



Unlocked Dynamic Bible

Old & New Testaments

Unlocked Dynamic Bible

an unrestricted Bible intended for translation into any language

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Table of Contents

Unlocked Dynamic Bible	1
GENESIS	5
EXODUS	73
LEVITICUS	130
NUMBERS	171
DEUTERONOMY	229
JOSHUA	281
JUDGES	315
RUTH	350
1 SAMUEL	355
2 SAMUEL	401
1 KINGS	440
2 KINGS	484
1 CHRONICLES	528
2 CHRONICLES	575
EZRA	624
NEHEMIAH	638
ESTHER	659
JOB	669
PSALMS	726
PROVERBS	867
ECCLESIASTES	918
SONG OF SONGS	933
ISAIAH	943
JEREMIAH	1053
LAMENTATIONS	1152
EZEKIEL	1164
DANIEL	1236
HOSEA	1258
JOEL	1276
AMOS	1282
OBADIAH	1296
JONAH	1298
MICAH	1301
NAHUM	1311
HABAKKUK	1316
ZEPHANIAH	1321
HAGGAI	1326
ZECHARIAH	1329
MALACHI	1342
MATTHEW	1347
MARK	1400
LUKE	1432

JOHN	1483
ACTS	1520
ROMANS	1574
1 CORINTHIANS	1599
2 CORINTHIANS	1621
GALATIANS	1635
EPHESIANS	1644
PHILIPPIANS	1652
COLOSSIANS	1658
1 THESSALONIANS	1663
2 THESSALONIANS	1668
1 TIMOTHY	1671
2 TIMOTHY	1677
TITUS	1681
PHILEMON	1684
HEBREWS	1686
JAMES	1705
1 PETER	1712
2 PETER	1719
1 JOHN	1723
2 JOHN	1729
3 JOHN	1730
JUDE	1731
REVELATION	1733

GENESIS

Chapter 1

¹ In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ² When he began to create the earth, it was shapeless and completely desolate. Darkness covered the surface of the deep water. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the water. ³ God said, "I command there to be light," and there was light. ⁴ God was pleased with the light. Then he made the light shine in some places at certain times, while in other places there was still darkness. ⁵ He named the light "day," and he named the darkness "night." This was an evening and morning, the first day.

⁶ Then God said, "I command that there be an empty space like a huge dome to separate the water into two parts." ⁷ And that is what happened. God made the empty space like a huge dome and it separated the water that is above it from the water on the earth that is below it. ⁸ God named the space like a huge dome "sky." This was an evening and morning, the second day.

⁹ Then God said, "I command the water that is below the sky to come together, and dry ground to appear and rise above it." And that is what happened. ¹⁰ God gave to the ground the name "earth," and he gave to the water that came together the name "oceans." God was pleased with the earth and the oceans. ¹¹ Then God said, "I command the earth to produce many kinds of plants that reproduce themselves—plants that will produce seeds and trees that will produce fruit with their seed in it." And that is what happened. ¹² Then plants grew on the earth. Each kind of plant began to produce its own kind of seed, and each kind of tree produced fruit with its seed in it. God was pleased with the plants

and trees. ¹³ This was an evening and morning, the third day.

¹⁴ Then God said, "I command many lights to shine in the sky. They will distinguish day from night. By the changes in their appearance they will indicate the time for various festivals and other things that people do at certain times and in certain years. ¹⁵ I also want these lights in the sky to shine down on the earth." And that is what happened. ¹⁶ God made two of them to be very big lights. The biggest one, the sun, he made to govern the day and the smaller one, the moon, he made to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷ God set all of them in the sky to shine on the earth, ¹⁸ to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light of the daytime from the darkness of the nighttime. God was pleased with the lights. ¹⁹ This was an evening and morning, the fourth day. ²⁰ Then God said, "Fill the waters with all kinds of living things that I have made, and fill the sky with birds that fly above the earth." ²¹ So God created the very large creatures that live in the sea, and he created all the other living things that are found, in very great numbers, in the waters. He also created every kind of bird that has wings. All these creatures would be able to produce their own offspring. God looked at all that he had made and he was pleased with them. ²² So God blessed them. He said, "Produce offspring and become very numerous. I want the creatures in the water to live throughout all the bodies of water, and the birds also to become very numerous." ²³ This was an evening and morning, the fifth day. ²⁴ Then God said, "I command the earth to produce various kinds of animals that reproduce themselves to live on the earth. There will be many kinds of domestic animals, creatures that crawl on the ground, and large wild animals." And that is what happened. ²⁵ God made all

kinds of wild animals and domestic animals and all kinds of creatures that crawl on the ground. They could all produce more animals of their same kind. God was pleased with them.

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make human beings to be like us. I want them to rule over the fish in the sea, over the birds in the sky, over all the domestic animals, and over all the other creatures that move across the surface of the ground." ²⁷ So God created human beings that were like him in many ways. He made them to be like himself. He created them as male and female. ²⁸ God blessed them, saying, "Produce many children, who should live all over the earth and rule over it. I want you to rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over all the creatures that move across the surface of the ground." ²⁹ God said, "Look! I have given you all the plants that produce seeds all over the earth, and all the trees that produce fruit. All these things are for you to eat. ³⁰ I have given all the green plants to be food for all the wild animals, for the birds, and for all the creatures that move across the surface of the ground, that is, for everything that has life-giving breath in it." And that is what happened. ³¹ God was pleased with everything that he had made. Truly, it was all very good. This was an evening and morning, the sixth day.

Chapter 2

¹ That is the way God created the heavens and the earth and the living things that filled them. ² By the time it was the seventh day, God had finished the work of creating everything, so he did not work anymore on that day. ³ God declared that each seventh day would have his favor. He set those days apart to be special days,

because on the seventh day God did not work anymore, after finishing all his work of creating everything. ⁴ What follows is how God created the heavens and the earth.

God, whose name is Yahweh, made the heavens and the earth. ⁵ At first there were no plants growing, because Yahweh God had not yet caused rain to fall on the ground. Furthermore, there was no one to plow the ground for planting crops. ⁶ Instead, mist rose up from the ground, so that there was water all over the surface of the ground. ⁷ Then Yahweh God took some soil and formed a man. He breathed into the man's nostrils his own breath that makes things alive, and as a result the man became a whole living person. ⁸ Yahweh God made a park in a place named Eden, which was east of the land of Canaan. There he placed the man that he had formed. ⁹ Yahweh God caused to grow from the ground every kind of tree that is beautiful to see and that produces fruit that is good to eat. He also placed in the middle of the park a tree whose fruit would enable those who ate it to live forever. He also placed there another tree whose fruit would enable those who ate it to know what actions were good to do and what actions were evil to do.

¹⁰ A river flowed from Eden to provide water for the park. Outside of Eden, the river divided into four rivers. ¹¹ The name of the first river is Pishon. That river flows through all the land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹² That gold is very pure. There is also a sweet-smelling gum called bdellium and valuable stones called onyx. ¹³ The name of the second river is Gihon. That river flows through all the land of Cush. ¹⁴ The name of the third river is Tigris. It flows east of the city of Ashur. The name of the fourth river is Euphrates.

Chapter 3

¹⁵ Yahweh God took the man and put him in Eden to plow it and take care of it. ¹⁶⁻¹⁷ But Yahweh said to him, "I will not permit you to eat the fruit of the tree that will enable you to know what actions are good to do and what actions are evil to do. If you eat any fruit from that tree, on the day you eat it you will surely die. But I will permit you to eat the fruit of any of the other trees in the park."

¹⁸ Yahweh God said, "It is not good for this man to be alone. So I will make someone who will be a suitable partner for him." ¹⁹ Yahweh God had taken some soil and had formed all kinds of animals and birds, and he brought them to the man to hear what names he would give to them. And the man gave a name to every living animal that Yahweh had made. ²⁰ Then the man gave names to all the kinds of cattle, birds, and wild animals, but none of these creatures was a partner that was suitable for the man. ²¹ So Yahweh God caused the man to become deeply asleep. While the man was sleeping, Yahweh took out one of the man's ribs. Then he immediately closed the opening in his body and healed it. ²² Yahweh then made a woman from the rib that he had taken from the man's body, and he brought her to the man. ²³ The man exclaimed, "Finally, this is truly someone like me! Her bones came from one of my bones, and her flesh came from my flesh. So I will call her woman, because she was taken from me, a man."

²⁴ The first woman was taken from the man's body, so that is why when a man and a woman marry, they must leave their parents. The man will join very closely to his wife, so that the two of them will be as though they are one person.

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

¹ Now the snake was more cunning than all the other wild animals that Yahweh God had made. The snake said to her, "Did God really say to you, 'Do not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the park'?" ² The woman replied, "What God said was, 'Do not eat the fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the park or touch it. If you do that, you will die.' ³ But you can eat fruit from any of the other trees." ⁴ The snake said to the woman, "No, you will certainly not die. God said that ⁵ only because he knows that when you eat fruit from that tree, you will understand new things. It will be as though your eyes were opened, and you will know what is good to do and what is evil to do, just as God does." ⁶ The woman saw that the fruit on that tree was good to eat, and it was very beautiful. She desired it because she thought it would make her wise. So she picked some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, and he ate it. ⁷ Immediately it was as though their eyes were opened, and they realized that they were naked, so they were ashamed. So they picked some fig leaves and fastened them together to make clothes for themselves.

⁸ Late that afternoon, when a cool breeze was blowing, they heard the sound of Yahweh God as he was walking in the park. So the man and his wife hid themselves among the bushes in the park, so that Yahweh God would not see them. ⁹ But Yahweh God called to the man, saying to him, "Why are you trying to hide from me?" ¹⁰ The man replied, "I heard the sound of your footsteps in the garden, and I was naked, so I was afraid and I hid from you."

¹¹ God said, "How did you find out you were naked? It must be because you ate some of the fruit from the tree that I told you, 'Do not eat its fruit.' Is that what

you have done?" ¹² The man said, "You gave me this woman to be with me. She is the one who gave me some of the fruit from that tree, so I ate it." ¹³ Then Yahweh God said to the woman, "Why did you do such a thing?" The woman replied, "I ate it because the snake deceived me." ¹⁴ Then Yahweh God said to the snake, "Because you did this, of all the domestic animals and the wild animals, I will curse you alone. As a result, you and all other snakes will crawl on the ground on your bellies, and so what you eat will have dirt on it as long as you live. ¹⁵ I will cause you and the woman to be enemies to each other, and I will cause your descendant and her descendant to be enemies toward each other. You will bite his heel, but he will crush your head." ¹⁶ Then Yahweh said to the woman, "I will make you have great pain when you give birth to children. You will want to be with your husband, but he will rule over you." ¹⁷ Then he said to the man, "You listened to what your wife said, and you ate some of the fruit of the tree about which I commanded you, 'Do not eat it.' So I will make it difficult to grow things in the ground because of what you did. You will have to work hard as long as you live to produce things from the ground to eat. ¹⁸ Thornbushes and thistle plants and other weeds will grow and prevent what you have planted from growing. And for food, you will have to eat things that just grow in your fields. ¹⁹ All your life you will sweat as you work hard to produce food to eat. Then you will die, and your body will be buried in the ground. I made you from soil, so your body will become soil again."

²⁰ The man, whose name was Adam, named his wife Eve, which means "living," because she became the ancestor of all living people. ²¹ Then Yahweh God killed some animals and made clothes from their skins for Adam and his wife.

²² Then Yahweh God said, "Look! Those two have become like us because they know what is good to do and what is evil to do. So now, it will not be good if they reach out and pick and eat some of the fruit from the tree which enables people who eat it to live forever!" ²³ So Yahweh God drove out the man and his wife from the park of Eden. Yahweh God had created Adam from the ground, and he forced him to plow the ground. ²⁴ After Yahweh God drove them out, on the east side of the park he placed cherubim and a flaming sword that flashed back and forth, in order to block the entrance, so that people could not go back to the tree that enables anyone who eats its fruit to live forever.

Chapter 4

¹ Adam slept with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son whom she named Cain, which means "produce," because, she said, "By Yahweh's help I have produced a son."

² Some time later she gave birth to another son, and she named him Abel. After those boys grew up, Abel tended sheep and goats, and Cain became a farmer. ³ One day it happened that Cain harvested some of the crops he had grown and brought them to Yahweh as a gift for him, ⁴ and Abel took from his flock some of the first lambs that had been born and killed them and, as a gift, gave to Yahweh the fatty parts, which were the best parts. Yahweh was pleased with Abel and his offering, ⁵ but he was not pleased with Cain and his offering. So Cain became very angry, and his expression became unpleasant. ⁶ Yahweh said to Cain, "You should not be angry! You should not scowl like that! ⁷ If you do what is right, I will accept you. But

if you do not do what is right, the evil that you want to do will devour you, like a lion waiting outside your door to attack you. Your desire to sin wants to control you, but you must control it.”

⁸ But one day, Cain said to his younger brother Abel, “Come with me to the fields.” So they went together. And when they were in the countryside, suddenly Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

⁹ Then, even though Yahweh knew what Cain had done, he said to Cain, “Do you know where Abel, your younger brother, is?” Cain replied, “No, I do not know. My job is not to guard my younger brother!”

¹⁰ Yahweh said, “What you have done is terrible! Your brother’s blood that has soaked into the ground convicts you of your guilt. ¹¹ You have killed your younger brother, and, now that the ground has soaked up your younger brother’s blood, you are not welcome on it and your efforts to produce crops on it will fail. ¹² When you till the ground to plant crops, the ground will produce very little for you. You will continually wander around the earth, and not have any place to live permanently.” ¹³ Cain replied to Yahweh, “You are punishing me more than I can endure. ¹⁴ You are about to expel me from the ground that I have been tilling, and I will no longer be able to come into your presence. Furthermore, I will be continually wandering around the earth with no place to live permanently, and anyone who sees me will kill me.” ¹⁵ But Yahweh said to him, “No, that will not happen. I will put a mark on you to warn anyone who sees you that I will punish him severely if he kills you. I will punish that person seven times as severely as I am punishing you.” Then Yahweh put a mark on Cain. ¹⁶

So Cain left Yahweh and went to live in the land called Nod, which means ‘wan-

dering’, which was east of Eden.

¹⁷ Some time later, Cain slept with his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son, whom she named Enoch. Then Cain started to build a city, and he named the city ‘Enoch,’ the same name that his son had. ¹⁸ Enoch grew up and married and became the father of a son whom he named Irad. When Irad grew up he became the father of a son whom he named Mehujael. Mehujael grew up and became the father of a son whom he named Methushael. Methushael grew up and became the father of Lamech. ¹⁹ When Lamech grew up he married two women. The name of one was Adah and the name of the other was Zillah. ²⁰ Adah gave birth to a son named Jabal. Later, Jabal became the first person who lived in tents because he traveled from place to place to take care of livestock. ²¹ His younger brother’s name was Jubal. He was the first person who made a lyre and a flute. ²² Lamech’s other wife Zillah gave birth to a son whom she named Tubal-Cain. Later he learned how to make things out of bronze and iron. The name of Tubal-Cain’s younger sister was Naamah.

²³ One day Lamech said to his two wives, “Adah and Zillah, my two wives, listen carefully to what I am saying. A young man struck me and wounded me, so I killed him. ²⁴ Yahweh said long ago that he would avenge and punish anyone who killed Cain seven times as much as he punished Cain. So if anyone tries to kill me, may he be punished seventy-seven times as much.”

²⁵ Adam continued to sleep with his wife, and she again became pregnant and gave birth to another son, whom she named Seth. She said, “I name him Seth because God has given me another child to take the place of Abel, since Cain killed him.” ²⁶ When Seth grew up, he became the father

of a son whom he named Enosh. About that time people began to worship Yahweh.

Chapter 5

¹ This is a list of those who descended from Adam. When God created humans, he made them to be like him in many ways.

² He created one man and one woman. He blessed them, and on the day that he created them, he called them ‘human beings.’

³ When Adam was 130 years old, he became the father of a son who was just like him. That was the son he named Seth. ⁴ After Seth was born, Adam lived eight hundred more years, and during those years he became the father of other sons and daughters. ⁵ Adam lived 930 years altogether, and then he died.

⁶ When Seth was 105 years old, he became the father of Enosh. ⁷ After Enosh was born, Seth lived 807 more years, and became the father of other sons and daughters. ⁸ Seth lived 912 years altogether, and then he died. ⁹ When Enosh was ninety years old, he became the father of Kenan. ¹⁰ After Kenan was born, Enosh lived 815 more years and became the father of other sons and daughters.

¹¹ Enosh lived 905 years altogether, and then he died. ¹² When Kenan was seventy years old, he became the father of Mahalalel. ¹³ After Mahalalel was born, Kenan lived 840 more years and became the father of other sons and daughters. ¹⁴ Kenan lived 910 years altogether, and then he died.

¹⁵ When Mahalalel was sixty-five years old, he became the father of Jared. ¹⁶ After Jared was born, Mahalalel lived 830 more years and became the father of other sons and daughters. ¹⁷ Mahalalel lived 895 years altogether, and then he died.

¹⁸ When Jared was 162 years old, he became the father of Enoch. ¹⁹ Jared lived eight hundred years after

Enoch was born, and he became the father of other sons and daughters. ²⁰ Jared lived 962 years altogether, and then he died.

²¹ When Enoch was sixty-five years old, he became the father of Methuselah. ²² Enoch lived in close fellowship with God for three hundred years after Methuselah was born, and he became the father of other sons and daughters.

²³ Enoch lived 365 years. ²⁴ He was in close fellowship with God, and one day he disappeared, because God took him away to be with him.

²⁵ When Methuselah was 187 years old, he became the father of Lamech. ²⁶ Methuselah lived 782 years after Lamech was born, and became the father of other sons and daughters. ²⁷ Methuselah lived 969 years altogether, and then he died.

²⁸ When Lamech was 182 years old, he became the father of a son, ²⁹ whom he named Noah, because, as he said, “He will bring us relief from all the hard work we have been doing to produce food from the ground that Yahweh cursed.”

³⁰ Lamech lived 595 years after Noah was born and became the father of other sons and daughters. ³¹ Lamech lived 777 years altogether, and then he died. ³² When Noah was five hundred years old, he became the father of sons whom he named Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Chapter 6

¹ When people began to become very numerous all over the earth, and many daughters were born to them, ² some of the heavenly beings saw that the human women were very beautiful. So they took whichever ones they chose to become their wives.

³ Then Yahweh said, “My breath will not remain in people forever, to keep them alive. They are made of weak flesh. They will live not more than 120 years before they die.”

⁴ When these heavenly beings slept with human women, they gave birth to children. These were the giants who lived on the earth at that time and also later. These giants were heroic fighters; they were famous men from long ago.

⁵ Yahweh saw that people on the earth had become very wicked, and everything they thought in their inner beings was evil continually. ⁶ Yahweh was sorry that he had made people on the earth and it made him sad. ⁷ So Yahweh said, "I will completely destroy the people I made. I will also destroy all the larger animals and the creatures that move close to the ground and the birds. None of them will remain on the earth, because I regret that I made them."

⁸ But Yahweh was pleased with Noah. ⁹ This is what happened: Noah was a man whose behavior was always righteous. No one who lived at that time could criticize him about anything. Noah lived in close fellowship with God. ¹⁰ Noah became the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

¹¹ God could see that everyone else on earth was very wicked, and everywhere on the earth, people were acting cruelly and violently toward each other. ¹² God looked at everyone and saw how evil people were, because all people on the earth had begun to behave in an evil way. ¹³ So God said to Noah, "I have decided to destroy all people, because all over the earth people are acting violently toward each other. So I am about to get rid of them as well as everything else on the earth. ¹⁴ Make for yourself a large boat from cypress wood. Make rooms inside it. Cover the outside and the inside with tar to make it waterproof. ¹⁵ This is how you must make it: It must be 138 meters long, twenty-three meters wide, and fourteen meters high. ¹⁶ Make a roof for the boat. Leave a space of about half a meter

between the sides and the roof to let air and light enter. Make it with three decks inside, and put a door in one side. ¹⁷ Listen carefully! I am about to bring a flood that will destroy everything that lives beneath the sky. Everything on the earth will die. ¹⁸ But I will make my covenant with you. You and your wife, your sons and their wives will enter the boat. ¹⁹ You must also bring two of all living creatures, a male and a female, into the boat with you, so that they also may remain alive. ²⁰ Two of every kind of creature will come to you in order for you to keep them alive. They will include two of each kind of bird and two of each kind of larger animal and two of each kind of creature that moves close to the ground. ²¹ You must also take some of every kind of food that you and all these creatures will need, and store it in the boat." ²² So Noah did everything that God told him to do.

Chapter 7

¹ Then Yahweh said to Noah, "I have seen that from all the people who are now living, you alone always act righteously. So I want you and all your family to go into the boat. ² Take with you seven pairs of every kind of animal that I have said I will accept for sacrifices. Take seven males and seven females. Also take one male and one female from every kind of animal that I have said that I will not accept for sacrifices. ³ Also take seven pairs of every kind of bird from to keep their descendants alive all over the earth. ⁴ Do this because seven days from now I will cause rain to fall on the earth. It will rain constantly for forty days and nights. In this way, I will destroy everything that I have made that is on the earth."

⁵ Noah did everything that Yahweh told him to do. ⁶ Noah was six hundred years

old when the flood came on the earth. ⁷ Before it started to rain, Noah and his wife and his sons and his sons' wives all went into the boat to escape from the flood water. ⁸ Pairs of animals, those that God said that he would accept for sacrifices and those that he would not accept for sacrifices, and pairs of birds and pairs of all the kinds of creatures that move close to the ground, ⁹ males and females, came to Noah and then went into the boat, just as God told Noah that they would do. ¹⁰ After seven days had ended, it started to rain and a flood began to cover the earth. ¹¹ When Noah was six hundred years old, on the seventeenth day of the second month, all the water that is under the surface of the earth burst out, and it began to rain so hard that it was as though a dam in the sky burst open. ¹² Rain fell on the earth constantly for forty days and nights. ¹³ On the day that it started to rain, Noah went into the boat with his wife, and his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and their wives. ¹⁴ They and some of every kind of wild animal, and every kind of domestic animal, and every kind of creature that moves close to the ground, and every kind of bird, and every other creature that has wings, all entered the boat. ¹⁵ Pairs of all creatures that breathed came to Noah and entered the boat. ¹⁶ There were a male and a female of each creature that came to Noah, just as God had said they would do. After they were all in the boat, Yahweh shut the door.

¹⁷ For forty days the water kept coming and the flood increased and lifted the boat up above the ground. ¹⁸ The rushing water rose higher and higher on the earth, and the boat floated on the surface of the water. ¹⁹ The water rushed higher and higher all over the earth until it covered all the mountains and everything under heaven. ²⁰ Even the highest mountains were covered by more than six meters of

water. ²¹ As a result, every living being on the surface of the earth died. That included the birds, the domestic animals, the wild animals, and all the other creatures that move around on the ground, as well as all the people. ²² Everything that breathed, that was a creature of the land, died. ²³ In this way every living thing on the earth perished—the people, the larger animals, the creatures that crawl, and the birds. The only ones that remained alive were Noah and those who were in the boat with him. ²⁴ The waters remained at full flood like that on the earth for 150 days.

Chapter 8

¹ But God did not forget about Noah, or about all the wild animals and all the kinds of domestic animals that were with him in the boat. So one day God sent a wind to blow across the earth, and the wind caused the water to begin to recede.

² God caused the water that was under the earth to stop bursting out, and he caused the floodgates of water from the sky to close so that it stopped raining. ³ The water on the earth gradually receded. By one hundred fifty days after the flood began, much of the water was gone. ⁴ On the seventeenth day of the seventh month, the boat came to rest on one of the mountains in the region of Ararat. ⁵ The water continued to recede until, on the first day of the tenth month of that year, the tops of other mountains became visible. ⁶ Forty days later, Noah opened the window that he had made in the side of the boat, and sent out a raven. ⁷ The raven flew back and forth to and from the boat until the water dried up from the surface of the ground. ⁸ Then Noah sent out a dove to find out if the water had all receded from the surface of the ground. ⁹ But the dove did not find any place to perch, so it flew back

to Noah in the boat, because there was still water all over the surface of the earth. So Noah reached out his hand and took the dove back inside the boat. ¹⁰ Noah waited seven more days. Then he sent the dove out of the boat again. ¹¹ This time the dove returned to him in the evening and, surprisingly, there was a leaf from an olive tree that the dove had just plucked in its beak. Then Noah knew that the water had truly receded from the surface of the ground. ¹² Noah waited again seven more days. Then he sent the dove out again, but this time it did not return to him.

¹³ Noah was now 601 years old. By the first day of the first month of that year, the water had completely drained away from the ground. Noah removed the covering on top of the boat, and he was surprised to see that the surface of the ground was dry. ¹⁴ By the twenty-seventh day of the next month, the ground was completely dry. ¹⁵ Then God said to Noah, ¹⁶ "Leave the boat, along with your wife, your sons, and their wives. ¹⁷ Bring out with you all the birds, the domestic animals, and all the kinds of creatures that move close to the ground, in order that they can spread all over the earth and become very numerous." ¹⁸ So Noah left the boat, along with his wife, his sons, and their wives. ¹⁹ Then all the creatures, including all those that move close to the ground, all the birds, and every animal that moves on the earth, left the boat. They left the boat in groups of their own kind.

²⁰ Then Noah built an altar to Yahweh. He took some of the animals and birds that were acceptable as sacrifices and killed them. Then he burned them whole on the altar. ²¹ When Yahweh smelled the pleasant odor, he was pleased with the sacrifice. Then he said to himself, "I will never again devastate everything on the earth because of the sinful things people

do. Even though all that people think in their minds is evil from the time they are young, I will not destroy all the living beings again, as I did this time. ²² As long as the earth exists, the seasons for planting seeds and seasons for harvesting crops, the times when it is cold and times when it is hot, the summer and winter, the daytime and nighttime will continue."

Chapter 9

¹ Then God blessed Noah and his sons. He said to them, "I want you to have many children who will live all over the earth. ² All the larger animals on the earth, all the birds, all the creatures that move close to the ground, and all the fish, will be very afraid of you. I place them under your authority. ³ Previously I allowed you to eat green plants for food, but now you may eat everything that lives and moves. ⁴ But you must not eat meat that still has the blood in it, because the life is in its blood. ⁵ I punish any creature who kills a human being—that they answer to Yahweh—whether it be an animal or from a human being. I demand that murderers must suffer for their crimes and pay with their own lives. Even when an animal kills a person, that animal must also have their life taken because they have taken the life of a human being. ⁶ For I made people to be like myself. So I insist that if someone murders another human being, another person must kill him. Anyone who pours another's blood out must himself lose his own blood.

⁷ As for you, I want you to produce many children, in order that they and their descendants may live all over the earth."

⁸ God also said to Noah and his sons, ⁹ "Listen carefully. I am now making a covenant with you and with your descen-

dants,¹⁰ and with every creature with you, that is alive—including the birds, the domestic animals, and the wild animals—every living animal creature on the earth that came out of the boat with you.¹¹ This is the covenant that I am making with you: I will never again destroy all living beings by a flood, or destroy everything else on the earth by a flood.”

¹² Then God said to him, “This is the sign to guarantee that I will keep the covenant that I am making with you and with all living beings, a covenant that I will keep forever: ¹³ From time to time I will put a rainbow in the sky. It will be the sign of my covenant with you and with everything on the earth. ¹⁴ When I cause rain to fall from the clouds, and a rainbow appears in the sky, ¹⁵ it will remind me about the covenant that I have made with you and with all living creatures, my promise that there will never again be a flood that will destroy all living creatures. ¹⁶ Whenever there is a rainbow in the sky, I will see it, and I will think about the covenant that I have made with every living being that is upon the earth, a promise that I will keep forever.”

¹⁷ Then God said to Noah, “The rainbow will be the sign of the covenant that I have made with all living beings on the earth.”

¹⁸ The sons of Noah who came out of boat were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Ham later became the father of Canaan. ¹⁹ All the people on the earth are descended from these three sons of Noah.

²⁰ Noah began to farm the land. He planted grapevines. ²¹ After they produced grapes, he made wine from them. One day, when he had drunk too much of the wine, he became drunk, and he lay naked in his tent. ²² Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father lying naked in the tent. So he went outside and told his two older brothers what he had seen.

²³ Then Shem and Japheth took a large cloth and placed it across their backs, and walked backwards into the tent. They covered their father’s naked body with the cloth. Their faces were turned away from their father, so they did not see him naked.

²⁴ When Noah woke up and was sober again, he found out how badly Ham, his youngest son, had behaved toward him. ²⁵ He said, “I am cursing Ham’s son, Canaan, and his descendants. They will be like slaves to their uncles.

²⁶ I praise Yahweh, whom Shem worships. May Canaan’s descendants be servants to Shem’s descendants. ²⁷ But may God make the Japheth’s territory larger. May he allow Japheth’s descendants to live peacefully among the descendants of Shem. May Canaan’s descendants be their slaves.”

²⁸ Noah lived 350 more years after the flood. ²⁹ He died when he was 950 years old.

Chapter 10

¹ These are the descendants of Noah’s sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. They became the fathers of many children after the flood. ² The sons of Japheth

were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. ³ The sons of Gomer were Askenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah. ⁴ The sons of Javan were Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim. ⁵ The sons and their families who were descended from Javan lived in the islands and in the lands close to the ocean. Their descendants became people groups, each with its own language, clans, and territory. ⁶ The sons of Ham were Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan.

⁷ The sons of Cush were Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabtah. The sons of

Raamah were Sheba and Dedan.

⁸ Another one of Cush's sons was Nimrod. Nimrod was the first person on earth who became a mighty warrior. ⁹ Yahweh saw that he had become a great hunter. That is why people say to a great hunter, "Yahweh sees that you are a great hunter like Nimrod." ¹⁰ Nimrod became a king who ruled in Babylonia land. The first cities over which he ruled were Babel, Erech, Akkad, and Kalneh. ¹¹ From there he went with other people to Assyria, and there they built the cities of Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah, ¹² and Resen. Resen was a large city between Nineveh and Calah.

¹³ Ham's son, Egypt, became the ancestor of the Lud, Anam, Lehab and Naph-tuh, ¹⁴ Pathrus, Casluh and Caphtor people groups. The Philistine people were descended from Casluh.

¹⁵ Ham's youngest son, Canaan, became the father of Sidon, who was his eldest son, and Heth, his younger son. ¹⁶ Canaan was also the ancestor of the Jebus, Amor, Gir-gash, ¹⁷ Hiv, Ark, Sin, ¹⁸ Arved, Zemar and Hamath people groups. Later the descendants of Canaan scattered over a large area. ¹⁹ Their land extended from the city of Sidon in the north as far south as Gaza near Gerar, and then east toward Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboyim towns, as far as the town of Lasha.

²⁰ Those are the descendants of Ham. They became people groups that had their own clans, their own languages, and their own lands.

²¹ Shem, the older brother of Japheth, also had sons, and he became the ancestor of all the descendants of Eber. ²² The sons of Shem were Elam, Ashur, Arphachshad, Lud, and Aram. ²³ The sons of Aram were Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash. ²⁴ Arphachshad became the father of She-lah. Shelah became the father of Eber.

²⁵ Eber became the father of two sons. One of them was named Peleg, which means "division," because during the time he lived, people on the earth became divided and scattered everywhere. Peleg's younger brother was Joktan. ²⁶ Joktan became the father of Almodad, Sheleph, Haz-armaveth, Jerah, ²⁷ Hadoram, Uzal, Dik-lah, ²⁸ Obal, Abimael, Sheba, ²⁹ Ophir, Hav-ilah, and Jobab. All these were sons of Jok-tan. ³⁰ The areas in which the clans began to live extended from Mesha to Sephar, which is in the hill country in the east. ³¹ They are descendants from the sons of Shem. They became people groups that had their own clans, their own languages, and their own land.

³² All these clans descended from the sons of Noah. Each clan had its own genealogy and each became a separate people group. Those people groups formed after the flood and spread all around the earth.

Chapter 11

¹ At this time, all the people in the world spoke the same language. ² As people moved around in the east, they arrived at a plain in the region of Babylon and began to live there. ³ Then they said to each other, "Let us make bricks and bake them to make them hard, for building!" So they used bricks instead of stones, and used tar instead of mortar to hold them together. ⁴ They said, "Let us build a city for ourselves! We also ought to build a very high tower that reaches up to the sky! In that way people will know who we are! If we do not do this, we will be scattered all over the earth!"

⁵ One day Yahweh came down to see the city and the tower that the people were building. ⁶ Yahweh said, "These people are one group that all speak the same lan-

guage. If they have begun to do this, then there is nothing that they will decide to do that will be impossible for them! ⁷ So, let us go down there and make the people speak different languages, so that they will not be able to understand what each other is saying.”

⁸ By doing this, Yahweh caused them to scatter all over the earth, and the people stopped building the city. ⁹ The city was called Babel, because there Yahweh caused the people all over the earth to no longer speak only one language. And Yahweh caused them to scatter all over the earth from that place.

¹⁰ These are those who descended from Shem. Two years after the flood, when Shem was one hundred years old, he became the father of Arphaxad. ¹¹ After Arphaxad was born, Shem lived five hundred more years and became the father of other sons and daughters.

¹² When Arphachshad was thirty-five years old, he became the father of Shelah.

¹³ After Shelah was born, Arphaxad lived 403 more years and became the father of other sons and daughters.

¹⁴ When Shelah was thirty years old, he became the father of Eber. ¹⁵ After Eber was born, Shelah lived 403 more years and became the father of other sons and daughters.

¹⁶ When Eber was thirty-four years old, he became the father of Peleg. ¹⁷ After Peleg was born, Eber lived 430 more years and became the father of other sons and daughters.

¹⁸ When Peleg was thirty years old, he became the father of Reu. ¹⁹ After Reu was born, Peleg lived 209 more years and became the father of other sons and daughters.

²⁰ When Reu was thirty-two years old, he became the father of Serug. ²¹ After

Serug was born, Reu lived 207 more years and became the father of other sons and daughters.

²² When Serug was thirty years old, he became the father of Nahor. ²³ After Nahor was born, Serug lived two hundred more years and became the father of other sons and daughters.

²⁴ When Nahor was twenty-nine years old, he became the father of Terah. ²⁵ After Terah was born, Nahor lived 119 more years and became the father of other sons and daughters.

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

²⁷ This is what happened concerning the descendants of Terah: Terah's sons were Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran's son was named Lot. ²⁸ Haran's father was with him when Haran died in the city of Ur, in the country of the Chaldeans. This is the land where he was born. ²⁹ Abram and Nahor both married. Abram's wife was named Sarai, and Nahor's wife was named Milkah. Milkah and her sister Iskah were the daughters of Haran. ³⁰ Sarai was unable to have any children.

³¹ Terah decided to leave Ur and go to live in the land of Canaan. So he took his son Abram and his grandson Lot son of Haran, and Abram's wife Sarai with him. But instead of going to Canaan, they stopped at the town of Haran and lived there. ³² When Terah was 205 years old, he died in Haran.

Chapter 12

¹ Then Yahweh said to Abram, "Leave this country where you are now living. Leave your father's clan and his family, and go to a land that I will show you. ² I will cause

your descendants to become a large nation. I will bless you and cause you to become famous. What I do for you will be a blessing to others. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse those who do evil things to you. I will bless all the clans on earth through you.”

⁴ So Abram left Haran, as Yahweh told him to do. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left there along with his family and Lot’s family. ⁵ Abram took his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot; he also took with himself all the possessions and slaves that they had accumulated in Haran. They left from there and went to the land of Canaan. ⁶ In Canaan they traveled as far as Shechem and camped by a tall tree called the tree of Moreh. When this happened, the Canaanite people were living in that land.

⁷ Then Yahweh appeared to Abram and said to him, “I will give this land to your descendants.” Then Abram built an altar to offer a sacrifice to Yahweh, who had appeared to him. ⁸ From Shechem, Abram and his family traveled to the hills that were east of Bethel. Bethel was to the west of where they set up their tent, and Ai was to the east. There he built another altar and offered a sacrifice and worshiped Yahweh there. ⁹ Then they left there and continued traveling south to the Negev desert.

¹⁰ There was a famine in that land, so they went further south to live for awhile in the land of Egypt, because the lack of food in the land where they were was very severe. ¹¹ When they were coming near to the land of Egypt, Abram said to his wife Sarai, “Listen, I know that you are a very beautiful woman. ¹² When the people in Egypt see you, they will say, ‘This woman is his wife!’ and they will kill me, but they will not kill you. ¹³ So I ask you to tell them that you are my sister, so that I will be safe

and so they will spare my life because of you.”

¹⁴ And that was what happened. As soon as they arrived in Egypt, the people in Egypt saw that his wife was indeed very beautiful. ¹⁵ When the king’s officials saw her, they told the king how beautiful she was. Then the king took her into his palace. ¹⁶ The king treated Abram kindly because of Sarai, and he gave Abram sheep and cattle and donkeys and male and female slaves and camels. ¹⁷ But because the king had taken Sarai, Abram’s wife, Yahweh caused the king and the others in his household to be inflicted with terrible diseases. ¹⁸ So the king summoned Abram and said to him, “You have done a terrible thing to me! Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? ¹⁹ Why did you say that she is your sister, so that I took her to be my wife? You should not have done that! So now take your wife, leave here and go!” ²⁰ Then the king ordered his officials to take Abram and his wife and all his possessions out of Egypt.

Chapter 13

¹ So Abram and Sarai left Egypt and went back to the southern Judean wilderness. They took along all their possessions, and Lot went with them. ² Abram was very rich. He owned a lot of livestock, silver, and gold. ³ They continued traveling from place to place from the southern Judean wilderness toward Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where they had previously set up their tents. ⁴ This is also where Abram had built an altar; there he worshiped Yahweh again. ⁵ Lot, who was traveling with Abram, also had flocks of sheep and goats and herds of cattle and tents. ⁶ The two of them had so many animals that they could not

all stay in the same area. There was not enough land to provide water and food for all their animals. ⁷ Furthermore, the men who took care of Abram's livestock started quarreling with the men who took care of Lot's livestock. The descendants of Canaan and Perez were also living in that area. ⁸ Then Abram said to Lot, "Since we are close relatives, it is not good for us to quarrel, or for the men who take care of your animals to quarrel with the men who take care of my animals. ⁹ There is plenty of land for both of us. So we should separate. You can choose whatever part you want. If you want the area over there, I will stay here. If you want the area here, I will go over there." ¹⁰ Lot looked toward Zoar and saw that there was plenty of water all over the plain near the Jordan River. This was before Yahweh destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah which were on that plain. In those days, it was like the garden of Yahweh, like the land in Egypt near the Nile River. ¹¹ So Lot chose for himself the land in the plain of the Jordan River. He left his uncle, Abram, and moved east. ¹² Abram stayed in the land of Canaan, and Lot went to live near the cities in the plain of the Jordan River, and he set up his tents near Sodom. ¹³ Now the people who lived in Sodom were extremely wicked and sinned terribly against Yahweh.

¹⁴ After Abram and Lot separated, Yahweh said to Abram, "Look around at this whole area where you are. Look north and south, look east and west. ¹⁵ I will give to you and to your descendants all the land that you see; I will give it to you forever. ¹⁶ I will cause your descendants to be as numerous as particles of dust! If a man tried to count the particles of dust, it would be the same as if he tried to count your descendants. ¹⁷ Walk through the land in every direction, because I am going to give it all to you." ¹⁸ So Abram took down his tents and moved to Hebron and

settled by the big trees of Mamre. He built a stone altar there to make sacrifices to Yahweh.

Chapter 14

¹ There were four kings who were allies. They were King Amraphel of Babylonia, King Arioch of Ellasar, King Chedorlaomer of Elam, and King Tidal of Goiim. ² They prepared to attack a group of five kings: King Bera of Sodom, King Birsha of Gomorrah, King Shinab of Admah, King Shemeber of Zeboyim, and the king of Bela, the city that is now called Zoar. ³ Those five kings and their armies gathered together in the Valley of Siddim, which is also called the Valley of the Dead Sea, to fight against the four kings and their armies. ⁴ For twelve years King Chedorlaomer had ruled them. But in the thirteenth year, they rebelled against King Chedorlaomer and refused to give him any more tribute money. ⁵ The next year, King Chedorlaomer and the other kings that were with him gathered their armies and started coming toward the area of the five kings. They defeated the Rephaite people in Ashteroth Karnaim, the Zuzite people in Ham, and the Emite people in Shaveh Kiriathaim. ⁶ They also defeated the Horite people in their hill area of Seir as far as El Paran near the desert. ⁷ Then they turned around and went to En Mishpat, which is now called Kadesh. They conquered all the land belonging to the Amalekite people and the Amorite people who were living in Hazazon Tamar.

⁸ Then the armies of the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboyim and Bela marched out to fight the armies of the four kings in Siddim Valley. ⁹ They fought against the armies of Chedorlaomer the king of Elam, Tidal the king of Goiim, Amraphel the king of Shinar, and Arioch the

king of Ellasar. The armies of four kings were fighting against the armies of five kings. ¹⁰ The Valley of Siddim was full of tar pits. So when the armies of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah tried to run away, many of the men fell into these pits. The others escaped and ran away to the hills. ¹¹ As they fled, their enemies seized all of the valuable things in Sodom and Gomorrah, including all the food. ¹² They also captured Abram's nephew Lot and his possessions, since he was living in Sodom at that time. ¹³⁻¹⁴ At that time, Abram was living near the big trees that belonged to Mamre, who belonged to the Amor clan. Abram had made an agreement with Mamre and his two brothers, Eshcol and Aner, that they would help each other if there was a war. One of the men who escaped from the battle told Abram the Hebrew what had happened and that the enemy had captured his nephew, Lot, and taken him away. So Abram summoned 318 men who were his servants, men who had been with Abram since they were born and who knew how to fight as warriors. They all went together and pursued their enemies as far as the city of Dan. ¹⁵ During the night, Abram divided the men into several groups, and they attacked their enemies from various directions and defeated them. They pursued them as far as Hobah, which was north of the city of Damascus. ¹⁶ Abram's men recovered all of the goods that had been taken. They also rescued Lot and all his possessions and also the women and others who their enemies had taken.

¹⁷ As Abram was returning home after he and his men had defeated the armies of King Chedorlaomer and the other kings who had fought alongside him, the King of Sodom went north to meet him in Shaveh Valley, which people also call the King's Valley. ¹⁸ Melchizedek, the king of the city of Salem, was also a priest of the supreme

God. He brought some bread and wine to Abram. ¹⁹ Then he blessed Abram and said, "I ask the supreme God, the one who created heaven and earth, to bless you. ²⁰ I praise the supreme God, because he has enabled you to defeat your enemies." Then Abram gave to Melchizedek a tenth part of all the things he had captured. ²¹ The King of Sodom said to Abram, "You can keep all the goods you recovered. Just let me take back the people from my city whom you captured." ²² But Abram said to the King of Sodom, "I have solemnly promised Yahweh, the supreme God, the one who created heaven and earth, ²³ that I will not take even one thread or a thong of a sandal from anything that belongs to you. As a result, you will never be able to say, 'I caused Abram to become rich.' ²⁴ The only thing I will accept is the food that my men have eaten. But Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre went with me and fought alongside me, so let them have a share of the goods we brought back."

Chapter 15

¹ Some time later, Abram had a vision in which Yahweh spoke to him and said, "Do not be afraid of anything, I will protect you and I will give a great reward." ² But Abram replied, "Lord Yahweh, how can you give me what I truly want, because I have no children, and the one who will inherit all my possessions is my servant Eliezer, from Damascus!" ³ Abram also said, "You have not given me any children, so a servant in my household will inherit everything that I own!" ⁴ Yahweh replied, "No! He will not be the one who will inherit it. Instead, you yourself will be the father of the one who will inherit everything you own." ⁵ Then Yahweh took Abram outside of his tent and said, "Look up at the sky! Can you count the stars?"

No, you cannot count them because there are so many of them, and your descendants will be as numerous as the stars.”⁶ Abram believed that what Yahweh said would happen. Because of that, Yahweh considered him as good.⁷ Yahweh also said to him, “I am Yahweh. I am the one who brought you from Ur in the land of Chaldea. I brought you here to give you this land to possess.”⁸ But Abram replied, “Lord Yahweh, how can I know for sure that this land will belong to me?”⁹ God said to him, “Bring a three year old heifer and a three year old goat to me, and a dove and a pigeon.”¹⁰ So Abram brought all of them. He killed them and cut each of the animals in half. He arranged the halves of each one, side by side. But he did not cut the pigeon and dove in half.¹¹ Birds that eat dead animals came down to eat the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.¹² As the sun was going down, Abram fell sound asleep, and suddenly everything around him became dark and frightening.¹³ Then Yahweh said to Abram, “I want you to know that your descendants will become foreigners living in a land that does not belong to them. They will become slaves of the owners of that land. The owners of the land will mistreat them for four hundred years.¹⁴ But then I will punish the people of that country where they are slaves. Then your descendants will leave that country, taking many possessions with them.¹⁵ But as for you, you will die peacefully and be buried when you are very old.¹⁶ After your descendants have been slaves for four hundred years, they will come back here. They will take control of this land and defeat the Amor people. This will not happen before that time, because the Amor people have not yet sinned to the degree that I would punish them like that for it.”¹⁷ When the sun had set and it was dark, unexpectedly a blazing torch and a clay

pot containing burning coals from which smoke was rising appeared and went between the halves of the animals.¹⁸ On that day Yahweh made a covenant with Abram. Yahweh told him, “I will give to your descendants all the land between the river that is on the eastern border of Egypt to the south, and north to the Euphrates River.¹⁹ That is the land where the Ken, the Keniz, the Kidmon,²⁰ the Heth, the Perez, the Repha,²¹ the Amor, the Canaan, the Girgash, and the Jebus people groups live.”

Chapter 16

¹ Up to that time, Abram’s wife Sarai had not given birth to any children for Abram. But she had a female slave from Egypt, whose name was Hagar.² Sarai said to Abram, “Listen to me! Yahweh has not allowed me to become pregnant. So sleep with my slave Hagar. Perhaps she will bear children whom I can consider to be mine.” Abram agreed to do what Sarai said.³ This happened ten years after Abram and Sarai went to live in Canaan land. In this way Abram took Hagar, Sarai’s slave from Egypt, to be his second wife.⁴ So he slept with Hagar, and she became pregnant. When she realized that she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress Sarai.⁵ Then Sarai said to Abram, “It is your fault! I put my servant into your arms so that you could sleep with her. Now she is pregnant, and she despises me because I have no children. May Yahweh find you guilty for doing this to me!”⁶ So Abram said to Sarai, “Listen to me! She is your servant, so act toward her in the way you consider best.” Then Sarai started to mistreat her, so Hagar ran away.⁷ The angel of Yahweh went to her as she was near a spring of water in the desert. It was the spring that

was alongside the road to Shur. ⁸ He said to her, "Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?" She replied, "I have run away from Sarai, my mistress." ⁹ The angel of Yahweh said, "Go back to your mistress and continue to obey her." ¹⁰ The angel of Yahweh also said to her, "I will enable you to bear so many descendants that no one will be able to count them!" ¹¹ The angel of Yahweh also said to her, "Listen to this! You are pregnant. You will give birth to a son. You must name him Ishmael, which means 'God listens,' because Yahweh has heard you crying because you feel so miserable. ¹² But your son will be as uncontrollable as a wild donkey. He will oppose everyone, and everyone will oppose him. He will live far away from all his relatives." ¹³ Hagar said to herself, "I continue to live, even though Yahweh has seen me!" So she called Yahweh, "God, the one who sees me." ¹⁴ That is why people call the well there "Beer Lahai Roi," which means, "the well of the living one who sees me!" It is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.

¹⁵ So Hagar later gave birth to a son for Abram, and she named him Ishmael. ¹⁶ Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar gave birth to Abram's son Ishmael.

Chapter 17

¹ When Abram was ninety-nine years old, Yahweh appeared to Abram again and said to him, "I am God Almighty. I want you to live your life in the way that I want. I want you to not do anything wrong. ² I will confirm my covenant between us, and I will cause you to have a very great number of descendants." ³ Abram bowed down with his face on the ground. Then God said to him, ⁴ "Listen to this! This is the covenant I am making with you: You

will be the father of many groups of people. ⁵ Your name will be Abram no longer. Instead, your name will be Abraham, because I will make you the father of many groups of people. ⁶ I will cause you to have very, very many descendants, and I will cause nations and kings to be among them. ⁷ I will make this covenant between me and you and the generations of your descendants after you forever. Because of this covenant, you will worship and follow me as God, and so will your descendants. ⁸ I will give to you and to your descendants the land of Canaan, the whole land of Canaan, where you are now living. It will be an everlasting possession for them, and I will be their God."

⁹ Then God said to Abraham, "Now you must keep your part of the covenant that I am making with you, and your descendants must also obey it, for all generations. ¹⁰ This is a requirement of the covenant that I am making between myself and you and all your descendants: Every male among you must be circumcised. ¹¹ Cutting the foreskins of them will be the sign that you have accepted the covenant that I am making with you. ¹² Every male child among you must be circumcised when he is eight days old, in all future generations. That includes baby boys in your household and those born from slaves that have been bought, and foreigners who live among you but do not belong to your household. ¹³ It does not matter whether their parents are members of your household or slaves that you have bought; they must all be circumcised. Your bodies will have this mark to show you have accepted this everlasting covenant that I am making. ¹⁴ You must drive out from your community any male who has not been circumcised, because that person has disobeyed my covenant."

¹⁵ God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai,

your wife, you must not call her Sarai any longer. I will change her name also. Her name will now be Sarah. ¹⁶ I will bless her, and she will surely give birth to a son for you. And I will bless her so much that she will be the ancestor of people of many nations. Kings and people groups will be descended from her.”

¹⁷ Abraham lay down with his face on the ground in respect before God. But then he laughed as he said to himself, “Can a man who is a hundred years old become a father of a son? And since Sarah is ninety years old, how can she bear a child?” ¹⁸ Then Abraham said to God, “Perhaps you will let Ishmael receive your blessing and inherit all I possess.” ¹⁹ Then God replied, “No! Your wife Sarah will bear a son for you. You must name him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him, one that will be an everlasting covenant with him and his descendants. ²⁰ As for Ishmael, I have heard what you asked me to do for him. I will bless him so that he also will have many descendants. Among his descendants will be the leaders of twelve tribes. And I will cause his descendants to become a great nation. ²¹ But it is with Isaac that I will establish my covenant—Isaac, the son whom Sarah will give birth to at this time next year.” ²² When God finished talking to Abraham, God disappeared from his sight.

²³ On that same day, Abraham took his son Ishmael and all the males that were in his household, including the sons of all the slaves he had bought, and circumcised them. He cut off their foreskins, just as God told him to do. ²⁴ Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised, ²⁵ and Ishmael was thirteen years old when Abraham circumcised him. ²⁶ It was on that very same day that Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised. ²⁷ All the males in his house-

hold, the ones who had been born there and those Abraham had bought from foreigners, were also circumcised.

Chapter 18

¹ One day during that year, at the time of day when it was hot, Yahweh appeared to Abraham again near the big trees that belonged to Mamre. Abraham was sitting in the entrance to his tent. ² Abraham looked up and was surprised to see three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran to meet them. He prostrated himself with his face on the ground in respect. ³ He said to one of them, “Lord, if you are pleased with me, stay here for a little while. ⁴ Allow my servants to bring a little water and wash your feet, and then rest under this tree. ⁵ Since you have come here to me, allow me to bring you some food so that you can gain strength before you leave.” The men replied, “All right, do as you have said.” ⁶ Then Abraham hurried into the tent and said to Sarah, “Quick, get twenty kilograms of our best flour and make some bread!” ⁷ Then he ran to the herd of cattle and selected a calf whose meat would be tender and tasty. He gave it to one of his servants, who hurried to kill and cook it. ⁸ When the meat was cooked, Abraham brought some curds, milk, and the meat that the servant had prepared. He placed them in front of them. Then he stood near them under a tree while they ate. ⁹ After they ate, they asked him, “Where is Sarah, your wife?” He replied, “She is in the tent.” ¹⁰ Then the leader of the group said, “I will return to you in the springtime next year, and listen, your wife Sarah will have an infant son.” It happened that Sarah was listening at the entrance of the tent, which was behind the man who was speaking. ¹¹ Now Abraham and Sarah were very old,

and Sarah was far past the time of child-bearing. ¹² So Sarah laughed to herself, thinking, "My body is worn out, and my husband is old. So how can I have the pleasure of having a baby?" ¹³ Yahweh said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh? Why was she thinking, 'I am too old, so how can I bear a child'?" ¹⁴ Is there anything too difficult for me? I will return about this time next year in the springtime, the time I have fixed, and Sarah will have an infant son." ¹⁵ Then Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, "I did not laugh." But Yahweh said, "Do not deny it! You did laugh."

¹⁶ When the three men got up to leave, they looked down into the valley toward the city of Sodom. Abraham was walking with them to say "Farewell" to them. ¹⁷ Yahweh said to himself, "It is not right for me to prevent Abraham from knowing what I plan to do. ¹⁸ Abraham's descendants will become a great and powerful people group. And people of all people groups will be blessed because of what I do for him. ¹⁹ I have chosen him in order that he will direct his children and their families so that they will obey me and do what is right and fair, so that I will do for Abraham what I have promised to do for him." ²⁰ So Yahweh said to Abraham, "I have heard the terrible things that some people have been saying about the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. Their sins are very great. ²¹ So I will go down now, and I will see if all the terrible things that I have heard are true or not true." ²² Then the two other men turned and started walking toward Sodom. But Abraham kept standing in front of Yahweh. ²³ Abraham came closer to him and said, "Will you really destroy people who have done nothing wrong along with the wicked ones? ²⁴ What will you do if there are fifty people in the city who have done nothing wrong? Will you really destroy them all, and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty

righteous people who have done nothing wrong? ²⁵ Certainly you would not do such a thing, to kill good people along with wicked ones, and treat good people and wicked people the same way. You could not do that, because you, who are the judge of everyone on the earth, will certainly do what is right regarding the people of Sodom!" ²⁶ Yahweh replied, "If I find fifty people in Sodom who have done nothing wrong, I will spare the whole place for their sake." ²⁷ Abraham replied, "I should not be bold like this and speak to you, my Lord, because I am as worthless as dust and ashes. ²⁸ But what will you do if there are only forty-five people who have done nothing wrong? Will you destroy everyone in the whole city because there are only forty-five and not fifty good people?" Yahweh replied, "I will not destroy it if I find that there are forty-five good people." ²⁹ Abraham continued to speak to him like this, saying, "What will you do if you find that there are only forty good people there?" Yahweh replied, "I will not destroy them all, for the sake of the forty." ³⁰ Abraham said, "Please do not be angry now. Let me speak again. What will you do if there are only thirty good people?" He replied, "I will not do it if I find that there are thirty there." ³¹ Abraham said, "I should not be bold and speak to you like this, my Lord. But what will you do if you find that there are only twenty good people there?" He replied, "I will not destroy the whole city, for the sake of those twenty." ³² Finally, Abraham said, "My Lord, do not be angry now. Just let me speak one time more. What will you do if you find that there are only ten good people there?" Yahweh answered, "I will not destroy the city for the sake of those ten." ³³ Abraham said no more. As soon as Yahweh finished speaking with Abraham, he left, and Abraham went home.

Chapter 19

¹ That evening, the two angels arrived in Sodom. Lot was sitting at the gateway of the city. When he saw them, he got up to greet them and prostrated himself with his face on the ground. ² He said to them, "Gentlemen, please stay in my house tonight. You can wash your feet, and early tomorrow you can continue your journey." But they said, "No, we will just sleep in the city square." ³ But Lot kept insisting strongly that they sleep in his house. So they entered his house with him, and he prepared a meal for them. He baked some bread without yeast, and they ate it. ⁴ After they finished eating, before they went to bed, the men of the city of Sodom, all of them, from the young ones to the old ones, surrounded the house. ⁵ They called out to Lot, saying, "Where are the men who came to your house this evening? Bring them out, so that we can sleep with them!" ⁶ Lot went outside the house and shut the door behind him, so that they could not go inside. ⁷ He said to them, "My friends, do not do such an evil thing!" ⁸ Listen to me. I have two daughters who have never slept with any man. Let me bring them out to you now, and you can do with them whatever pleases you. But do not do anything to these men, because they are guests in my house, so I must protect them!" ⁹ But they replied, "Get out of our way! You are a foreigner; so you have no right to tell us what is right! We will do worse things to you than we will do to them!" Then they lunged toward Lot, and tried forcefully to break down the door. ¹⁰ But the two angels opened the door carefully, reached out their hands, and pulled Lot inside the house. Then they quickly shut the door. ¹¹ Then they caused all the men who were outside the door of the house, young and old, to become blind, so that they could

not find the door. ¹² Then the two angels said to Lot, "Who else is with you here? If you have sons or sons-in-law or daughters or anyone else in the city who is related to you, take them out of the city, ¹³ because we are going to destroy this place. Yahweh has heard many terrible things that some people have said about this city, and he has sent us to destroy it." ¹⁴ So Lot went and spoke to the men who had pledged to marry his daughters. He said to them, "Hurry! Get out of this city, because Yahweh is about to destroy it!" But his future sons-in-law thought he was joking. ¹⁵ As it was about to dawn the next morning, the two angels urged Lot, saying, "Get up quickly! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here with you and leave! If you do not, you will be swept away when we destroy the city!" ¹⁶ When Lot hesitated, the angels grasped his hand and his wife's hand and the hands of his two daughters. They led them outside the city safely. The angels did that because Yahweh was acting mercifully toward them. ¹⁷ When they were outside the city, one of the angels said, "If you want to stay alive, run away quickly! Do not look back! And do not stop anywhere in the valley! Flee to the hills! If you do not, you will die!" ¹⁸ But Lot said to one of them, "No, sir, do not make me do that!" ¹⁹ Please, listen. You have been pleased with me and have been very kind to me and spared my life. But I cannot flee to the mountain. If I try to do that, I will die in this disaster. ²⁰ Listen to me. There is a town nearby. Let me run there now. It is only a small town, and if you do not destroy it, our lives will be saved if we go there." ²¹ One of the angels said to Lot, "I will allow you to do what you have requested. And I will not destroy the town you are talking about. ²² But hurry! Run there, because I cannot destroy anything until you arrive." People later called the

name of the town Zoar, which means ‘not-important,’ because Lot said that it was a small village.

²³ As the sun was rising, Lot and his family arrived in the town which is now called Zoar. ²⁴ Then Yahweh caused fire and burning sulfur to fall down on Sodom and Gomorrah like rain from the sky. ²⁵ In that way, he destroyed those cities and all the people who were living in those cities. He also destroyed everything in the valley, including all the plants. ²⁶ But Lot’s wife stopped and looked back to see what was happening, so she died, and her body later became a pillar of salt.

²⁷ That morning, Abraham got up and went to the place where he had stood in front of Yahweh. ²⁸ He looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and he was surprised to see that all over the valley, smoke was rising, like the smoke of a huge furnace.

²⁹ So when God destroyed those cities in the valley, he did not forget to help Abraham, and he rescued Lot from the disaster that occurred in the cities where Lot lived.

³⁰ Lot was afraid to stay in Zoar, so he left there and moved with his two daughters to the mountain, and they lived in a cave.

³¹ One day the older daughter said to the younger daughter, “Our father is old, and there is no man in this area who will sleep with us, as people all over the earth do.

³² Let us make our father drink wine until he gets drunk. Then we can sleep with him without him knowing it. In that way he will cause us to become pregnant and we can bear children who will be our father’s descendants.” ³³ So that night they caused their father to become drunk. And the older daughter went in and slept with her father, but he was so drunk that he did not know when she lay down with him or when she got up. ³⁴ The next

day, his older daughter said to his younger daughter, “Listen to me. Last night I slept with our father. Let us cause him to become drunk again tonight! This time you can go and sleep with him. If he sleeps with you, you can become pregnant, and that way you can have a child, too.” ³⁵ So that night, they caused their father to become drunk with wine again, and then his younger daughter went and slept with him. But again, he was so drunk that he did not know when she lay down with him or when she got up. ³⁶ So Lot caused his two daughters to become pregnant. ³⁷ The older one later gave birth to a son, whom she named Moab. He became the ancestor of the Moab people group. ³⁸ The younger one also gave birth to a son, whom she named Ben-Ammi. He became the ancestor of the people that are now called the Ammon people group.

Chapter 20

¹ Abraham left Mamre and moved southwest to the Negev desert. There he lived between Kadesh and Shur. He lived as a foreigner in the town of Gerar. ² While he was there, he told people that Sarah was his sister, not his wife. Then King Abimelech of Gerar sent some of his men to get Sarah, and they brought her to him to be his wife. ³ But God appeared to Abimelech in a dream during the night and said to him, “Listen to me! You are going to die because the woman you took is another man’s wife.” ⁴ But Abimelech had not slept with her, so he said, “Lord, since the people of my nation and I are innocent, will you kill us?” ⁵ Abraham told me, ‘She is my sister,’ and she also said, ‘He is my brother.’ I did not intend to do anything wrong; neither have I done anything wrong.” ⁶ God said to him, “Yes, I know that you did not want to do

anything wrong. That is why I prevented you from sinning against me. I did not allow you to touch her. ⁷ Therefore, return this man's wife to her husband, because he is a prophet. He will pray for you so that you may live. But if you do not return her to him, you will certainly die, and all the members of your household will also certainly die." ⁸ Early the next morning, Abimelech summoned all his officials and told them everything that had happened. When they heard that, his men were very afraid that God would punish them. ⁹ Abimelech then summoned Abraham, and said to him, "You should not have done that to us! Did I do something wrong to you? Did I make you want me and my people to become guilty of a great sin? You have done things to me that you should not have done!" ¹⁰ Why did you do this?" ¹¹ Abraham replied, "I said that she was my sister because I thought, 'The people in this place certainly do not respect God. Certainly they do whatever wrong things they wish. So they will kill me to get my wife.' ¹² Besides, Sarah really can be considered my sister, because she is the daughter of my father, although she is not the daughter of my mother. She is the daughter of another woman, and I married her. ¹³ Later, when God told me to move away from my father's household, I said to her, 'This is the way you can show that you are faithful to me: Everywhere we go, say about me, "This is my brother."'" ¹⁴ So Abimelech brought some sheep and cattle and gave them to Abraham. He also gave him some male and female slaves. Then he returned Abraham's wife Sarah to him. ¹⁵ And Abimelech said to him, "Look! My land is in front of you. Live in whatever place you wish!" ¹⁶ And he said to Sarah, "Look! I am giving a thousand pieces of silver to your brother. This is to ensure that no one will bring up this matter again and say that you have

done anything wrong." ¹⁷ Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech's wife and his slave girls so that they could have children. ¹⁸ This was because Yahweh had caused it to be impossible for any of the women in Abimelech's household to bear children, because Abimelech had taken Abraham's wife Sarah.

Chapter 21

¹ Yahweh acted very kindly toward Sarah, just as he said he would do. He did for Sarah exactly what he promised to do, ² for she became pregnant and gave birth to a son for Abraham when he was very old, at the time God promised it would happen. ³ Abraham gave the name "Isaac" to the son Sarah delivered. ⁴ He also circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, just as God had commanded him to do. ⁵ Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born. ⁶ Sarah said, "Although I was sad before because I did not have any children, God has now enabled me to laugh with joy, and everyone who hears about what God has done for me will laugh with me." ⁷ She also said, "No one would have said to Abraham that some day I would nurse a child, but I have given birth to a son when Abraham is very old."

⁸ The baby grew. The day came when he was taken off his mother's milk. On that day, Abraham prepared a large feast to celebrate. ⁹ One day Sarah noticed that Hagar's son Ishmael was making fun of Isaac. ¹⁰ So she said to Abraham, "Get rid of that slave woman from Egypt and her son! I do not want the son of that slave woman to take what my son Isaac will inherit." ¹¹ Abraham was very upset about the matter, because he was also concerned about his son Ishmael. ¹² But

God said to Abraham, "Do not be upset about your son, Ishmael, and about your servant Hagar. Listen to everything that Sarah tells you to do, and do it, because Isaac is the one who will be the forefather of the descendants I promised to give you.

¹³ But I will also cause the son of your servant Hagar to be the ancestor of a great people group, because he is also your son."

¹⁴ So Abraham got up early the next morning. He got some food ready, put water in a bag, and gave it to Hagar. He put the bag on her shoulder, handed her Ishmael, and sent them away into the wilderness of Beersheba.

¹⁵ After Hagar and her son had drunk all the water in the bag, she put the boy under one of the bushes there. ¹⁶ Then she went and sat nearby, about as far as someone can shoot an arrow. She thought, "I cannot endure seeing my son die!" As she sat there, she began to cry loudly. ¹⁷

Soon God heard the sound of Ishmael, so he sent one of his angels to call out from heaven to Hagar. He said, "Hagar, what is the matter with you? Do not be afraid, because God has heard the boy crying there.

¹⁸ Go lift the boy up and help him be brave, because I will cause his descendants to become a great people group." ¹⁹ Then God showed her a well of water. So she went to the well and filled the container with water, and gave the boy a drink.

²⁰ God helped the boy as he grew up in the wilderness, and he became a good archer.

²¹ He lived in the wilderness of Paran. Hagar got a wife for him from Egypt.

²² At that time, King Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, said to Abraham, "It is clear that God helps you in all that you do. ²³ So now, solemnly promise to me here, as God is listening, that you will not deceive me and my children, or my descendants. Act faithfully toward me and toward all the people here in the coun-

try where you are now living. Act faithfully toward me, as I have acted toward you." ²⁴ So Abraham swore an oath to do that.

²⁵ Abraham also complained to Abimelech about one of Abraham's wells of water that Abimelech's servants had taken control of. ²⁶ But Abimelech said, "I do not know who has done that. You did not tell me previously, and I did not hear about it until today." ²⁷ So Abraham brought some sheep and cattle and gave them to Abimelech, and the two of them solemnly agreed to have peace between themselves.

²⁸ Abraham went to his flock and chose seven female lambs from it. ²⁹ Abimelech asked Abraham, "Why have you taken these seven female lambs from your flock?" ³⁰ Abraham replied, "I want you to accept these female lambs from me. In this way, my gift to you will be proof to everyone that this well belongs to me because I dug it." ³¹ So Abimelech accepted the lambs. Then Abraham named that place Beersheba, which means 'Well of the oath,' because he and Abimelech had sworn an oath there to be peaceful toward each other. ³² After they made the treaty at Beersheba, Abimelech and his army commander, Phicol, left and returned to the land of the Philistines. ³³

Abraham planted a tamarisk tree there, and there he worshiped Yahweh, the eternal God. ³⁴ Abraham stayed as an outsider in the land of the Philistine people for a long time.

Chapter 22

¹ Several years later, God tested Abraham to find out whether Abraham would obey him. He called out to Abraham, and Abraham replied, "I am here." ² God said, "Your son, Isaac, whom you love very

much, is the only son I promised to give you. Take him with you and go together to the land of Moriah, and go up a mountain I will show you, and offer him as a burnt offering.” ³ So Abraham got up early the next morning, put a saddle on his donkey, and took with him two of his servants along with his son, Isaac. He also chopped some wood for a fire for a burnt offering. Then they started traveling to the place God told him about. ⁴ On the third day that they were traveling, Abraham looked up and saw in the distance the place where God wanted him to go. ⁵ Abraham said to his servants, “You two stay here with the donkey while the boy and I go over there. We will worship God there, and then we will come back to you.” ⁶ Then Abraham took the wood to start a fire for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac for him to carry. Abraham carried in his hand something for starting a fire. He also carried a knife, and the two of them walked along together. ⁷ Then Isaac spoke to his father Abraham, saying, “My father.” Abraham replied, “Yes, my son, I am here!” Isaac said, “Look, we have wood and coals to light a fire, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” ⁸ Abraham replied, “My son, God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering.” So the two of them continued walking along together. ⁹ They arrived at the place God had told him about. There, Abraham built a stone altar and arranged the wood on top of it. Then he tied his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then Abraham took the knife and reached out to kill his son. ¹¹ But the angel of Yahweh called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham! Abraham!” Abraham replied, “I am here!” ¹² The angel said, “Do not harm the boy, because now I know that you respect and obey God. I know this because you have not refused to sacrifice your only son.”

¹³ Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram nearby, in a thicket that had caught its horns. So Abraham went over and grabbed the ram and killed it, and sacrificed it on the altar as a burnt offering, instead of his son. ¹⁴ Abraham named that place “Yahweh will provide.” To the present day people say, “On Yahweh’s mountain, he will provide.”

¹⁵ The angel of Yahweh called out to Abraham from heaven a second time. ¹⁶ He said, “I, Yahweh, declare to you that you did what I told you, and you have not held back your only son. So I solemnly swear, with myself as my witness, ¹⁷ that some day your descendants will be as many as the stars in the sky and the grains of sand on the seashore. Your descendants will defeat their enemies and capture their cities. ¹⁸ You obeyed me, so by means of your descendants the people of all the nations on the earth will be blessed.” ¹⁹ Then Abraham and Isaac returned to where his servants were waiting, and they went back together to Beersheba, and Abraham and his people continued to stay there.

²⁰ After these things happened, someone told Abraham, “Your brother Nahor’s wife, Milkah, has also given birth to children.”

²¹ Now the oldest son was Uz. The next was Buz. After him was Kemuel, the father of Aram. ²² After Kemuel was Kesed, then Hazo, then Pildash, then Jidlaph, then Bethuel. ²³ Bethuel was the father of Rebekah. Those were the eight sons of Milkah, wife of Abraham’s brother, Nahor. ²⁴ Nahor also had a concubine, whose name was Beumah. She gave birth to four sons: Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.

Chapter 23

¹ When Sarah was 127 years old, ² she

died at the city of Kiriath Arba, which is now called Hebron, in the land of Canaan. Then Abraham mourned over her.³ He left the body of his wife and spoke to some of the descendants of Heth. He said,⁴ "I am a temporary settler living among you, so I do not own any land here. Sell me some land here so that I can bury my wife's body."⁵ They replied to him,⁶ "Sir, you are a powerful man among us. Choose one of our finest tombs and bury your wife's body in it. None of us will refuse to sell land to you for a tomb for your wife's body."⁷ Then Abraham stood up and bowed in respect in front of the people who owned the land, the descendants of Heth.⁸ He said to them, "If you say that you are willing for me to bury my wife's body here, listen to me, and ask Ephron son of Zohar,⁹ to sell me the cave in the Machpelah area, which is at the end of his field. Ask him to sell it to me for the full price he wants, and to sell it to me in front of you all. In this way I can have a burial ground."¹⁰ Now Ephron was sitting among the people at the city gate where many descendants of Heth had gathered. He had heard what Abraham said to them.¹¹ Ephron said, "No, sir, listen to me. I will give to you the field and the cave in it, without charge, with the people here as witnesses. Please bury your wife there."¹² Abraham again bowed before the people who lived in the land,¹³ and said to Ephron, as all the others were listening, "No, listen to me. If you are willing, I will pay for the field. You tell me what the price is, and I will give it to you. If you accept it, the field will become mine, and I can bury my wife's body there."¹⁴ Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him,¹⁵ "Sir, listen to me. The land is worth four hundred pieces of silver. But the price is not important to you and me. Give me the money and bury your wife's body there."¹⁶ Abra-

ham agreed with Ephron about the price, and weighed for Ephron the four hundred pieces of silver he had suggested, as everyone was listening. He used the standard weights for silver used by people who sold things.

¹⁷ So Ephron's field in the Machpelah area, near Mamre, and the cave in the field, and all the trees that were in the field and those marking the land's boundary, they all became Abraham's possession.¹⁸ This is how Abraham bought the property, as all the descendants of Heth were listening there at the city gate.¹⁹ After that, Abraham buried his wife Sarah's body in the cave in the field in the Machpelah area near Mamre, which is now called Hebron, in the land of Canaan.²⁰ So the field and the cave in it were officially sold to Abraham by the descendants of Heth, for him to use as a burial ground.

Chapter 24

¹ Abraham was now a very old man. Yahweh had blessed Abraham in many ways.

² One day Abraham said to the chief servant of his household, the man who was in charge of all Abraham owned, "Put your hand between my thighs to solemnly promise you will do what I tell you."³ Knowing that Yahweh, God who created the heavens and the earth, is listening, promise that you will not get a wife for my son, Isaac, from the daughters of the Canaan people among whom I am now living.⁴ Instead, go to my country and to my relatives. Get a wife for my son Isaac from among them."⁵ The servant asked him, "If I find a woman among your relatives, what should I do if she is not willing to come back with me to this land? Should I take your son back there to the country you came from, so he can find a

wife and live there?" ⁶ Abraham replied to him, "No! Be certain that you do not take my son there! ⁷ Yahweh, the God who created the heavens, brought me here. He brought me from my father's household and from the land where my relatives lived. He spoke to me and made a solemn promise to me. He said, 'I will give this land of Canaan to your descendants.' He will send an angel who will go there ahead of you and enable you to get a wife for my son and bring her to live here. ⁸ But if the woman you find will not come back with you, you are free to disregard the promise you are making. The only thing that you must not do is to take my son to live there." ⁹ So the servant put his hand between Abraham's thighs and made a solemn promise about the matter.

¹⁰ Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and loaded them with all kinds of goods that his master gave him to take along. Then he left to go to Aram Naharaim, which is in northern Mesopotamia. He arrived in the city of Nahor. ¹¹ When the servant arrived at Nahor, it was in late afternoon, at the time when the women go to the well to get water. He made the camels kneel down near the well, which was outside the city. ¹² The servant prayed, "Yahweh, God whom my master Abraham worships, enable me to be successful today! Keep faith with my master, Abraham! ¹³ Listen to me. I am standing near a well of water, and the daughters of the people of the city are coming to get water. ¹⁴ I am asking you this: I will say to one of the girls, 'Please lower your jar so that I may drink some water.' If she says, 'Drink some water, and I will draw some water for your camels, too,' I will know that she is the woman whom you chose to be a wife for your servant, Isaac, and I will know that you have kept faith with my master." ¹⁵ Before he finished praying, a young woman

named Rebekah arrived there, carrying a jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milkah, the wife of Abraham's younger brother Nahor. ¹⁶ She was very beautiful and a virgin. No man had ever slept with her. She went down to the edge of the well, filled her jar with water, and then came back up. ¹⁷ Abraham's servant immediately ran to meet her, and said, "Please give me a little water from your jar." ¹⁸ She replied, "Drink some, sir!" She lowered her jar from her shoulder to her hands and gave him a drink. ¹⁹ After she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will also get some water for your camels, until they have had enough to drink." ²⁰ She quickly emptied the water in her jar into the animals' water trough. Then she ran back to the well, and kept getting water for all the camels. ²¹ The servant just watched her, without saying anything. He wanted to know if Yahweh had caused his trip to be successful or not. ²² Finally, after the camels finished drinking, the servant took out a gold nose ring that weighed six grams, and two gold bracelets for her arms, each weighing about 110 grams, gave them to Rebekah, and told her to put them on. ²³ Then he said, "Tell me whose daughter you are. Also, tell me, is there room in your father's house for me and my men to sleep there tonight?" ²⁴ She replied, "My father's name is Bethuel. He is the son of Nahor and his wife Milkah. ²⁵ Yes, we have room where you all can sleep tonight, and we also have plenty of straw and grain to feed the camels." ²⁶ The servant bowed and worshiped Yahweh. ²⁷ He said, "I thank Yahweh, God whom my master Abraham worships. He has continued to show that he is faithful and trustworthy toward my master. Yahweh led me on this journey straight to the house of my master's relatives!" ²⁸ The girl ran and told everyone in her mother's household about what had happened. ²⁹

Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban. Laban went quickly to the servant, who was outside by the well. ³⁰ He was surprised to have seen the nose ring and the bracelets on his sister's arms and to have heard Rebekah tell what the man had said to her. So he went out and saw the man standing near the camels, close to the well. ³¹ He said to the man, "You who have been blessed by Yahweh, come! Why are you standing out here? I have prepared a room for you in the house, and a place for the camels to stay." ³² So the servant went to the house, and Laban's servants unloaded the camels. They brought straw and grain for the camels, and water for him and the men with him to wash their feet. ³³ They set food in front of him for him to eat, but he said, "I will not eat until I tell you what I need to tell you." So Laban said, "Tell us!" ³⁴ So the servant said, "I am Abraham's servant. ³⁵ Yahweh has greatly blessed my master so that he has become very rich. Yahweh has given him many sheep and cattle, a lot of gold and silver, male and female servants, camels and donkeys. ³⁶ My master's wife, Sarah, bore a son for him when she was very old, and my master has given to his son everything he owns. ³⁷ My master made me solemnly promise, saying, 'Do not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaan people, in whose land we are living. ³⁸ Instead, go back to my father's family, to my own clan, and get from them a wife for my son.' ³⁹ Then I asked my master, 'What shall I do if the woman they give me will not come back with me?' ⁴⁰ He replied, 'Yahweh, whom I have always obeyed, will send his angel with you, and he will cause your journey to be successful. He will make you able to get a wife for my son from my clan, from my father's family. ⁴¹ But if my clan refuses to allow her to return with you, you will be freed from being cursed because

you could not obey me.'

⁴² When I came today to the well, I prayed, 'Yahweh, God whom my master, Abraham, worships, if you are going to make me successful on this journey, please do this for me: ⁴³ I am standing alongside a well, where girls will come to draw water. I am asking you that if I say to a girl, "Please, give me a little water to drink from your jar," ⁴⁴ and if she says to me, "Certainly, drink some, and I will also draw some water for your camels," then let that be the woman whom you have chosen for my master's son!' ⁴⁵ Before I finished praying, Rebekah approached with her water jar on her shoulder. She went down to the well and got some water. I said to her, 'Please give me a drink!' ⁴⁶ She quickly lowered her jar and said, 'Drink some! And I will draw water for your camels, too.' So I drank some water, and she also got water for the camels. ⁴⁷ Then I asked her, 'Whose daughter are you?' She said, 'The daughter of Bethuel, the son of Nahor and his wife, Milkah.' I had her put the ring in her nose and put the bracelets on her arms. ⁴⁸ Then I bowed and worshiped Yahweh, and I thanked Yahweh God, the one my master Abraham worships, the one who led me on the right road to get the granddaughter of my master's brother to be a wife for my master's son. ⁴⁹ Now, if you act faithfully toward my master as part of his extended family, tell me that you will do what I am asking. If you will not do that, tell me that also, so I may know what to do." ⁵⁰ Laban and Bethuel answered, "This clearly has come from Yahweh. So we two cannot say that it is the right thing or the wrong thing to do. ⁵¹ Rebekah is here in front of you. Take her and go, and let her be a wife for your master's son, just as Yahweh has indicated."

⁵² When Abraham's servant heard these words, he bowed down to the ground to

Yahweh. ⁵³ Then the servant brought out silver and gold jewelry and clothes, and gave them to Rebekah. And he gave gifts to her brother Laban and to her mother. ⁵⁴ Then they ate a meal and drank. The men who were with Abraham's servant also slept there that night. The next morning, the servant said, "Allow me now to return to my master." ⁵⁵ But her brother and her mother replied, "Let the girl remain with us for about ten days. After that, you may take her and go." ⁵⁶ But he replied to them, "Yahweh has made my journey successful, so do not delay me. Let me take her back to my master now!" ⁵⁷ They said, "Let us call the girl and ask her to say what she wants to do." ⁵⁸ So they summoned Rebekah and asked her, "Will you go with this man now?" She replied, "Yes, I will go." ⁵⁹ So they sent Rebekah, along with the female servant who had cared for her all her life, to go with Abraham's servant and the men who had come with him. ⁶⁰ Then they asked God to bless Rebekah and said to her, "Our sister, we ask that Yahweh will cause you to have millions of descendants, and allow them to completely defeat all those that hate them." ⁶¹ Then Rebekah and her servant girls got ready. They got on their camels and went with Abraham's servant. He took Rebekah and left.

⁶² Now Isaac was living in the southern Judean wilderness. He had come from Beer Lahai Roi. ⁶³ One evening he went out into the field to meditate as he walked. He looked up and was surprised to see some camels coming. ⁶⁴ Rebekah also looked up and saw Isaac. She got off the camel ⁶⁵ and asked the servant, "Who is that man who is approaching?" The servant replied, "That is Isaac, my master." So she took her veil and covered her face, in order to show modesty in front of him. ⁶⁶ The servant told Isaac all that had happened. ⁶⁷ Then Isaac took Rebekah into

the tent that had belonged to his mother, Sarah, and she became his wife. He loved her. In this way Isaac was comforted about his mother's death.

Chapter 25

¹ Some time after Sarah died, Abraham married another woman, whose name was Keturah. ² She later gave birth to six sons: Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. ³ Jokshan became the father of two sons, Sheba and Dedan. The descendants of Dedan were the people groups of the Assyrians, the Letush, and the Leum. ⁴ The sons of Midian were Ephah, Ephher, Hanok, Abida, and Eldaah. They were all descendants of Keturah.

⁵ Abraham declared that after he died, Isaac would inherit everything he owned. ⁶ But while Abraham was still living, he gave gifts to the sons of his concubines and sent them away to live in a land to the east, to keep them far from his son. ⁷ Abraham lived until he was 175 years old. ⁸ He died at a very old age and joined his ancestors who had died previously. ⁹ His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried his body in the cave at Machpelah area, near Mamre, in the field that Abraham had bought from Ephron son of Zohar, a descendant of Heth. ¹⁰ It was there that Isaac and Ishmael buried his body, where Abraham previously buried the body of his wife Sarah. ¹¹ After Abraham died, God blessed his son Isaac. Isaac continued living near Beer Lahai Roi.

¹² These are those who descended from Abraham's son, Ishmael, whom Sarah's female slave, Hagar from Egypt, gave birth to. ¹³ These were their names, in the order in which they were born: Ishmael's oldest son was named Nebaioth. After him were born Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, ¹⁴

Mishma, Dumah, Massa, ¹⁵ Hadar, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. ¹⁶ The twelve sons of Ishmael became the leaders of the tribes that had those names. They each had their own settlement and campsite. ¹⁷ Ishmael lived until he was 137 years old. Then he died and joined his ancestors who had previously died. ¹⁸ His descendants settled in the area between Shur and Havilah, near the border of Egypt as a person travels toward Asshur. But they did not live in peace together.

¹⁹ This is what happened concerning Abraham's son, Isaac. Abraham became the father of Isaac. ²⁰ When Isaac was forty years old, he married Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel. Bethuel was one of the descendants of Aram from Paddan Aram. Rebekah was the sister of Laban, who belonged to the Aram people. ²¹ For a long time after they were married, Rebekah still had no children. So Isaac prayed to Yahweh concerning his wife, and Yahweh answered his prayer. His wife Rebekah became pregnant. ²² There were two babies in her womb, and they kept jostling each other. So she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she asked Yahweh about it. ²³ Yahweh said to her, "Two nations will come from the twins within you. And those two nations will separate from each other, and one will be stronger than the other. And the older will serve the younger."

²⁴ When Rebekah gave birth, it was true! Twin boys were born! ²⁵ The first one born was red, and his body had hair all over it, like a garment made of hair. So they named him Esau. ²⁶ Then his brother was born, grasping Esau's heel. So they named him Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when the twins were born.

²⁷ When the boys grew up, Esau became a very good hunter of wild animals. He

spent a lot of time out in the fields. However, Jacob was a quiet man who stayed close to the campsite. ²⁸ Isaac liked Esau more, because he enjoyed the taste of the meat of the animals that Esau killed. But Rebekah liked Jacob more.

²⁹ One day while Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came home from the field, very hungry. ³⁰ He said to Jacob, "Give me some of that red stew to eat right now, because I am starving!" (That is why Esau's other name was Edom.) ³¹ Jacob said, "I will give you some if you sell me your right as firstborn to inherit most of our father's wealth." ³² Esau replied, "Well, I am about to die from being so hungry. If I die now, my rights will not help me." ³³ Jacob said, "Swear to me that you are giving me your rights as firstborn!" So that is what Esau did. He sold his firstborn rights to Jacob. ³⁴ Then Jacob gave to Esau some bread and some stew made of lentils. Esau ate and drank, and then he got up and left. By doing that, Esau showed that he was not interested in his rights as firstborn.

Chapter 26

¹ Some time later there was a severe famine in the land. That was different from the famine that occurred when Abraham was alive. So Isaac went southeast to the city of Gerar to talk to Abimelech, the king of the Philistine people. ² But Yahweh appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt! Live in the land that I tell you! ³ Stay in this land, and I will help you and bless you, because it is to you and your descendants that I will give all these lands, and I will do what I solemnly promised to your father. ⁴ I will cause your descendants to be as numerous as the stars in the sky. I will give to your descendants all these lands, and I will cause

your descendants to be a blessing to all the people groups on the earth. ⁵ I will do that because Abraham obeyed me. He obeyed all that I told him to do, all that I commanded him to do, all that I declared and all the laws that I gave him.”

⁶ So Isaac stayed in Gerar along with his wife and sons.

⁷ When the men in Gerar asked who that woman was, Isaac said, “She is my sister.” He said that because he was afraid to say, “She is my wife.” He thought, “Rebekah is very beautiful, so they will want her. They will kill me to get her.” ⁸ When Isaac had been there a long time, one day Abimelech, the king of the Philistine people, looked down from a window in his palace and was surprised to see Isaac caressing his wife Rebekah. ⁹ So Abimelech summoned Isaac and said to him, “Now I realize that she is really your wife! So why did you say, ‘She is my sister’?” Isaac replied to him, “I said that because I thought that someone here might kill me to get her.” ¹⁰ Abimelech said, “You should not have done this to us! One of our people might have slept with your wife, and you would have caused us to be guilty of a great sin!” ¹¹ Then Abimelech commanded all his people, saying, “Do not harm this man or his wife! Anyone who does that will surely be executed!”

¹² Isaac planted grain in that land that year, and he harvested a very large crop, because Yahweh had blessed him. ¹³ Isaac continued to acquire more and more possessions, until finally he became very wealthy. ¹⁴ He had large herds of sheep, goats, and cattle, and many slaves. Because of that, the Philistine people envied him. ¹⁵ So all the wells that the servants of his father Abraham had dug, the people filled up with earth. ¹⁶ Then Abimelech said to Isaac, “You have become more numerous than we are, so I want you to leave

from our area.” ¹⁷ So Isaac and his family moved from there. They went and set up their tents in the Valley of Gerar and settled there. ¹⁸ There were several wells in that area that had been dug when Isaac’s father Abraham was living, but Philistine people had filled them up with earth after Abraham died. But Isaac and his servants dug the wells out again, and Isaac gave the wells the same names that his father had given to them. ¹⁹ Isaac’s servants dug in the valley and discovered a well of fresh water. ²⁰ But the men who herded animals in the Valley of Gerar argued with the men who took care of Isaac’s animals. They said, “The water in this well is ours!” So Isaac named the well Esek, which means “dispute,” because they disputed about who owned it. ²¹ Then Isaac’s servants dug another well, but they quarreled about who owned that one also. So Isaac named it Sitnah, which means “opposition.” ²² They moved on from there and dug another well, but this time no one quarreled about who owned it. So he named it Rehoboth, which means “empty place,” saying, “Yahweh has given us an empty place to live in, a place that is not wanted by other people, and we will become very prosperous here.”

²³ From there Isaac went up to Beersheba.

²⁴ The first night that he was there, Yahweh appeared to him and said, “I am the God whom your father Abraham worshiped. Do not be afraid of anything. I will help you and bless you, and because of what I promised my servant Abraham, I will greatly increase the number of your descendants.” ²⁵ So Isaac built an altar there and offered a sacrifice to worship Yahweh. He set up their tents there, and his servants started to dig a well.

²⁶ While they were digging the well, King Abimelech came to Isaac from Gerar, along with Ahuzzath, his advisor, and Ph-

icol, the commander of his army. ²⁷ Isaac asked them, "You acted in a hostile way toward me before and sent me away. So why have you come to me now?" ²⁸ One of them answered, "We have seen that Yahweh helps you. So we said to each other, 'We should have an agreement between ourselves and Isaac.' So we should make a peace treaty with you, ²⁹ stating that you will not harm us, in the same way that we did not molest you. We always treated you well, and we sent you away peacefully. And now Yahweh is blessing you." ³⁰ So Isaac made a feast for them, and they all ate and drank. ³¹ Early the next morning they all swore to each other that they would do what they had promised. Then Isaac sent them home peacefully.

³² That day Isaac's servants came to him and told him about the well that they had finished digging. They said, "We found water in the well!" ³³ Isaac named the well Shibah, which sounds like the Hebrew word that means "oath." To the present time the town there has the name Beersheba which means "peace treaty well."

³⁴ When Esau was forty years old, he married Judith, the daughter of Beeri, and Basemath, the daughter of Elon. Both of those women were descendants of Heth, not from Isaac's clan. ³⁵ Esau's two wives made life miserable for Isaac and Rebekah.

Chapter 27

¹ When Isaac was old, he became almost blind. One day he summoned Esau, his firstborn son, and said to him, "My son?" He replied, "Here I am!" ² Isaac said, "Listen to me. I am very old, and I do not know when I will die. ³ So take now your bow and quiver full of arrows and go out into

the countryside, and hunt for a wild animal for me. ⁴ Kill one and prepare the kind of tasty meat that I like. Then bring it to me so that after I eat it, I can give you a blessing before I die." ⁵ Rebekah was listening as Isaac said that to his son, Esau. So when Esau left the tent to go hunting, ⁶ Rebekah said to her son, Jacob, "Listen to me. I heard your father talking to your brother, Esau, saying, ⁷ 'Go and kill some wild animal and bring it here, and prepare the meat in a tasty way, so that I may eat it. Then before I die I will give you my blessing while Yahweh is listening.' ⁸ So now, my son, do what I am telling you. ⁹ Go out to the flock and kill two nice young goats and bring the meat to me. Then I will prepare some tasty food for your father, the way he likes it. ¹⁰ Then you can take it to your father, in order that he can eat it, and then he will give you his blessing before he dies."

¹¹ But Jacob said to his mother Rebekah, "My brother Esau's skin has hair all over it, and my skin is not like that! My skin is smooth! ¹² What will happen if my father touches me? He will realize that I am tricking him, and I will bring a curse on myself, not a blessing!" ¹³ His mother said to him, "If that happens, my son, let the curse be on me. You do what I am telling you. Go and get the goats for me!" ¹⁴ So Jacob went and killed two goats and brought them to his mother. Then his mother prepared some tasty food, just the way his father liked. ¹⁵ Then Rebekah took her older son Esau's best clothes that were with her in the tent, and she put them on her younger son Jacob. ¹⁶ She also put the skins of the young goats on his hands and the smooth part of his neck. ¹⁷ Then she put into his hands some bread and the tasty food that she had prepared.

¹⁸ Jacob took it and went to his father and said, "My father!" Isaac replied, "I am

here; which of my sons are you?" ¹⁹ Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau, your first-born son. I did what you told me to do. Sit up and eat some of the meat so that you can bless me." ²⁰ But Isaac asked his son, "My son, how is it that you were able to find and kill an animal so quickly?" Jacob replied, "Because Yahweh, whom you worship, enabled me to be successful." ²¹ Isaac said to Jacob, "Come near to me, my son, so that I can touch you and find out whether you are really my son Esau." ²² So Jacob went close to his father, Isaac. Isaac touched him and said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands feel hairy, like the hands of his older brother, Esau." ²³ Isaac did not recognize him, because he was blind and because Jacob's hands were hairy, like those of his older brother, Esau. So Isaac got ready to bless him. ²⁴ But first Isaac asked, "Are you really my son Esau?" Jacob replied, "Yes, I am." ²⁵ Isaac said, "My son, bring me some of the meat that you have cooked, so that I may eat it and then give you my blessing." So Jacob brought him some, and he ate it. Jacob also brought him some wine, and he drank it. ²⁶ Then his father, Isaac, said to him, "My son, come here and kiss me." ²⁷ So Jacob went to him, and his father kissed him on the cheek. Isaac smelled the smell of the clothes Jacob was wearing. They smelled like Esau's clothes. So he said, "Truly, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that Yahweh has blessed." ²⁸ I ask that God will send down to you dew from heaven to water your fields, and cause you to have abundant crops from the soil, and good harvests of grain, and grapes for wine. ²⁹ I ask that people of many people groups serve you and bow down to you. I ask that you rule over your brothers, and that your mother's descendants also bow down to you. I ask that God curse those who curse you, and bless those who bless you."

³⁰ After Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had just left the room where his father was, his older brother, Esau, returned from hunting. ³¹ Esau cooked some tasty meat and brought it to his father. He said to his father, "My father, please sit up and eat some of the meat that I have cooked, so that you can then give me your blessing!" ³² His father, Isaac, said to him, "Who are you?" He answered, "I am Esau, your firstborn son!" ³³ Then Isaac began to tremble very violently. He said, "Then who is it that brought me some meat from an animal that he had hunted and killed, and I ate it all? He was here just before you came. I blessed him, and I cannot take back that blessing." ³⁴ When Esau heard those words of his father, he cried loudly. He was very disappointed. He said to his father, "My father, bless me, too!" ³⁵ But his father said, "Your brother came, tricked me, and took your blessing!" ³⁶ Esau said, "It is right that his name is Jacob, because he tricked me two times. The first time he took my rights as firstborn, and this time he took my blessing!" Then he asked, "Do you not have any blessing left for me?" ³⁷ Isaac answered and said to Esau, "I have declared that your younger brother will rule over you, and I have declared that all his relatives will serve him. And I have said that God will give him plenty of grain and grapes for wine. So, my son, what can I do for you?" ³⁸ Esau said to his father, "My father, do you have only one blessing? My father, bless me, too!" Then Esau cried very loudly. ³⁹ His father Isaac answered and said to him, "The place where you will live will be far from the fertile soil and from the dew that God sends from heaven to water the fields." ⁴⁰ You will rob and kill people in order to get what you need to live,

and you will be as though you are your brother's slave.

But when you decide to rebel against him, you will free yourself from his control."

⁴¹ Because of the blessing that his father had given to Jacob, Esau hated his brother. Esau said to himself, "After my father dies and we finish mourning for him, I will kill Jacob!" ⁴² But Rebekah found out what her older son, Esau, was thinking. So she summoned her younger son, Jacob, and said to him, "Listen to me. Your older brother, Esau, is comforting himself by planning to kill you, to get revenge for you tricking your father. ⁴³ So now, my son, listen carefully to what I am telling you. Escape quickly and go and stay with my brother Laban, in Haran. ⁴⁴ Stay with him a while, until your older brother is no longer angry. ⁴⁵ When he forgets what you did to him, I will send a message to you to tell you to return from there. If Esau killed you, then others would kill him, and then both my sons would die at the same time!"

⁴⁶ Rebekah then said to Isaac, "These foreign women whom Esau has married, who are descendants of Heth, are making my life miserable. If Jacob also marries a woman from the descendants of Heth in this area, my life will be worthless!"

Chapter 28

¹ Then Isaac summoned Jacob and gave him a blessing. He told him this: "Do not marry a woman from the women of the Canaanite people. ² Instead, go right away to Paddan Aram, to the house of your mother's father Bethuel. Ask one of the daughters of your mother's brother Laban to marry you. ³ I will pray that God Almighty bless you, and enable you to have many descendants, in order that they will become many different people groups. ⁴ I also will pray that he bless you

and your descendants by enabling you to possess the land in which you are now living as a foreigner, the land that God promised to give to Abraham and his descendants." ⁵ So Isaac sent Jacob to Paddan Aram to live with Rebekah's brother Laban son of Bethuel, who belonged to the people group of the Arameans. (It was this Rebekah who would later give birth to Jacob and Esau.)

⁶ Esau found out that his father Isaac had blessed Jacob and then sent him to Paddan Aram. He also found out that when his father blessed Jacob, he told him, "Do not marry a woman from the Canaanite people," ⁷ and that Jacob had obeyed his father and mother, and had gone to Paddan Aram. ⁸ Esau also realized that his father Isaac did not approve of women from the Canaan people. ⁹ Because of that, Esau went to see his relative Ishmael and married Mahalath, the daughter of Ishmael. Mahalath was the sister of Nabaioth and the granddaughter of Abraham.

¹⁰ Meanwhile, Jacob left Beersheba and started to go toward Haran. ¹¹ When he arrived at a certain place, he stopped there because the sun had gone down. He took one of the stones there and put it under his head to use as a pillow. Then he lay down and slept there. ¹² While he was sleeping, he had a dream in which he saw a stairway. The bottom of the stairway was on the earth and the top was in the sky. Jacob also saw that God's angels were going up and down the stairway. ¹³ Then he saw Yahweh standing at the top of the stairway, saying "I am Yahweh God, whom your grandfather Abraham worshiped and whom Isaac worships. I will give to you and to your descendants the land on which you are lying. ¹⁴ Your descendants will be as numerous as the particles of dust that are on the earth, and their territory will be very large. It will ex-

tend in all directions, to the east and to the west, to the north and to the south. I will bless all the clans and people groups on earth through you and your descendants.

¹⁵ I will help you and protect you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you; I will do for you all that I have promised to do.”

¹⁶ During the night, when Jacob woke up from sleeping, he thought, “Surely Yahweh is in this place, and until now I was not aware of it!” ¹⁷ He was afraid, and he said, “This place is terrifying! This is surely the place where God lives, and this is the entrance to heaven!” ¹⁸ The next morning Jacob got up, took the stone that he had put under his head, and set it up on its end to mark the place where God had appeared to him. He poured some olive oil on top of the stone to set it apart for God. ¹⁹ He named that place Bethel, which means “house of God.” Previously its name was Luz.

²⁰ Jacob solemnly promised God, saying, “If you will help me and protect me while I am taking this journey, and if you give me enough food to eat and clothes to wear, ²¹ in order that I can later return safely to my father’s house, then you, Yahweh, will be the God that I will worship. ²² This stone that I have set up will mark the place where you appeared to me. And I will give back to you a tenth of everything that you give to me.”

Chapter 29

¹ Jacob continued on the road, and he reached the land that was east of the land of Canaan. ² There he saw a well in a field, and three flocks of sheep were lying near the well. It was the well from which shepherds normally got water for their sheep. There was a large stone covering

the top of the well. ³ When all the flocks were gathered there, the shepherds would work together to roll the stone away from the top of the well and get water for the sheep. When they finished doing that, they would put the stone back in its place over the top of the well.

⁴ On that day, Jacob asked the shepherds who were sitting there, “Where are you from?” They replied, “We are from the city of Haran.” ⁵ He asked them, “Do you know Laban, the grandson of Nahor?” They replied, “Yes, we know him.” ⁶ Jacob asked them, “Is Laban well?” They replied, “Yes, he is well. Look! Here comes his daughter Rachel with the sheep!” ⁷ Jacob said, “But the sun is still high in the sky. It is not time for the flocks to be gathered for nighttime. Why do you not give the sheep some water and then take them back to graze in the pastures?” ⁸ They replied, “No, we cannot do that until all the flocks are gathered here and the stone is removed from the top of the well. After that, we will give water to the sheep.”

⁹ While he was still talking with them, Rachel came with her father’s sheep. She was the one who took care of her father’s sheep. ¹⁰ When Jacob saw Rachel, the daughter of Laban, his mother’s brother, and Laban’s sheep, he went over and by himself rolled away the stone that covered the top of the well, and he got water for his uncle’s sheep. ¹¹ Then Jacob kissed Rachel on the cheek, and he cried loudly because he was so happy. ¹² Jacob told Rachel that he was one of her father’s relatives, the son of her aunt Rebekah. So she ran and told that to her father.

¹³ As soon as Laban heard that Jacob, his sister’s son, was there, he ran to meet him. He embraced him and kissed him on the cheek. Then he brought him to his home, and then Jacob told him all that had happened to him. ¹⁴ Then Laban said to him,

“Truly, you are part of my family!”

Jacob stayed there and worked for Laban for a month. ¹⁵ Then Laban said to him “You should not work for me for nothing just because you are a relative of mine! Tell me how much you want me to pay you.” ¹⁶ Now Laban had two daughters. The older one was named Leah, and the younger one was named Rachel. ¹⁷ Leah had pretty eyes, but Rachel had a very attractive figure and was beautiful. ¹⁸ Jacob was in love with Rachel, and he said, “I will work for you for seven years. That will be my payment for you giving me permission to marry your younger daughter, Rachel.” ¹⁹ Laban replied, “It is better for me to let you marry her than for her to marry some other man! You should stay here with us.” ²⁰ So Jacob worked for Laban for seven years to get Rachel, but to him it seemed like it was only a few days, because he loved her so much.

²¹ After the seven years were ended, Jacob said to Laban, “Let me marry Rachel now, because the time we agreed upon for me to work for you has ended, and I want to marry her.” ²² So Laban gathered together all the people who lived in that area and made a feast. ²³ But that evening, instead of taking Rachel to Jacob, Laban took his older daughter, Leah, to him. But because it was already dark, he could not see that it was Leah and not Rachel, and he slept with her. ²⁴ (Laban had already given his slave girl Zilpah to his daughter Leah to be her maid.)

²⁵ The next morning, Jacob was shocked to see that it was Leah who was with him! So he went to Laban and told him very angrily, “What you have done to me is disgusting! I worked for you to get Rachel, did I not? So why did you deceive me?”

²⁶ Laban replied, “In this land, it is not our custom to give a younger daughter to be married before we let someone marry our

firstborn daughter. ²⁷ After we finish this week of celebration, we will let you marry the younger one also. But in return, you must pay for Rachel by working for me for another seven years.”

²⁸ So that is what Jacob did. After the week of celebration was ended, Laban gave him his daughter, Rachel, to be his wife. ²⁹ Laban gave his slave girl, Bilhah, to Rachel to be her servant. ³⁰ Jacob married Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than he loved Leah. He worked for Laban for another seven years.

³¹ When Yahweh saw that Jacob did not love Leah very much, he enabled her to become pregnant. But Rachel was not able to become pregnant. ³² Leah gave birth to a son, whom she named Reuben. She said, “Yahweh has seen that I was miserable, and because of that he has given me a son. Now, surely my husband will love me for giving birth to a son for him.”

³³ Later she became pregnant again and gave birth to another son. She said, “Because Yahweh has heard that my husband does not love me, he has given me this son, too.” So she named him Simeon, which means “someone who hears.” ³⁴ Later she became pregnant again, and gave birth to another son. She said, “Now, finally, my husband will hold me close to him.” So she named him Levi, which means “hold close.” ³⁵ Later she became pregnant again and gave birth to another son. She said, “This time I will praise Yahweh,” so she called his name Judah. After that, she did not give birth to any more children.

Chapter 30

¹ Rachel realized that she was not becoming pregnant at all. So she became jealous of her older sister, Leah, because Leah had given birth to four sons. She said to Ja-

cob, "Make me pregnant so I can have children. If you do not do that, I will die!" ² Jacob became angry with Rachel and said, "I am not God! He is the one who has prevented you from becoming pregnant!" ³ Then she said, "Look, here is my slave, Bilhah. Sleep with her so that she will have children in my place. In that way I will have legal children." ⁴ So she gave him her slave, Bilhah, to be another wife for him, and Jacob slept with her. ⁵ She became pregnant and bore Jacob a son. ⁶ Rachel said, "God gave me justice. He has heard me when I prayed to him, and his justice was to give me a son." She named him Dan, which sounds like the Hebrew word that means "he gives me justice." ⁷ Later, Rachel's slave Bilhah became pregnant again and gave birth to another son for Jacob. ⁸ Then Rachel said, "I have had a great struggle to have children like my older sister, but truly I have a son." So she named him Naphtali, which sounds like the Hebrew word that means "struggle."

⁹ When Leah realized that she was not having any more children, she took her slave, Zilpah, and gave her to Jacob to be another wife for him. ¹⁰ Zilpah soon became pregnant and gave birth to a son for Jacob. ¹¹ Leah said, "I am truly fortunate!" So she named him Gad, which means "fortunate." ¹² Later Leah's slave, Zilpah, gave birth to another son for Jacob. ¹³ Leah said, "Now I am very happy, and people will call me happy." So she named him Asher, which means "happy."

¹⁴ During the time when they were harvesting wheat, Reuben went out into the fields and saw some mandrakes. He brought some of them to his mother Leah. But Rachel saw them and said to Leah, "Please give me some of those plants that your son brought to you!" ¹⁵ But Leah said to her, "No! It was bad that you stole my husband! Now are you going to take

my son's mandrake plants?" So Rachel said, "All right, Jacob can sleep with you tonight, if you give me some of your son's mandrake plants." So Leah agreed with Rachel.

¹⁶ When Jacob returned from the wheat fields that evening, Leah went out to meet him. She said, "You must sleep with me tonight, because I gave Rachel some mandrake plants to pay her for allowing us to do that." So Jacob slept with her that night. ¹⁷ God answered Leah's prayers, and she became pregnant and bore a fifth son to Jacob. ¹⁸ Leah said, "God has rewarded me for giving my slave to my husband to be another wife for him." So she named him Issachar, which sounds like the Hebrew word that means "reward."

¹⁹ Leah became pregnant again and bore a sixth son for Jacob. ²⁰ Leah said, "God has given me a precious gift. This time my husband will honor me, because I have given birth to six sons for him." So she named him Zebulun.

²¹ Later she gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah.

²² Then God thought about what Rachel wanted. He heard her pray and enabled her to become pregnant. ²³ She became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She said, "God has caused me to be ashamed no longer for not having children." ²⁴ She named him Joseph, which sounds like the Hebrew words that mean, "Yahweh gave me another son."

²⁵ After Rachel had given birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, "Now allow me to stop working for you and let me return to my own land. ²⁶ You know the work that I have done for you. So let me take my wives and my children for whom I worked for you to get them, and leave." ²⁷ But Laban said to him, "If you are pleased with me, stay here, because I have found out

by performing a magic ritual that Yahweh has blessed me because of what you have done for me. ²⁸ Tell me what you want me to pay you for continuing to work for me, and that is what I will pay you.” ²⁹ Jacob said to him, “You know how I have worked for you, and you know that your livestock have increased greatly as I have taken care of them. ³⁰ You had only a few animals before I came here. But now you have a large number of animals and Yahweh has caused them to increase into an even larger number everywhere I have taken them. But now I need to start taking care of the needs of my own family.” ³¹ Laban replied, “What do you want me to pay you?” Jacob replied, “I do not want you to pay me anything. But if you will do this one thing for me, I will continue to take care of your flocks and protect them. ³² Allow me to go and look at all of your flocks today and remove from them all the speckled sheep, all the spotted sheep, and every dark-colored lamb, all the goats that are speckled, and all the goats that are spotted. I want to keep them for myself. They will be my wages. ³³ In that way, in the future, you will be able to know whether I have been honest regarding what you have paid me. If any of my goats have no speckles or spots, and if any of my lambs are not dark-colored, you will know that I have stolen them from you.”

³⁴ Laban agreed and said, “Yes, we will do as you have said.” ³⁵ But on that same day, Laban removed all the male goats that had black and white stripes on them or were spotted, and all the female goats that were speckled or spotted, all the goats that were partly white, and all the dark-colored lambs. He separated them from the other animals and put his sons in charge of them. ³⁶ Then Laban and his sons took these animals and journeyed for three days from where Jacob was. Jacob continued to take care of the rest of La-

ban’s flocks.

³⁷ Then Jacob cut some branches of poplar, almond, and plane trees. He peeled strips of bark from the branches. In this way, where he peeled the bark off, the branches were light in color. ³⁸ Then he placed the peeled branches in the troughs where they put the water for the animals to drink, so that the flocks saw them when they were drinking water. ³⁹ The animals also mated in front of the branches, and later they gave birth to animals that were speckled, or to animals that were spotted, or to animals that had black and white stripes on them. ⁴⁰ During the several years following, Jacob often separated the female sheep in Laban’s flock from the other sheep and goats. When they mated, he made them look toward the animals that had black and white stripes, and toward the dark-colored animals. So they gave birth to animals with similar markings. Then he would separate these animals from Laban’s flocks and keep them for his own. ⁴¹ In addition, whenever the stronger female sheep were ready to mate, Jacob put some of those peeled branches in the troughs in front of them, so that they would mate in front of the branches. ⁴² But when weak animals were ready to mate, he did not put the branches in their troughs. So they gave birth to weak lambs, which remained in Laban’s flock, but the strong ones became part of Jacob’s flock. ⁴³ As a result, Jacob became very rich. He owned many large flocks. He also owned many male and female slaves, camels, and donkeys.

Chapter 31

¹ One day, someone told Jacob that Laban’s sons were complaining and saying, “Jacob has become very rich by taking everything that belonged to our father.” ²

Jacob noticed that Laban was not acting friendly toward him as he had done before. ³ Then Yahweh said to Jacob, "Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will help you there."

⁴ So Jacob sent a message to Rachel and Leah, telling them to come out to the pastures where his flocks of sheep and goats were. ⁵ When they arrived, he said to them, "I see that your father does not act friendly toward me as he did previously. But God, whom my father worshiped, has helped me. ⁶ You two know that I have worked very hard for your father. ⁷ He has cheated me many times by decreasing my wages. But God has not allowed him to do me physical harm. ⁸ When Laban said, 'The speckled animals are the ones that I will give you to be your wages,' then all the animals gave birth to young ones that were speckled. When he changed his mind and said, 'The ones that have black and white stripes on them will be your wages,' then all the animals gave birth to young ones that were striped. ⁹ In that way, God has taken away the livestock that belonged to your father and has given them to me.

¹⁰ One time, when the animals were mating, I had a dream. In my dream I looked up and was surprised to see that some of the male goats that were mating with the female goats had black and white stripes on them, some were speckled, and some were spotted. ¹¹ In the dream, an angel came from God said to me, 'Jacob!' I replied, 'I am here!' ¹² He said to me, 'Look up and you will see that all the male goats that are mating have black and white stripes on them, or are speckled or spotted. This is happening because I have seen all that Laban has done to you. ¹³ I am the God who appeared to you at Bethel, where you set up a stone, poured olive oil on it and made a solemn promise to me.

So now leave this land immediately and return to the land where you were born."

¹⁴ Rachel and Leah replied to him, "Our father will not give us anything more when he dies. ¹⁵ He treats us as though we were foreigners! The work that you did for him all these years was a payment that you gave him for us, but we will not inherit any of the wealth you produced for him. He has spent it all! ¹⁶ Certainly all of the wealth that God took away from our father belongs to us and to our children. So do whatever God has told you to do!"

¹⁷ Then Jacob put his children and his wives on camels. ¹⁸ He drove all his livestock just ahead of him as they went. He also took along all the other property and goods that he added to his own possessions while living in Paddan Aram. This is how they began their journey back to his father Isaac, who lived in the land of Canaan.

¹⁹ Now Laban had left to go shear his sheep. In his absence, Rachel stole the small wooden idols that were in her father's tent. ²⁰ Furthermore, Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean by not telling him that they were planning to leave. ²¹ So Jacob and his family fled with all their possessions. They crossed the Euphrates River and then started traveling south toward the hill country of the region of Gilead.

²² On the third day after they left, someone told Laban that Jacob and his family were gone. ²³ So he took some of his relatives with him and started to pursue Jacob. They walked for seven days and they caught up with him in hill country of the region of Gilead. ²⁴ Then God appeared to Laban in a dream at night. He said to him, "When you catch up to Jacob, be very careful what you say to him."

²⁵ The next day, by the time Laban caught

up with Jacob, Jacob and his household had set up their tents in the hills of Gilead. So Laban and his relatives set up their tents there too. ²⁶ Then Laban went to Jacob and said to him, "Why have you done this? You have deceived me by carrying away my daughters as though you had captured them in a war! ²⁷ Why did you run away and deceive me? Why did you not tell me that you were going to leave, so that we could have rejoiced and sung while people played music on tambourines and harps before I said 'goodbye' to you? ²⁸ You did not even let me kiss my grandchildren and my daughters goodbye before they left! What you have done was foolish! ²⁹ My relatives and I have the power to harm you, but last night the God whom your father worships said to me in a dream, 'Be very careful what you say to Jacob.' ³⁰ Now I know you have left because you want to go back home. But why did you steal my idols?"

³¹ Jacob replied to Laban, "I did not tell you that we were planning to leave, because I was afraid that you would take your daughters away from me by force. ³² But if you find anyone here who has your idols, we will execute that person. While our relatives are watching, search for yourself to see if there is anything that belongs to you that is here with me. If you find anything, you can take it!" When Jacob said that, he did not know that Rachel had already stolen her father's idols.

³³ Then Laban went into Jacob's tent, next into Leah's tent, and then into the tent of the two female slaves and searched for the idols, but he did not find them. After he left their tents, he entered Rachel's tent. ³⁴ But Rachel had previously taken the idols and put them in the saddle of a camel, and she was sitting on the saddle. So when Laban searched all over for them inside Rachel's tent, he did not find them.

³⁵ Rachel said to her father, "Do not be angry with me, sir, but I cannot stand up in your presence to show respect for you, because I am having my menstrual period." So even after searching more, Laban, he did not find his idols.

³⁶ Then Jacob became angry. He said to Laban, "What crime did I commit? For what sin have you pursued me? ³⁷ Now you have searched through all my possessions, and you have found nothing that belongs to you! If you have found anything, put it here in front of my relatives and your relatives, so that they can decide who is right, you or me!

³⁸ I was with you for twenty years. In all that time, your sheep and goats have not miscarried. I have not killed and eaten any rams from your flocks. ³⁹ When one of your animals was attacked and mauled by a wild animal, I did not bring it to you. I replaced the dead animal with a living one of my own animals. Whenever one of your animals was stolen, during the day or during the night, you demanded that I replace it with one of my own animals. ⁴⁰ I suffered from the heat during the day and from the cold at night. I was often not even able to sleep! ⁴¹ I lived in your household for twenty years. I worked for you for fourteen years to marry your two daughters, and for six more years to buy some of your sheep and goats. During that time, you changed and reduced my wages ten times. ⁴² If God, the one whom my grandfather Abraham worshiped and before whom my father Isaac trembled in fear, had not been with me and helped me, you would have sent me away with nothing in my hands! But God saw how much I was suffering and how hard I was working, so last night he told you that what you have done to me was wrong."

⁴³ Laban replied, "These two women are my daughters, and their children are my

grandchildren, and the animals are my animals. Everything you see here is mine!
⁴⁴ I cannot do anything in order to keep them, so we should make a peace agreement, you and I. It will serve as a witness between you and me.”

⁴⁵ So Jacob took a large stone and set it on its end. ⁴⁶ Then Jacob said to his relatives, “Gather some stones.” So they gathered some rocks and put them in a heap, and they ate some food there near the heap. ⁴⁷ Laban gave the heap the Aramaic name Jegar Saha Dutha, but Jacob gave the heap the Hebrew name Galeed. ⁴⁸ Laban said to Jacob, “This pile of rocks we have put here today will help us to remember our agreement.” That is why Jacob called it Galeed. ⁴⁹ They also named the place Mizpah, which sounds like the Hebrew word that means “watchtower,” because Laban said, “We will ask Yahweh to watch you and me while we are separated from each other, so that we do not try to harm each other. ⁵⁰ If you mistreat my daughters, or if you take other women to be your wives, even if no one tells me about it, do not forget that God sees what you and I are doing!”

⁵¹ Laban also said to Jacob, “You see this large stone and this pile of rocks that we have set up to be between us. ⁵² Both this pile of rocks and this large stone will remind us, that I will not go past these rocks to harm you and you will not go past these rocks to harm me. ⁵³ May the God whom Abraham worshiped, and the god that Nahor worshiped, and the gods their ancestor Terah worshiped punish either one of us, if one of us harms the other.” Jacob solemnly promised by the God whom his father Isaac feared to do what they said in their peace agreement.

⁵⁴ He offered a sacrifice to God there in the hill country, and he invited his relatives to eat with him. After they had eaten, they

slept there that night. ⁵⁵ The next morning Laban kissed his grandchildren and his daughters, and he asked God to bless them. Then Laban and his men left and returned home.

Chapter 32

¹ As Jacob and his family continued traveling, some angels came from God and met him. ² When Jacob saw them, he said, “This is God’s army camp!” So he named that place Mahanaim.

³ Jacob told some men to go ahead of him to his older brother Esau, who was living in Seir, that is, the land of Edom. ⁴ He told them, “This is what I want you to say to Esau: ‘I, Jacob, am your servant and you are my master. I have been living with our uncle Laban, and I have stayed there until now. ⁵ I now own many cattle, donkeys, sheep, goats, and male and female slaves. Now I am sending this message to you, sir, hoping that you will be friendly toward me when I arrive.’”

⁶ The messengers went and gave that message to Esau. When they returned to Jacob, they said, “We went to your older brother Esau. He is coming to you, and four hundred men are coming with him.”

⁷ Jacob was very afraid and worried. So he divided the people who were with him into two groups. He also divided the sheep and goats, the cattle, and the camels, into two groups. ⁸ He was thinking, “If Esau and his men come and attack us, perhaps one of the groups will be left and will be able to escape.” ⁹ Then Jacob prayed, “O Yahweh God, whom my grandfather Abraham worshiped and my father Isaac worships, you said to me, ‘Go back to your own land and to your relatives, and I will cause good things to happen to you.’ ¹⁰ I am not worthy for you to have kept your

covenant in so many faithful and trustworthy ways with me, your servant. I had only this walking stick with me when I crossed the Jordan River on my way to Haran, but now I am so wealthy that there are two large groups of my family and possessions. ¹¹ So now I pray that you will rescue me from the power of my brother Esau, because I am afraid that he and his men will come and attack and kill me and the children and their mothers. ¹² But do not forget that you have said, 'I will certainly enable you to prosper, and I will cause your descendants to be as numerous as the grains of sand on the seashore, which are so many that no one can count them.'"

¹³ Jacob slept in that place that night. The next morning he selected some animals to give to his brother Esau. ¹⁴ He selected two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred female sheep and twenty male sheep, ¹⁵ thirty female camels and their offspring, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. ¹⁶ He divided them into small herds, and put each herd into the care of one of his servants. He said to his servants, "Go ahead of me, one group at a time, and keep some space between each herd." ¹⁷ He said to the servant who was going with the first group, "When my brother Esau meets you, he will ask you, 'To whom do you belong, and where are you going, and to whom do these animals in front of you belong?' ¹⁸ Tell him, 'They belong to your servant Jacob. He has sent them to you as a gift, sir. And he is coming behind us.'"

¹⁹ He also said the same thing to the servants who were taking care of the second and third groups, and to the other herdsmen. He said to them, "When you meet Esau, I want you to say to him the same thing that I told the first servant. ²⁰ Also

be sure to say 'Your servant Jacob is coming behind us.'" Jacob told them to say that because he was thinking, "Perhaps these gifts that I am sending ahead of me will cause him to act peacefully toward me. Later, when I see him, perhaps he will act kindly toward me." ²¹ So the men taking the gifts went ahead, but Jacob himself stayed in the camp that night.

²² Some time during that night, Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female slaves, and his eleven sons, and he sent them across the ford at the Jabbok River. ²³ After he sent all his people across the Jabbok River, then he also sent over everything he owned. ²⁴ So Jacob was left there alone. But a man came and wrestled with him until dawn. ²⁵ When the man realized that he was not winning against Jacob, he struck Jacob's hip and caused the thigh bone to pull away from the hip socket. ²⁶ Then the man said, "Let me go, because it will soon be daylight." Jacob replied, "No, if you will not bless me, I will not let you go!" ²⁷ The man said to him, "What is your name?" He replied, "Jacob." ²⁸ The man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob. Your name will be Israel, which means 'he struggles with God,' because you have struggled with God and with people, and you have won." ²⁹ Jacob said, "Now, please tell me your name!" The man replied, "Why do you ask me what my name is?" But he blessed Jacob there. ³⁰ So Jacob named the place Peniel, which means "God's face," saying "I looked directly at God, but I did not die because of doing that."

³¹ The sun was rising as Jacob left Peniel, and he was limping because of what had happened to his hip. ³² The muscle on his hip joint had been injured. So to this present time, because of what happened to Jacob, the Israelite people do not eat the muscle that is attached to the socket of the

hips of animals.

Chapter 33

¹ Then Jacob joined the rest of his family. Later that day Jacob looked up and saw Esau coming, and there were four hundred men with him. Jacob was worried because of that, so he separated the children. He put Leah's children with Leah, Rachel's children with Rachel, and the two female slaves' children with their mothers. ² He put the two female slaves and their children in front. He put Leah and her children next. He put Rachel and Joseph at the rear. ³ He himself went ahead of them all, and as he continued to approach his older brother, he prostrated himself with his face on the ground seven times. ⁴

But Esau ran to Jacob. He hugged him, put his arms around his neck, and kissed him on the cheek. And they both cried. ⁵ Then Esau looked up and saw the women and the children. He asked, "Who are these people who are with you?" Jacob replied, "These are the wives and children that God has graciously given to me." ⁶ Then the female slaves and their children came near and bowed in front of Esau. ⁷ Then Leah and her children came and bowed down. Finally Joseph and Rachel came near and bowed down.

⁸ Esau asked, "What is the meaning of all the animals that I saw?" Jacob replied, "I am giving them to you, sir, so that you will feel good toward me." ⁹ But Esau replied, "My younger brother, I have enough animals! Keep for yourself the animals that you have!" ¹⁰ But Jacob said, "No, please, if you feel good toward me, accept these gifts from me. You have greeted me very kindly. Seeing you smile at me assures me that you have forgiven me. It is like seeing the face of God!" ¹¹ Please accept these

gifts that I have brought to you, because God has acted kindly toward me, and I still have plenty of animals!" Jacob kept on urging him to accept the animals, and finally Esau accepted them.

¹² Then Esau said, "Let us continue traveling together, and I will lead you on the road." ¹³ Jacob said, "You know, sir, that the children are weak, and that I must take care of the female sheep and cows that are sucking their mother's milk. If I force them to walk fast for a long distance in just one day, the animals will all die. ¹⁴ You go ahead of me. I will lead the animals slowly, but I will walk as fast as the children and animals can walk. I will catch up with you in Seir." ¹⁵ Esau said, "Then allow me to leave with you some of the men who came with me, to protect you." But Jacob replied, "Why do that? The only thing that I want is for you to feel good toward me." ¹⁶ So on that day Esau left to return to Seir. ¹⁷ But instead of going to Seir, Jacob and his family went to a place called Succoth. There he built a house for himself and his family, and built shelters for his livestock. That is the reason they named the place Succoth, which means "shelters."

¹⁸ This is how Jacob and his family left Pad-dan Aram and traveled safely to the land of Canaan. There they set up their tents in a field near the city of Shechem. ¹⁹ One of the leaders of the people in that area was named Hamor. Hamor had several sons. Jacob paid the sons of Hamor one hundred pieces of silver for the piece of ground on which they set up their tents. ²⁰ He built a stone altar there and named it El Elohe Israel, which means "God, the God of Israel."

Chapter 34

¹ One day Dinah, the daughter of Jacob

and Leah, went to visit some of the women in that area. ² Shechem was one of the sons of Hamor, and he was descended from the people group of the Hivites. When he saw her, he took her and forced her to have sex with him. ³ He was very much attracted to her, and he became attached to her. He loved her and he spoke very tenderly to the girl. ⁴ So Shechem said to his father Hamor, "Please get this girl for me. I want her to become my wife!"

⁵ When Jacob found out that Shechem had seized his daughter Dinah and slept with her, his sons were still in the fields with his livestock, so he said nothing about this until they returned home.

⁶ In the meantime, Shechem's father Hamor went to talk with Jacob. ⁷ Jacob's sons came in from the field, and when they had found out what had happened, they were shocked and very angry, because Shechem had brought much shame to Israel by forcing himself on Jacob's daughter. She was their sister! This was a terrible crime that should never be done.

⁸ But Hamor said to them, "My son Shechem really likes this girl who is your daughter and your sister. Please allow him to marry her. ⁹ Let us make an agreement: You will give your daughters to our young men to be their wives, and we will give our daughters to your young men to be their wives. ¹⁰ You can live among us and live anywhere in our land that you wish. You can buy and sell things. If you find land that you want, then you can buy it."

¹¹ Then Shechem said to Dinah's father and brothers, "If you feel good toward me and do what I am asking for, I will give you whatever you ask for. ¹² Tell me what gifts you want and what bride price you want, and I will give you what you ask for.

I just want you to give the girl to me to be my wife."

¹³ But because Shechem had done a shameful thing to their sister Dinah, the sons of Jacob deceived Shechem and his father Hamor. ¹⁴ They said to them, "No, we cannot do that. We cannot give our sister to be the wife of a man who is not circumcised, because that would be a shameful thing for us to do. ¹⁵ We will do that only if you do one thing: You must become like us by circumcising all the males that are among you. ¹⁶ Then we will give our daughters to your young men to be your wives, and we will take your daughters to be the wives of our young men. We will live among you, and we will become one people group. ¹⁷ But if you do not agree to be circumcised, we will take our sister and leave."

¹⁸ What they said pleased Hamor and his son Shechem. ¹⁹ Shechem wanted very much to take Jacob's daughter as his wife; also, since he was the most respected person in his father's family, he quickly agreed to do what they suggested. ²⁰ Shechem went with Hamor to the meeting place at the city gate, and they spoke to the city leaders. They said, ²¹ "These men are friendly toward us. We should let them live here and travel around. Certainly the land is big enough to support them and us. Our young men can marry their daughters, and their young men can marry our daughters. ²² But these men will agree to live among us and become one people group with us only if all our males are circumcised, as they are. ²³ But if we do that, just think! Their cattle, their possessions, and all their animals will become ours! So we should agree to do what they suggest, and then they will live among us!" ²⁴ All the men who were at the city gate agreed to what Hamor and Shechem suggested. Every male in the city was circumcised.

²⁵ On the third day after that, when the men of the city were still sore because of being circumcised, two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, who were Dinah's brothers, took their swords and entered the city without anyone stopping them, and killed all the men. ²⁶ They even killed Hamor and his son Shechem. Then they took Dinah out of Shechem's house and left the city. ²⁷ Then the other sons of Jacob went into the city where all those dead bodies were. They looted the city to get revenge for the shameful thing that had been done to their sister. ²⁸ They took away the people's sheep and goats, their cattle, their donkeys, and everything else that they wanted from inside the city and from out in the countryside. ²⁹ They took away everything that was valuable, even the children and the women. They seized and took away everything that was in the houses.

³⁰ Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have brought me big trouble! Now the Canaan people group, the Perez people group, and everyone else who lives in this land will hate me! I do not have many men to fight for us, so if they all gather together and come to me and attack us, they will destroy us and all our household!" ³¹ But they replied, "Should we have allowed Shechem to treat our sister like a prostitute?"

Chapter 35

¹ Some time later, God said to Jacob, "Go up to the city of Bethel and live there. Build an altar to worship me, God, who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your older brother Esau." ² So Jacob said to his household and to all the others who were with him, "Get rid of the idols you brought from the land of Mesopotamia.

Also, bathe yourselves and put on clean clothes. ³ Then we will get ready and go up to Bethel. There I will build an altar to worship God. He is the one who helped me at the time when I was greatly distressed and afraid, and he has been with me wherever I have gone." ⁴ So they gave to Jacob all the idols that they had brought, and all their earrings. Jacob buried them in the ground under the big oak tree that was near the city of Shechem.

⁵ As they prepared to leave there, God caused the people who lived in the cities around them to be very afraid of Jacob's family, so that they did not pursue them. ⁶ Jacob and all those who were with him went to Luz, which is now called Bethel, in Canaan land. ⁷ There he built an altar. He named the place El Bethel, which means "God of Bethel," because it was there that God revealed himself to Jacob when he was fleeing from his older brother Esau.

⁸ Deborah, who had taken care of Isaac's wife Rebekah when Rebekah was a small girl, was now very old. She died and was buried under an oak tree south of Bethel. So they named that place Allon Bakuth, which means "oak of weeping."

⁹ After Jacob and his family returned from Paddan Aram, while they were still at Bethel, God appeared to Jacob again and blessed him. ¹⁰ God said to him again, "Your name will no longer be Jacob. It will be Israel." So Jacob was then called "Israel." ¹¹ Then God said to him, "I am God Almighty. Produce many children. Your descendants will become many nations, and some of your descendants will be kings. ¹² The land that I promised to give to Abraham and Isaac, I will give to you. I will also give it to your descendants."

¹³ When God finished talking there with Jacob, he left him. ¹⁴ Jacob set up a large stone at the place where God had

talked with him. He poured some wine and some olive oil on it to dedicate it to God. ¹⁵ Jacob named that place Bethel, which means “house of God,” because God had spoken to him there.

¹⁶ Jacob and his family left Bethel and traveled south toward Ephrath town. When they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel began to have severe childbirth pains. ¹⁷ When her pain was the most severe, the midwife said to Rachel, “Do not be afraid, because now you have given birth to another son!” ¹⁸ But she was dying, and with her last breath she said, “Name him Ben-Oni,” which means “son of my sorrow,” but his father named him Benjamin, which means “son of my right hand.”

¹⁹ After Rachel died, she was buried alongside the road to Ephrath, which is now called Bethlehem. ²⁰ Jacob set up a large stone over her grave, and it is still there, showing where Rachel’s grave is.

²¹ Jacob, whose new name was Israel, continued traveling with his family, and he set up his tents on the south side of the watchtower at Eder. ²² While they were living in that area, Jacob’s son Reuben slept with Bilhah, one of his father’s concubines. Someone told Jacob about it, and it made him very angry.

Now Jacob had twelve sons. ²³ The sons of Leah were Reuben, who was Jacob’s oldest son, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. ²⁴ The sons of Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin. ²⁵ The sons of Rachel’s female slave Bilhah were Dan and Naphtali. ²⁶ The sons of Leah’s female slave Zilpah were Gad and Asher. All those sons of Jacob, except Benjamin, were born while he was living in Paddan Aram.

²⁷ Jacob went back home to see his father Isaac at Mamre, which is also named Kiriath Arba, and which is now named

Hebron. Isaac’s father Abraham had also lived there. ²⁸ Isaac lived until he was 180 years old. ²⁹ He was very old when he died and went to join his ancestors who had died previously. His sons Esau and Jacob buried his body.

Chapter 36

¹ These are those who descended from Esau, whose other name was Edom, and what happened concerning them. ² Esau married three women from Canaan land: Adah, the daughter of Elon the Hittite; Oholibamah, who was the daughter of Anah and granddaughter of Zibeon the Hittite; ³ and Basemath, who was the daughter of Ishmael and sister of Nebaioth. ⁴ Esau’s wife Adah gave birth to Eliphaz. Basemath gave birth to Reuel. ⁵ Oholibamah gave birth to Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. All these sons of Esau were born while he was living in Canaan land.

⁶⁻⁷ Jacob and Esau had very many possessions. For this reason, they needed more land for their livestock. The land where they were living was not big enough for all their livestock. So Esau, whose other name was Edom, had taken his wives and sons and daughters and all the other members of his household, his sheep and goats and his other animals, and all the other things he had obtained in Canaan land, and they had moved to an area that was away from Jacob. ⁸ They went to live in the hill country of Seir.

⁹ These are those who descended from Esau, the ancestor of the Edom people group who live in the Seir area. ¹⁰ Esau’s wife Adah gave birth to Eliphaz, and Esau’s wife Basemath gave birth to Reuel.

¹¹ The sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz. ¹² Esau’s son Eliphaz also had a concubine. Her name

was Timna. She gave birth to Amalek. Those six men were grandsons of Esau's wife Adah.

¹³ Reuel's sons were Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. They were grandsons of Esau's wife Basemath.

¹⁴ Esau's wife Oholibamah, who was the daughter of Anah and granddaughter of Zibeon, gave birth to three sons: Jeush, Jalam, and Korah.

¹⁵ These are the chiefs among the descendants of Esau. The descendants of Eliphaz, his firstborn son, these were the chiefs: Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz, ¹⁶ Korah, Gatam, and Amalek people groups. These were chiefs that descended from Eliphaz who lived in Edom; they were grandsons of Adah.

¹⁷ The sons of Esau's son Reuel were ancestors of the Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah people groups. They were descended from Esau's wife Basemath. They also lived in Edom.

¹⁸ The sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah, whose mother was Anah, were ancestors of the Jeush, Jalam, and Korah people groups.

¹⁹ That is the list of the sons of Esau, and the people groups who were their descendants.

²⁰ This is a list of the descendants of Seir, who belonged to the Hor people group, who were the first people group who lived in the region of Edom: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, ²¹ Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. Those seven men each became ancestors of a people group. Each of the people groups had the same name as the name of their ancestor.

²² The sons of Lotan were Hori and Heman. Lotan's sister was Timna.

²³ The sons of Shobal were Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam.

²⁴ The sons of Zibeon were Aiah and Anah. This Anah was the one who discovered the hot springs in the desert while he was taking care of his father Zibeon's donkeys.

²⁵ Anah had two children—a son named Dishon and a daughter named Oholibamah.

²⁶ Dishon's sons were Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Keran.

²⁷ Ezer's sons were Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan.

²⁸ Dishan's sons were Uz and Aran.

²⁹⁻³⁰ The people groups who were descendants of Hor lived in Seir land. The names of the people groups are Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan.

³¹ These are the names of the kings who ruled in Edom before any kings ruled over the Israelites. ³² Beor's son Bela became the first king in Edom. The city where he lived was named Dinhabah.

³³ When Bela died, Zerah's son Jobab became the king. He was from the city of Bozrah.

³⁴ When Jobab died, Husham became the king. He was from the region where the Teman people group lived.

³⁵ When Husham died, Bedad's son Hadan became the king. Husham's army fought the army of the Midian people group in the region of Moab and defeated them. The city where Husham lived was Avith.

³⁶ When Hadad died, Samlah became the king. He was from Masrekah.

³⁷ When Samlah died, Shaul became the king. He was from Rehoboth, that was beside the Euphrates river.

³⁸ When Shaul died, Akbor's son Baal-Hanan became king.

³⁹ When Akbor's son Baal-Hanan died, Hadad became king. The city where he

lived was named Pau. His wife's name was Mehetabel. She was the daughter of Matred, who was the daughter of Me Zahab.

⁴⁰⁻⁴³ Here is a list of all the people groups that were descendants of Esau: Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, Magdiel, and Iram. They all lived in the land of Edom. The land where each people group lived got the same name as the name of the people group.

Chapter 37

¹ Jacob continued to live in Canaan land, where his father had lived previously. ² This is what happened to Jacob's family.

When his son Joseph was seventeen years old, he was taking care of the flocks of sheep and goats with some of his older brothers. They were sons of his father's concubines, Bilhah and Zilpah. Joseph told his father about bad things that his brothers were doing.

³ Jacob loved Joseph more than he loved any of his other children, because Joseph had been born when Jacob was an old man. Jacob had someone make for Joseph a beautiful piece of clothing with long sleeves. ⁴ When Joseph's older brothers realized that their father loved him more than he loved any of them, they hated him. They never spoke kindly to him.

⁵ One night Joseph had a dream. He told his brothers about the dream, who hated him even more as a result. This is in detail what happened: ⁶ He said to them, "Listen to the dream I had! ⁷ In the dream, we were tying up bundles of wheat in the field. Suddenly my bundle stood up straight, and your bundles gathered around my bundle and bowed down

to it!" ⁸ His brothers said to him, "Do you think that some day you will rule over us? Are you going to be our king?" They hated him even more than before because of what he had told them about his dream.

⁹ Later he had another dream, and again he told his older brothers about it. He said, "Listen to this! I had another dream. In this dream, the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me!" ¹⁰ He also told his father about it. His father corrected him, saying "What are you suggesting by that dream? Do you think it means that your mother and I and your older brothers will some day bow down to the ground in front of you?" ¹¹ Joseph's older brothers resented him, but his father kept thinking about what the dream might mean.

¹² One day Joseph's older brothers went to take care of their father's sheep and goats that were in fields near Shechem. ¹³ Some time later, Jacob said to Joseph, "Your brothers are taking care of the sheep and goats near Shechem. I am going to send you there to see them." Joseph replied, "I will go." ¹⁴ Jacob said, "Go and see if they are doing okay, and if the flocks are doing okay. Then come back and give me a report." So Jacob sent Joseph from the valley where they were living, the valley where Hebron is located, to go to find his brothers.

Then Joseph arrived near the city of Shechem. ¹⁵ While he was wandering around in the fields looking for his brothers, a man saw him and asked him, "Whom are you looking for?" ¹⁶ Joseph replied, "I am looking for my older brothers. Can you tell me where they are taking care of their sheep and goats?" ¹⁷ The man replied, "They are not here anymore. I heard one of them saying, 'Let us take the sheep and goats and go to Dothan town.'"

So Joseph left there and went north, and

found his older brothers near Dothan. ¹⁸ But they saw him when he was still far away, and they decided to kill him. ¹⁹ They said to each other things like, "Here comes that dreamer!" ²⁰ "Come on, let us kill him and throw his body into one of the pits! Then we will tell people that a wild animal attacked and killed him and ate him. And then we will find out whether his dreams come true!"

²¹ Reuben heard what they were saying, so he tried to persuade them not to kill Joseph. He said, "No, we should not kill him. ²² Do not take his life! We can throw him into this pit in the desert, but we should not harm him." He said that and then left them, planning to rescue Joseph later and take him back to his father.

²³ When Joseph arrived where his older brothers were, they seized him and ripped off his long-sleeved clothing. ²⁴ Then they took him and threw him into the pit. Now the pit was dry; there was no water in it.

²⁵ After they sat down to eat some food, they looked up and saw a caravan, descendants of Ishmael, coming from the Gilead area. Their camels were loaded with bags of spices and sweet-smelling resins. They were going down to Egypt to sell those things there. ²⁶ Judah said to his older and younger brothers, "If we kill our younger brother and hide his body, what will we gain? ²⁷ So instead of harming him, let us sell him to these men who are descendants of Ishmael. Do not forget, he is our own younger brother!" So they all agreed to do that.

²⁸ When those traders from the Midian area came near, Joseph's brothers pulled him up out of the pit. Then they sold him to the men from Midian for twenty pieces of silver. The traders then took Joseph to Egypt.

²⁹ When Reuben returned to the pit, he saw that his younger brother was not there. He was so grieved that he tore his clothes. ³⁰ He went back to his younger brothers and said, "The boy is not in the pit! What can I do now?"

³¹ They did not dare to tell their father what they had done. So they decided to invent a story about what had happened. They got Joseph's piece of long-sleeved clothing. Then they killed a goat and dipped the clothing into the goat's blood. ³² They took that piece of clothing back to their father and said, "We found this! Look at it. Is it your son's clothing?" ³³ He recognized it, and he said, "Yes, it is my son's! Some ferocious animal must have attacked and killed him! I am sure that the animal has torn Joseph to pieces!"

³⁴ Jacob was so grieved that he tore his clothes. He put on sackcloth. He mourned.

³⁵ All of his children came to try to comfort him, but he did not pay attention to what they said. He said, "No, I will still be mourning when I die and go to be with my son." So Joseph's father continued to cry because of what had happened to his son.

³⁶ In the meantime, the men from Midian took Joseph to Egypt and sold him to Potiphar, who was one of the king's officials. He was the captain of the soldiers who protected the king.

Chapter 38

¹ At that time, Judah left his older and younger brothers and went down from the hill country and stayed with a man who lived in Adullam. His name was Hiram. ² There he met a woman who was the daughter of a man from Canaan land named Shua. He married her and slept with her. ³ She became pregnant and later gave birth to a son. His father

named him Er. ⁴ Later she became pregnant again and gave birth to another son, whom she named Onan. ⁵ Many years later, when Judah and his family went to live in Kezib, Judah's wife gave birth to another son, and she named him Shelah.

⁶ When Judah's oldest son Er grew up, Judah got a wife for him, a woman named Tamar. ⁷ But Er did something that Yahweh considered to be very wicked, so Yahweh caused him to die. ⁸ Then Judah said to Onan, "Your older brother died without having any sons. So marry his widow and sleep with her. That is what our customs require that you should do." ⁹ But Onan knew if he did that, any children who would be born would not be considered to be his. So every time he slept with his brother's widow, he spilled his semen on the ground, so that she would not get pregnant and produce children for his older brother. ¹⁰ Yahweh considered that what he did was wicked, so he caused him to die also.

¹¹ Then Judah said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Return to your father's house, but do not marry anyone else. When my youngest son Shelah grows up, he can marry you." But Judah really did not want Shelah to marry her, because he was afraid that then Shelah would die too, just as his older brothers had died. So Tamar obeyed Judah and went back to live in her father's house again.

¹² Several years later, Judah's wife, who was the daughter of Shua, died. When the time of mourning for her was finished, Judah decided to go up to Timnah, to the place where his men were shearing his sheep. His friend Hiram, from Adullam, went with him. ¹³ Someone said to Tamar, "Your father-in-law is going to Timnah to help the men who are shearing his sheep." ¹⁴ She realized that now Shelah was grown up, but Judah had not given

her to him to be his wife. So she took off her widow's clothes and covered her head with a veil, so that people would not recognize her. Then she sat down at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah. ¹⁵ When Judah came along and saw her, he thought that she was a prostitute, because she had covered her head and sat where prostitutes often sat. ¹⁶ Judah did not realize that she was his daughter-in-law. So he said to her, "Let me sleep with you." She replied, "What will you give me in exchange?" ¹⁷ He replied, "I will send you a young goat from my flock of goats." She asked, "Will you give me something now for me to keep until you send the goat?" ¹⁸ He replied, "What do you want me to give to you?" She replied, "Give me the ring that has your name on it that is tied by a cord around your neck, and give me the walking stick that you are holding in your hand." So he gave them to her. Then he slept with her, and she became pregnant. ¹⁹ After she left, she took off the veil and put her widow's clothes on again.

²⁰ Judah gave a young goat to his friend from Adullam, for him to take back to the woman, as he had promised. But his friend could not find the woman. ²¹ So his friend asked the men who lived there, "Where is the prostitute who was sitting by the road at Enaim?" They replied, "There has never been a prostitute here!" ²² So he went back to Judah and said, "I did not find her. Furthermore, the men who live in that town said, 'There has never been a prostitute here.'" ²³ Judah said, "She can keep the things that I gave to her. If we continued to search for her, people would ridicule us. I tried to send this young goat to her, but you could not find her to give it to her."

²⁴ About three months later, someone told Judah, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar has

become a prostitute, and now she is pregnant!" Judah said, "Drag her outside of the city and burn her to death!"

²⁵ But as they were taking her outside of the city, she gave the ring and walking stick to someone, and told him to take them to Judah, and say to him, "The man who owns these things is the one who caused me to become pregnant." She also said to tell him, "Look at this ring, and the cord that is attached to it, and this walking stick. Whose are they?" ²⁶ When the man did that, Judah recognized the ring and the stick. He said, "She is more right than I am. I did not tell my son Shelah to marry her, as I promised that I would." And Judah did not sleep with her again.

²⁷ When it was time for her to give birth, she was surprised that there were twin boys in her womb. ²⁸ As she was giving birth, one of them put out his hand. So the midwife fastened a scarlet thread around his wrist, saying, "This one came out first." ²⁹ But he pulled his hand back inside the womb, and his brother came out first. So she said, "So this is how you break your way out first!" So she named him Perez, which sounds like the Hebrew word that means "breaking out." ³⁰ Then his younger brother, the one who had the scarlet thread around his wrist, came out. And he was named Zerah, which sounds like the Hebrew word that means "redness of dawn."

Chapter 39

¹ Meanwhile, the descendants of Ishmael took Joseph down to Egypt. There Potiphar bought Joseph from them. Potiphar was an Egyptian who was one of the king's officials and the captain of the king's palace guards. ² Because Yahweh helped Joseph, he was able to do his

work very well. He worked in the house of his Egyptian master. ³ His master saw that Yahweh was helping Joseph and enabling him to be successful in everything that he did. ⁴ Joseph's master was pleased with him, so he appointed him to be his personal servant. Then he appointed him to be the one who would take care of everything in his household and all of his possessions. ⁵ From the time Potiphar appointed Joseph to take care of everything in his household and all that he owned, Yahweh blessed the people who lived in Potiphar's house because of Joseph. He also caused Potiphar's crops to grow well. ⁶ Potiphar allowed Joseph to take care of everything that he owned. Potiphar needed to decide only about the food he ate. He did not worry about anything else in his house.

Now Joseph was well built and handsome. ⁷ Because of that, after a while, his master's wife started to look fondly at Joseph. So one day she said to him, "Sleep with me!" ⁸ But he refused, saying to his master's wife, "Listen! My master is not concerned about anything in this house. He has appointed me to take care of everything that he owns. ⁹ No one in this household has more authority than I do. The only thing that he has not allowed me to have is you, because you are his wife! So how could I do this wicked thing that you are asking me to do? I would be sinning against God if I did that!" ¹⁰ She kept on asking Joseph day after day to sleep with her, but he refused. He would not even go near her.

¹¹ One day Joseph went into the house to do his work, and none of the other household servants were in the house. ¹² Potiphar's wife grabbed his clothing and said, "Sleep with me!" Joseph ran out of the house, but his clothing was still in her hand! ¹³ When she saw that he had run

outside leaving his clothing in her hand,¹⁴ she called the household servants. She said to them, "Look! This Hebrew man that my husband brought to us is insulting us! He came into where I was and tried to force me to sleep with him, but I screamed loudly."¹⁵ As soon as he heard me scream, he left his clothing with me and ran outside!"¹⁶ She kept the clothing beside her until her husband, Joseph's master, came home.¹⁷ Then she told him this story: "That Hebrew slave whom you brought here came into where I was and tried to force me to sleep with him!"¹⁸ As soon as I screamed loudly, he ran outside, leaving his clothing beside me!"¹⁹ When Joseph's master heard this story that his wife told him, and when she said, "This is how your slave treated me," he was very angry.²⁰ Joseph's master took Joseph and put him in prison, in the place where all the king's prisoners were put, and Joseph stayed there.

²¹ But Yahweh was kind to Joseph and helped him because of his covenant with his ancestors; he caused the prison warden to be pleased with him.²² So the prison warden put Joseph in charge of all those who were in the prison, and in charge of all the work that was done there.²³ The warden was not concerned with anything that Joseph was taking care of, because Yahweh helped Joseph to do all his work well.

Chapter 40

¹ Some time later, two of the king of Egypt's officials did things that displeased him. One was his chief drink server and the other was his chief baker.² The king became angry with both of them.³ So he had them put in prison, in the house of the captain of the palace guards. That was the

place where Joseph was being kept.⁴ The two men were in prison for a long time. During that time, the captain of the palace guards appointed Joseph to bring them the things they needed.

⁵ One night the king's chief drink server and chief baker each had a dream. Each dream had a different meaning.

⁶ The next morning, when Joseph came to them, he saw that both of them were looking sad.⁷ So he asked them, "Why do you look so sad today?"⁸ One of them answered, "We both had dreams last night, but there is no one who can tell us the meaning of the dreams." Joseph said to them, "It is God who can tell the meaning of dreams. So tell me what you dreamed, and God will tell me the meaning."⁹ So the king's chief drink server told his dream to Joseph. He said, "In my dream I saw a grapevine in front of me.¹⁰ On the vine there were three branches. The branches budded, then they blossomed, and then they produced clusters of grapes.¹¹ I was holding the king's cup, so I took the ripe grapes and squeezed the juice into the cup. Then I gave the cup to the king to drink the juice."¹² God immediately told Joseph what the dream meant. So Joseph said to him, "This is the meaning of your dream: The three branches of the vine represent three days.¹³ Within three days the king will release you from prison. He will let you do the work that you did before. You will take cups of wine to the king as you did before, when you were his drink server.¹⁴ But when you are out of prison and everything goes well for you, please do not forget me.¹⁵ People took me away by force from the land where my fellow Hebrews live. I did nothing wrong there, and also while I have been here in Egypt, I have done nothing for which I deserved to be put in prison. So be kind to me and tell the king about me, so that he

will release me from this prison!”

¹⁶ When the chief baker heard that the meaning of the dream of the king’s drink server was very good for the chief drink server, he also said to Joseph, “I also had a dream. In the dream I was surprised to see three baskets of bread stacked on my head. ¹⁷ In the top basket there were many kinds of baked goods for the king, but birds were eating them from the top basket that was on my head!” ¹⁸ God again told Joseph what the dream meant, so he said, “The three baskets also represent three days. ¹⁹ Within three days the king will command that your head be cut off. Then your body will be hung on a tree, and vultures will come and eat your flesh.”

²⁰ The third day after that was the king’s birthday. On that day the king invited all his officials to celebrate his birthday. During the celebration, while they were all gathered there, the king summoned his chief drink server and chief baker from the prison. ²¹ He said that his chief drink server could have his previous job again, so once again he started to take cups of wine to the king. ²² But he commanded that the chief baker should be killed by being hanged, just as Joseph had said would happen when he told the two men the meaning of their dreams.

²³ But the chief drink server did not think about Joseph. Instead, he forgot to do what Joseph asked him to do.

Chapter 41

¹ Two complete years later, the king of Egypt had a dream. In the dream, he was standing alongside the Nile River. ² Suddenly seven healthy fat cows appeared. They started eating the grass that was on the riverbank. ³ Soon seven other cows,

unhealthy-looking and thin, came up behind them from the Nile River. They stood alongside the fat cows that were on the riverbank. ⁴ Then the unhealthy thin cows ate the seven healthy fat cows. And then the king woke up.

⁵ The king went to sleep again, and he had another dream. This time he saw seven heads of grain that were full of kernels of grain and ripe, and all growing on one stalk. ⁶ After that, the king saw that seven other heads of grain sprouted on that stalk. They were thin and had been dried up by the hot east wind. ⁷ Then the thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven ripe full heads. Then the king woke up. He realized that he had been dreaming.

⁸ But the next morning he was worried about the meaning of the dream. So he summoned all the magicians and wise men who lived in Egypt. He told them what he had dreamed, but none of them could tell him the meaning of the two dreams.

⁹ Then the chief drink server said to the king, “Now I remember something that I should have told you! I made a mistake by forgetting to tell it to you. ¹⁰ One time you were angry with two of us. So you put me and the chief baker in the prison in the house of the captain of the palace guards. ¹¹ While we were there, one night each of us had a dream, and the dreams had different meanings. ¹² There was a young Hebrew man there with us. He was a servant of the captain of the palace guards. We told him what we had dreamed, and he told us what our dreams meant. He told each of us the meaning of our dreams. ¹³ What happened after that was exactly the same as the meanings that he told us: You said I could have my previous job again, but the other man was killed by being hanged.”

¹⁴ When the king heard that, he told some servants to bring Joseph to him, and they quickly brought Joseph out of the prison. Joseph shaved and put on better clothes, and then he went and stood in front of the king. ¹⁵ The king said to Joseph, "I had two dreams, and no one can tell me what they mean. But someone told me that when you hear someone tell about a dream he has had, you can tell that person what the dream means." ¹⁶ But Joseph replied to the king, "No, I cannot do that. It is God who knows the meaning of dreams, but he will enable me to tell you their meaning, and they will mean something good."

¹⁷ The king said to Joseph, "In my first dream I was standing on the bank of the Nile River. ¹⁸ Suddenly seven healthy fat cows came up out of the river, and they started eating the grass that was on the riverbank. ¹⁹ Soon seven other cows, ugly and thin ones, came up behind them from the river. I never saw such ugly cows in all the land of Egypt! ²⁰ The thin ugly cows ate the seven fat cows that came up first. ²¹ But afterwards, no one would have known that the thin cows ate them, because they were just as ugly as they were before. Then I woke up.

²² Then I had another dream. I saw seven heads of grain. They were full of kernels of grain and ripe, and they were all growing on one stalk. ²³ Then to my surprise I saw seven other heads of grain that sprouted. They were thin and had been dried up by the hot east wind. ²⁴ The thin heads of grain swallowed the seven good heads. I told these dreams to the magicians, but none of them could explain to me what they meant."

²⁵ Then Joseph said to the king, "Both your dreams have the same meaning. God is revealing to you in your dreams what he is about to do. ²⁶ The seven healthy cows represent seven years. The seven good

heads of grain also represent seven years. The two dreams both have the same meaning. ²⁷ The seven thin ugly cows that came up behind them and the seven worthless heads of grain that were dried up by the hot east wind each represent seven years of famine. ²⁸ It will happen just as I have told you, because God has revealed to you what he is about to do. ²⁹ There will be seven years in which there will be plenty of food throughout the land of Egypt. ³⁰ Then there will be seven years of famine. Then people will forget all the years when there was plenty of food, because the famine that will come afterward will ruin the country. ³¹ The people will forget how plentiful food was previously, because the famine will be very terrible. ³² The reason God gave to you two dreams is that he has firmly decided that this will happen, and he will cause it to happen very soon.

³³ Now I suggest that you should choose a man who is wise and can make good decisions. I suggest that you appoint him to direct the affairs of the whole country. ³⁴ You should also appoint supervisors over the country, in order that they can arrange to collect one-fifth of all the grain that is harvested during the seven years when food is plentiful. ³⁵ They should collect this amount of grain during those seven years that are coming, when there will be plenty of food. Each of the cities should supervise and protect the food that is stored up. ³⁶ This grain should be kept so that it can be eaten during the seven years when there will be a famine here in Egypt, so that the people in this country will not die from hunger."

³⁷ The king and his officials thought that this would be a good plan. ³⁸ So the king said to them, "Can we find any other man like Joseph, a man to whom God has given his spirit?"

³⁹ Then the king said to Joseph, "Because God has revealed all this to you, it seems to me that there is no one who is as wise as you and who can decide wisely about things. ⁴⁰ So I will put you in charge of everything in my palace. All the people here in Egypt must obey what you command. Only because I am king will I have more authority than you."

⁴¹ Then the king said to Joseph, "I am now putting you in charge of the whole country of Egypt." ⁴² The king took from his finger the ring that had his seal on it, and he put it on Joseph's finger. He put robes made of fine linen on him, and he put a gold chain around his neck. ⁴³ Then he arranged for Joseph to ride around in the chariot that showed that he was the second most important man in the country. When Joseph rode in the chariot, men shouted to the people who were on the road in front of him, "Bow down!" So the Joseph went out to supervise this work all over Egypt.

⁴⁴ The king said to Joseph, "I am the king, but no one in the whole land of Egypt will do anything if you do not permit them to do it." ⁴⁵ The king gave Joseph a new name, Zaphenath-Paneah. He also gave him Asenath to be his wife. She was the daughter of Potiphera, who was a priest in a temple in the city of On. In this way Joseph became known through all the land of Egypt.

⁴⁶ Joseph was thirty years old when he started to work for the king of Egypt. To do his work, he left the king's palace and traveled throughout Egypt. ⁴⁷ During the next seven years, the land produced abundant crops, so there was plenty of food. ⁴⁸ As Joseph supervised them, his helpers collected one-fifth of all the grain that was produced during those years, and stored it in the cities. In each city, he had his helpers store up the grain that was grown

in the fields that surrounded that city. ⁴⁹ Joseph had them store up a huge amount of grain. It looked as plentiful as the sand on the seashore. There was so much grain that after a while they stopped keeping records of how much grain was stored, because there was more grain than they could measure.

⁵⁰ Before the seven years of famine started, Joseph's wife Asenath gave birth to two sons. ⁵¹ Joseph named the first one Manasseh, which sounds like the Hebrew word that means "forget," because he said, "God has caused me to forget all my troubles and all my father's family." ⁵² He named his second son Ephraim, which means "to have children," because he said, "God has given me children here in this land where I have suffered."

⁵³ Finally the seven years in which there was plenty of food ended. ⁵⁴ Then the seven years of famine started, just as Joseph had predicted. There was also a famine in all the other nearby lands, but although the crops did not grow, there was food everywhere in Egypt, because of the grain they had stored up in the cities. ⁵⁵ When all the people of Egypt had eaten all of their own food and were still hungry, they begged the king for food. So the king told all the people of Egypt, "Go to Joseph and do what he tells you to do."

⁵⁶ When the famine was very bad over the whole country, Joseph ordered his helpers to open the storehouses. Then they sold the grain in the storehouses to the people of Egypt, because the famine was very severe all over Egypt. ⁵⁷ People from many nearby countries came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was very severe everywhere.

Chapter 42

¹ When someone told Jacob that there was grain in Egypt that people could buy, he said to his sons, "Why do you just sit there looking at each other? We need some grain!" ² He said to them, "Someone told me that there is grain for sale in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, in order that we can stay alive!"

³ So Joseph's ten older brothers went down to Egypt to buy some grain. ⁴ But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's younger brother, to go with the others, because he was afraid that something terrible might happen to him like what happened to Joseph. ⁵ So Jacob's sons went down from Canaan to Egypt to buy grain, and others went too, because there was a famine in Canaan also.

⁶ At that time Joseph was the governor of Egypt. He was the one who sold grain to people who came from all over Egypt and from many other countries to buy grain. So when Joseph's brothers arrived, they prostrated themselves before him with their faces to the ground. ⁷ As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them. But he pretended that he did not know them. He spoke harshly to them, saying, "Where do you come from?" One of them replied, "We have come from Canaan land, to buy some grain."

⁸ Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. ⁹ Then Joseph remembered what he had dreamed about them many years previously. But he decided not to tell them yet that he was their younger brother. He said to them, "You are spies! You have come to find out whether we will be able to defend ourselves if you attack us!" ¹⁰ One of them replied, "No, sir! We have come to buy grain. ¹¹ We are all sons of one man. We are honest men, not spies." ¹² He said to

them, "I do not believe you! You have come just to see whether we would be able to defend ourselves if we were attacked!"

¹³ But one of them replied, "No, that is not true! Originally there were twelve of us who were brothers, the sons of one man. Our youngest brother is with our father. One of them is no longer alive. "

¹⁴ Joseph replied, "You are lying! I think it is just as I told you. You are spies! ¹⁵ But this is how I will find out whether what you are saying is true. I think that as surely as the king lives, you are spies. So you will not leave this place until your youngest brother comes here! ¹⁶ Send one of your group to go and get your younger brother and bring him here. I will put the rest of you in prison, in order that I may test what you have said to find out whether what you are telling me is true. If the one who goes does not bring your younger brother here, then, just as surely as the king lives, it will be clear that you are lying and that you are spies." ¹⁷ Then Joseph put them all in prison for three days.

¹⁸ On the third day after that, Joseph went to the prison and said to them, "I am a man who fears that God will punish me if I do not do what I promise. So do what I tell you, and I will spare your lives. ¹⁹ If you are honest men, let one of you brothers stay here in prison, and the rest of you can take some grain back to your families who are very hungry because of the famine. ²⁰ But if you come back here again, you must bring your youngest brother to me, so that you can prove that what you told me is true, and as a result I will not have you executed." So they agreed to do that.

²¹ They said to each other, "It is surely because of what we did to our younger brother that we are being punished! We saw that he was very distressed when he pleaded with us not to harm him. But we

did not pay any attention to him, and that is why we are having this trouble!”

²² Reuben said to them, “I told you not to harm the boy, but you did not pay attention to what I said! Now we are being paid back for killing him!”

²³ While they were talking with Joseph, they were speaking to an interpreter, but when they said these things among themselves, they were speaking in their own language. They did not know that Joseph could understand their language and that he understood what they were saying. ²⁴ Because of what they said, Joseph realized that they admitted that what they had done to him many years previously was wrong. But he knew that he could not keep from crying, and he did not want them to see him crying, so he left them and went outside the room and began to cry. But then he returned to them and talked to them again. Then he took Simeon, and while they were watching, he told his servants to tie him up. He left Simeon in the prison and told the others that they could go.

²⁵ Joseph told his servants to fill the men’s sacks with grain, but he also told them to put the money that each one had paid for the grain in the top of his sack. He also told them to give them food to eat along the way. And his brothers received the food from Joseph’s servants. ²⁶ His older brothers loaded the sacks of grain on their donkeys and left.

²⁷ At the place where they stopped to sleep that night, one of them opened his sack to get some grain for his donkey. He was amazed to see his money in the top of the sack. ²⁸ He exclaimed to his brothers, “Someone has returned my money! Here it is in my sack!” They started shaking with fear, and said to each other, “What is this that God has done to us?”

²⁹ When they returned to their father in Canaan land, they told him all that had happened to them. One of them said, ³⁰ “The man who governs the whole land of Egypt talked very harshly to us. He acted toward us as though we were spying on his country. ³¹ But we told him, ‘We are honest men! We are not spies. ³² Originally there were twelve of us who were brothers, the sons of one father. One has died, and our youngest brother is with our father in Canaan.’ ³³ The man who is the governor of the land did not believe us, so he said to us, ‘This is how I will know if you are truly honest men: Leave one of your brothers here with me. Then the rest of you can take some grain for your families that are starving from hunger and go. ³⁴ But when you return, bring your youngest brother to me, in order that I will know that you are not spies, but instead, that you are honest men. Then I will release your brother for you. And then you can buy whatever you want in this country.’”

³⁵ As they were emptying their sacks, they were surprised that in each man’s sack was his pouch of money! When they and their father saw all the pouches of money, they were frightened. ³⁶ Their father Jacob said to them, “You have caused two of my children to be taken from me! Joseph is dead, and Simeon is gone! And now you want to take Benjamin from me! It is I who am suffering because of all these things that are happening!”

³⁷ Reuben said to his father, “I will bring Benjamin back to you. Let me take care of him. If I do not bring Benjamin back to you, you may kill both of my sons.” ³⁸ But Jacob said, “No, I will not let my son go down there with you. His older brother is dead, and he is the only one of my wife Rachel’s sons who is left! If something harms him while you are traveling, you would cause me, a gray-haired old man, to

die because of sorrow.”

Chapter 43

¹ The famine in Canaan got worse. ² Finally, when Jacob and his family had eaten all the grain they had brought from Egypt, Jacob said to them, “Go back to Egypt and buy some more grain for us!”

³ But Judah said to him, “The man who sold us the grain warned us sternly, ‘I will not let you see me again if you come and your younger brother is not with you.’” ⁴ So if you will send our younger brother with us, we will go down to Egypt and buy some grain for you. ⁵ But if you will not send him, we will not go down there, because that man said to us, ‘I will not let you see me again if your younger brother is not with you.’” ⁶ Jacob asked, “Why did you cause me to have this trouble by telling the man that you had a younger brother?” ⁷ One of them replied, “The man asked about us and about our family. He said, ‘Is your father still living? Do you have another brother?’ We had to answer his questions. We could not know that he would say, ‘The next time that you come down here, bring your brother with you!’”

⁸ Then Judah said to his father Jacob, “Send the boy with me, and we will go immediately, in order that we and you and our children may get grain and not die from hunger. ⁹ I myself will guarantee that he will return. You can require me to do what I am promising. If I do not bring him back to you safely, you can say forever that I am to blame. ¹⁰ If we had not wasted so much time, by now we could have gone there and returned two times!”

¹¹ Then their father Jacob said to them, “If there is no other way, do this: Put in your sacks some of the best things that are

grown in this land, and take them down to the man as a gift. Take some balm and honey and spices and myrrh, some pistachio nuts, and almonds. ¹² Take twice as much money as you took the previous time, because you must return the silver that someone put in the tops of your sacks. Perhaps it was a mistake that it was put in your sacks. ¹³ Take your youngest brother and go back to that man. ¹⁴ I will pray that God Almighty will cause that man to act mercifully toward you, so that he will let your other brother, as well as Benjamin, come back here with you. But as for me, if my sons are taken from me, then I will not have my sons!”

¹⁵ So the men took the gifts that Jacob said that they should take, and twice the amount of money that the grain would cost. They also took Benjamin. They went down quickly to Egypt, and they stood in front of Joseph. ¹⁶ When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the man who was in charge of things in his house, “Take these men to my house. Slaughter an animal and prepare a meal, because I want them to eat with me at noon.” He told his servant in what order they were to be seated.

¹⁷ The man did as Joseph said; he took them to Joseph’s house. ¹⁸ But they were afraid because he was taking them to Joseph’s house. They were thinking, “He is taking us here because of the silver that was put in our sacks the first time that we came here. While we are eating, he will have his servants attack us and seize us and cause us to become his slaves, and also take our donkeys.”

¹⁹ They went with the man who was in charge of things in Joseph’s house. When they arrived at the entrance of the house, ²⁰ one of them said to him, “Please, sir, listen to me. We came down here previously and bought some grain. ²¹ But at the

place where we stopped for the night as we were returning home, we opened our sacks. We were astonished to see that in the top of each of our sacks was the exact amount of silver that we had paid for the grain! So we have brought it back with us.²² We have also brought more silver with us to buy more grain. We do not know who put the silver in our sacks.”

²³ The man replied, “Relax! Do not worry about it! I received the silver that you brought. Your God, the God your father worships, must have put it in your sacks.” And then he brought Simeon to them from the prison.

²⁴ Then he took them into Joseph’s house. He gave them water to wash their feet and gave them food for their donkeys. ²⁵ He told them that they were going to eat with Joseph at noon. So the men prepared their gifts to give to Joseph when he arrived.

²⁶ When Joseph came home, they presented to him the gifts that they had brought into the house. Then they bowed down to the ground in front of him. ²⁷ He asked them if they were well, and then he asked, “How is the health of your old father, the one that you told me about? Is he still living?” ²⁸ One of them replied, “Yes, your servant, our father, is still alive, and he is well.” Then again they bowed down in front of him.

²⁹ Then he saw his younger brother Benjamin, his own mother’s other son. He asked them, “Is this your youngest brother, the one whom you told me about?” After they said “Yes,” he said to Benjamin, “Young man, I pray that God will act kindly toward you.” ³⁰ Joseph quickly left the room. He realized that he was about to cry because he was full of emotion about his younger brother. He went into his private room and cried there. ³¹ Then, after he washed the tears from his face, he came out, and controlling his emo-

tions, he said to the servants, “Serve the food!”

³² Now the people of Egypt thought that it was disgraceful for them to eat with Hebrews, so the servants served food to Joseph by himself, and served the other people of Egypt who ate with him by themselves, and they served Joseph’s older brothers and younger brother by themselves. ³³ His brothers were astonished to see that their seats were arranged according to their ages, from the youngest to the oldest! ³⁴ When their portions of food were served to them from Joseph’s table, Benjamin’s portion was five times as much as anyone else’s portion! So they ate food and drank wine with Joseph until they became very cheerful.

Chapter 44

¹ When his brothers were ready to return home, Joseph said to the man who was in charge of things in his house, “Fill the sacks of those men with as much grain as they can carry on their donkeys. And put in the top of each man’s sack the silver that he paid for the grain.” ² Then put my silver cup in the top of the youngest brother’s sack, along with the silver that he paid for the grain.” So the servant did what Joseph told him to do.

³ The next morning at dawn the men were allowed to leave for home with their donkeys. ⁴ When they had not gone far from the city, Joseph said to the servant in charge of things in his house, “Pursue those men immediately. When you catch up to them, say to them, ‘We did good things for you! Why have you paid us back by doing something bad to us?’ ⁵ You have stolen the cup that my master drinks from! It is the cup that he uses to find out things that nobody knows! What you did

was very wicked!”

⁶ When the servant caught up with them, he told them what Joseph had told him to say. ⁷ But one of them replied to him, “Sir, why do you say such things? We are your servants, and we would never do anything like that!” ⁸ We even brought back to you from Canaan the silver that we found inside the tops of our sacks! So we certainly would not steal silver or gold from your master’s house! ⁹ If you discover that any of us has that cup, you can execute him, and the rest of us will become your slaves.”

¹⁰ The man replied, “I will do what you say. But the one who has the cup will not be executed. Instead, he will become my slave, and the rest of you may return home.”

¹¹ Each of the men quickly lowered his sack down from the donkey to the ground and opened it. ¹² Then the servant started to search for the cup in each sack. He started with the oldest brother’s sack and ended with the youngest one’s sack. He found the cup in Benjamin’s sack and showed it to them. ¹³ The brothers tore their clothes because they were so dismayed. They loaded the sacks on the donkeys again and returned to the city.

¹⁴ When Judah and his older and younger brothers entered Joseph’s house, Joseph was still there. The servant told Joseph what had happened. Then the brothers threw themselves down on the ground in front of Joseph. ¹⁵ He said to them, “Why did you do this? Do you not know that a man like me can find out things that nobody knows?”

¹⁶ Judah replied, “Sir, what can we say? How can we prove that we are innocent? God has paid us back for the sins we committed many years ago. So now we will become your slaves—both we and the one in whose sack the cup was found.” ¹⁷ But

Joseph replied, “No, I could never do anything like that. Only the man in whose sack the cup was found will become my slave. The rest of you can return to your father peacefully.”

¹⁸ Then Judah came near to Joseph and said, “Sir, please let me say something to you. You are equal to the king himself, so you could command that I be executed; but do not be angry with me for speaking to you. ¹⁹ You asked us, ‘Is your father still living, and do you have another brother?’ ²⁰ We answered, ‘Our father is alive, but he is an old man. He has a young son who was born after our father became an old man. That son had an older brother, who is now dead. So the youngest son is the only one of his mother’s sons who is still alive, and his father loves him very much.’ ²¹ Then you said to us, ‘The next time you come here, bring your younger brother down to me, so that I can see him.’ ²² We said to you, ‘No, we cannot do that, because the boy cannot leave his father. If he leaves his father, his father will die because of sorrow.’ ²³ But you told us, ‘If your youngest brother does not come down with you, I will not let you see me again!’ ²⁴ When we returned to our father, we told him what you said. ²⁵ Months later our father said, ‘Go back to Egypt and buy some more grain!’ ²⁶ But we said, ‘We cannot go back by ourselves. We will go only if our youngest brother is with us. We will not be able to see the man who sells grain if our youngest brother is not with us.’ ²⁷ Our father replied, ‘You know that my wife Rachel gave birth to two sons for me. ²⁸ One of them disappeared, and I said, “A wild animal has surely torn him to pieces.” And I have not seen him since then. ²⁹ If you take this other one from me, too, and something harms him, you would cause me, an old gray-haired man, to die because of my sorrow.’

³⁰ So please listen. My father will remain alive only if his youngest son remains alive. ³¹ If he sees that the boy is not with us when we return to him, he will die. We will cause our gray-haired father to die because of his sorrow. ³² I guaranteed that the boy would return safely. I told him, 'You can require me to do what I am promising. If I do not bring him back to you, you can say forever that I am to blame for not bringing him back to you.'

³³ So, please let me remain here as your slave instead of my youngest brother, and let the boy return home with his other older brothers. ³⁴ I cannot return to my father if the boy is not with me! I do not want to see how miserable my father would become!"

Chapter 45

¹ Joseph was not able to control his feelings any longer. He did not want to cry in front of his servants, so he said to them loudly, "All of you go outside!" After they went outside, there were no Egyptians there with Joseph when he told his brothers who he was. ² He cried so loudly that even the people outside heard it, and even the people in the king's palace heard it. ³ Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is our father still alive?" But his brothers were not able to reply, because they were frightened because of what he said. ⁴ Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me!" When they came closer to him, he said, "I am your brother Joseph! I am the one you sold to traders who brought me here to Egypt! ⁵ But now, do not be distressed, and do not be angry with yourselves for having sold me as a slave. It was God who sent me here ahead of you in order to keep you from dying in the famine. ⁶ There has been a

famine in this country for two years, and it will continue for five more years. During this time, no one will plow the ground, and there will be no crops to harvest. ⁷ God sent me here ahead of you to keep you from starving, and to make sure that your descendants would survive. ⁸ Therefore, it was not you who sent me here; it was God who sent me here! He has caused me to become like a father to the king. I am in charge of everything in his palace and the governor of everyone in Egypt! ⁹ Now return to my father quickly and say to him, 'This is what your son Joseph says: "God has caused me to become the governor over the whole land of Egypt. Come down to me immediately! ¹⁰ You can live in the region of Goshen. You and your children and your grandchildren, your sheep and goats and cattle, and everything that you own, will be near me. ¹¹ Since there will be five more years of famine, I will make sure that you have food. If you do not come here, you and your family and all of your servants will starve. '"

¹² If you—and Benjamin, too—look closely at me, all of you will see that it is really I, Joseph, who am speaking to you. ¹³ Go and tell my father about how much honor I have here in Egypt. And tell him about everything else that you have seen. Bring my father down here quickly!"

¹⁴ Then he threw his arms around his younger brother Benjamin's neck and cried. And Benjamin hugged him and cried. ¹⁵ Then he kissed his older brothers on their cheeks, and he cried. After that, his brothers started to talk with him.

¹⁶ Someone went to the palace and told the news that Joseph's brothers had come. The king and all his officials were pleased. ¹⁷ The king said to Joseph, "Tell your brothers this: 'Put loads of grain on your animals and return to Canaan land. ¹⁸ Then bring your father and your families back

here. I will give you the best land in Egypt, and you will have the best food in the land to eat.’¹⁹ Also tell this to your brothers: ‘Take some carts from Egypt to carry your children and your wives, and get them and your father and come back here quickly.’²⁰ Do not worry about bringing your possessions, because the best things in Egypt will be yours. Because of that, you will not need to bring things from Canaan.”

²¹ Jacob’s sons did what the king commanded. Joseph gave them carts and food to eat along the way, as the king had ordered. ²² To each of them he gave new clothes, but he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five sets of new clothes to Benjamin! ²³ This is what he sent to his father: Ten male donkeys, loaded with some of the best things that came from Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain, bread, and other food for his father’s trip to Egypt. ²⁴ Then he sent his brothers on their way, saying to them “Do not quarrel along the way!”

²⁵ So the brothers left Egypt and came to their father Jacob in Canaan land. ²⁶ One of them told him, “Joseph is still alive! In fact, he is the governor over all of Egypt!” Jacob was extremely astonished; he could not believe that it was true. ²⁷ But they told him everything that Joseph had said to them, and Jacob saw the carts that Joseph had sent to carry him and his family and possessions to Egypt. Then Jacob’s shock ended. ²⁸ He said, “What you have said is enough to convince me! My son Joseph is still alive, and I will go and see him before I die!”

Chapter 46

¹ So Jacob left, taking with him all his family and possessions. When they arrived

at Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to God, the one whom his father Isaac worshiped.

² That night, God called to Jacob in a vision, saying, “Jacob! Jacob!” He replied, “I am here!” ³ God said, “I am God, the one your father worshiped. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, because I will give you many descendants, and they will become a great nation there. ⁴ I will go down to Egypt with you, and later I will bring your descendants back to Canaan again. And Joseph will be with you when you die.”

⁵ So Jacob left Beersheba, and his sons took their father, their wives, and their children, in the carts that the king had sent for them to travel in. ⁶ In this way, Jacob and all his family went to Egypt. They took with them the livestock and all the other possessions that they had acquired in Canaan. ⁷ Jacob went to Egypt with all his sons, his daughters, grandsons, and granddaughters—his whole family.

⁸ This is a list of the names of the members of Jacob’s family who went with him to Egypt:

Reuben, Jacob’s oldest son;

⁹ Reuben’s sons Hanok, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi;

¹⁰ Simeon and his sons Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jakin, Zohar, and Shaul, who was the son of woman who came from the Canaanite people group;

¹¹ Levi and his sons Gershon, Kohath, and Merari;

¹² Judah and his sons, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah (his other sons, Er, and Onan, had died in Canaan land);

the two sons of Perez: Hezron and Hamul;

¹³ Issachar and his sons Tola, Puah, Jashub, and Shimron;

¹⁴ Zebulon and his sons Sered, Elon, and Jahleel

¹⁵ These were the sons of Jacob and Leah, who were born in Paddan Aram, in addition to Dinah his daughter. There were thirty-three sons and daughters altogether.

¹⁶ Gad and his sons Zephon, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli;

¹⁷ Asher and his sons Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, and Beriah; and their sister Serah;

Beriah's sons: Heber and Malkiel;

¹⁸ (Those were the children and grandchildren of Jacob and Zilpah, the slave woman whom Laban had given to his daughter Leah. These were sixteen people altogether.)

¹⁹ Joseph and Benjamin, the sons of Jacob's wife Rachel;

²⁰ (Ephraim and Manasseh were Joseph's two sons. They did not go down to Egypt because they had been born in Egypt. They were sons of Asenath, the daughter of On, who was the priest in the temple in the city of On.)

²¹ Benjamin and his sons Bela, Beker, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard;

²² (These were the sons and grandsons of Rachel and Jacob. They were fourteen people altogether.)

²³ Dan and his son Hushim;

²⁴ Naphtali and his sons Jahziel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem.

²⁵ (These were the sons and grandsons of Jacob and Bilhah, the slave girl whom Laban had given to his daughter Rachel. They were seven people altogether.)

²⁶ Altogether there were sixty-six descendants of Jacob who went to Egypt with him. That number does not include his sons' wives. ²⁷ Including Jacob and Joseph and Joseph's two sons who were born in

Egypt, there were seventy members of Jacob's family when they were all there in Egypt.

²⁸ Jacob sent Judah to go ahead of the rest of them to talk with Joseph and to ask for directions on how to travel to Goshen. Then Judah returned to the rest of his family and they all traveled to the region of Goshen. When they arrived there, ²⁹ Joseph got his chariot ready and went to Goshen to meet his father. When Joseph arrived, he threw his arms around his father's neck and cried for a long time. ³⁰ Jacob said to Joseph, "I have seen you, and now I know that you are still alive! So I am ready to die."

³¹ Then Joseph said to his brothers and to the rest of his father's family, "I will go to the king and say to him, 'My brothers and my father and the rest of his family, who were living in Canaan land, have all come to me. ³² The men are all shepherds. They take care of their livestock, and they have brought with them their sheep, goats, and cattle, and everything else that they own.'

³³ When the king summons you and asks, 'What work do you do?' ³⁴ answer by saying, 'From the time when we were young, we have taken care of livestock, just as our ancestors did.' If you tell him that, he will let you live in the region of Goshen." Joseph told them to say that because the people of Egypt despised shepherds.

Chapter 47

¹⁻² Joseph chose five of his brothers to go with him to talk to the king. He introduced them to the king, and then he said, "My father and my brothers have come from Canaan land. They have brought all their sheep, goats, cattle, and everything else that they own, and they are living now in region of Goshen." ³ The king asked the

brothers, "What work do you do?" They replied to the king, "We are shepherds, just as our ancestors were." ⁴ They also said to him, "We have come here to live for a while in this land, because the famine is very severe in Canaan, and our animals have no pasture there. So now, please let us live in the region of Goshen."

⁵ The king said to Joseph, "So your father and brothers have come to you. ⁶ They can live wherever you want in all of Egypt. Give your father and your brothers the best part of the land. They can live in Goshen. And if you know that any of them have any special ability to work with livestock, have them be in charge of my own livestock, too."

⁷ Then Joseph brought his father Jacob into the palace and introduced him to the king. Jacob asked God to bless the king. ⁸ Then the king asked Jacob, "How old are you?" ⁹ Jacob replied, "I have been traveling around for 130 years. I have not lived as long as my ancestors, but my life has been full of troubles." ¹⁰ Then Jacob again asked God to bless the king and left him.

¹¹ That is how Joseph enabled his father and brothers to start living in Egypt. As the king had commanded, he gave them property in the best part of the land, in Goshen, which is now called Rameses. ¹² Joseph also provided food for all his father's family. The amounts that he gave them were according to how many children each of them had.

¹³ There was no food growing in the whole country because the famine was very severe. The people of Egypt and Canaan became weak because they did not have enough food to eat. ¹⁴ Joseph received all the money that the people in Egypt and Canaan paid for the grain he sold them, and he brought it to the king's palace. ¹⁵ When the people of Egypt and Canaan had spent all their money for grain, they all

kept coming to Joseph and saying, "Please give us some food! If you do not give us grain, we will die! We have used all our money to buy food, and we have no money left!" ¹⁶ Joseph replied, "Since your money is all gone, bring me your livestock. If you do that, I will sell you food in exchange for your livestock." ¹⁷ So they brought their livestock to Joseph. He gave them food in exchange for their horses, their sheep and goats, their cattle, and their donkeys.

¹⁸ When that year was ended, the next year they came to him and said, "We cannot hide this from you: We have no more money, and now all our cattle belong to you. We have only our bodies and our land to give to you. We have nothing else left. ¹⁹ If you do not give us some food, we will die! If you do not give us seeds, our fields will become useless. Buy us and our land in exchange for food. Then we will be the king's slaves, and he will own the land. Give us seeds so that we can plant and grow food, in order that we will not die, and in order that our land will not become like a desert."

²⁰ So Joseph bought all the farms in Egypt for the king. The people of Egypt each sold their land to him because the famine was very severe and they had no other way to buy food. So all the farms became the king's farms. ²¹ As a result, Joseph caused all the people from one border of the country to the other to become the king's slaves. ²² But he did not buy the priests' land, because they received their food from the king regularly. That is the reason they did not sell their land to him.

²³ Joseph said to the people, "Listen to me! Today I have bought you and your land for the king. So here are seeds for you so that you can plant them in the ground. ²⁴ But when you harvest the crop, you must give one-fifth of the crop to the king. The

rest of the crop you can keep to be seed to plant in the fields and to be food for you and your children and for everyone else in your household to eat.” ²⁵ They replied, “You have saved our lives! We want you to be pleased with us. And we will be the king’s slaves.”

²⁶ So Joseph made a law about all the land in Egypt, stating that one-fifth of the crops that are harvested belongs to the king. That law still exists. Only the land that belonged to the priests did not become the king’s land.

²⁷ Jacob and his family started to live in Egypt, in the region of Goshen. They acquired property there. Many children were born to them there. As a result, their population increased greatly.

²⁸ Jacob lived in Egypt seventeen years. Altogether he lived 147 years. ²⁹ When it was almost time for him to die, he summoned his son Joseph and said to him, “If I have pleased you, put your hand between my thighs to solemnly promise that you will be faithful to me as your father and do what I am now trusting you to do: When I die, do not bury me here in Egypt. ³⁰ Instead, when I die and join my ancestors who have died previously, take my body out of Egypt, and bury it in Canaan where they are buried.” Joseph replied, “I will do what you have said.” ³¹ Jacob said, “Swear to me that you will do it!” So Joseph swore to do it. Then Jacob bowed down as he worshiped God, near the head of his bed.

Chapter 48

¹ Some time after this, someone told Joseph, “Your father is ill.” When Joseph heard that, he took his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, to see his father. ² When someone told Jacob, “Look, your son Joseph has come to see you!” Jacob,

also called Israel, made an effort and sat up on the bed, even though it was difficult for him to do that. ³ He said to Joseph, “When I was at Luz in the land of Canaan, God Almighty appeared to me. He blessed me ⁴ and said to me, ‘I am going to enable you to become the father of many children. You will have many descendants, and they will become many people groups. And I will give this land to your descendants to possess forever.’

⁵ And now I will consider that your two sons, who were born to you here in Egypt before I came here, belong to me. Ephraim and Manasseh will be my sons, and they will inherit my possessions, just like my sons Reuben and Simeon and the others will. ⁶ If you later become the father of any more children, they will not be considered to be my children, but instead as my grandchildren. They will receive as part of what they inherit some of the same land that is in the territory that their brothers will inherit. ⁷ Many years ago, as I was returning from Paddan Aram, your mother Rachel sadly died in the land of Canaan, while we were still traveling, not far from the town of Ephrath. So I buried her body there alongside the road to Ephrath” (which is now called Bethlehem).

⁸ When Jacob saw Joseph’s sons, he asked, “Who are these boys?” ⁹ Joseph replied to his father, “They are the sons that God has given to me here in Egypt.” Jacob said, “Bring them close to me so that I can bless them.” ¹⁰ Jacob was almost blind because he was very old. He could not see well. So Joseph brought his sons close to his father, and Jacob kissed them and hugged them. ¹¹ Jacob said to Joseph, “I did not expect to see your face again, but look at this! God has allowed me to see you, and he has allowed me to see your children, too!”

¹² Joseph took the boys from Jacob’s knees.

Then he bowed down with his face to the ground. ¹³ Then Joseph took both of the boys, putting Ephraim on his right side toward Jacob's left hand, and putting Manasseh on his left side toward Jacob's right hand, and brought them close to Jacob. ¹⁴ But Jacob did not do what Joseph wanted him to do. Instead, he reached out his right hand and put it on Ephraim's head, even though he was the younger son. He crossed his arms and put his left hand on Manasseh's head, even though Manasseh was the older son. ¹⁵ Then he blessed Joseph and his sons, saying, "My grandfather Abraham and my father Isaac conducted their lives as God desired, and to this very day God has led me and taken care of me as a shepherd leads and cares for his sheep. ¹⁶ The angel whom he sent has kept me from being harmed in any way.

I pray that God will bless these boys.

I pray that people will think about me and my ancestors, Abraham and Isaac, because of what God does for them.

I pray that they will have many descendants who will live all over the earth."

¹⁷ When Joseph saw that his father had placed his right hand on Ephraim's head and not on Manasseh's head, he was distressed. So he took his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. ¹⁸ Joseph said to him, "My father, that is not right! The one on whom you put your left hand is my older son. Put your right hand on his head." ¹⁹ But his father refused, saying, "I know that, my son; I know what I am doing. Manasseh's descendants will also become a people group, and they will become important. But his younger brother's descendants will become greater than his will. His descendants will become many nations." ²⁰ So he blessed them both on that day, saying, "The people in Israel will use

your names when they bless people. They will say, 'We pray that God will help you as he helped Ephraim and Manasseh.'" In that way, Jacob said that Ephraim would become more important than Manasseh.

²¹ Then Jacob said to Joseph, "I am about to die. But I know that God will help you. Some day he will take your descendants back to the land of their ancestors. ²² It is to you, who stands above your brothers that I will give the fertile hill in the area of Shechem. I captured that land from the Amor people group, fighting them with my sword and my bow and arrows."

Chapter 49

¹ Jacob summoned all his sons and said to them, ² "Gather around close to me in order that I can tell you what will happen in the future. My sons, come and listen to me. I am your father, Jacob.

³ Reuben, you are my oldest son. You were born when I was young and energetic. When I became a grown man, you were my first child. You are prouder and stronger than all the rest of my sons. ⁴ But you were as unstable as ocean waves. So now you will not be my most important son, because you climbed up onto my bed and slept with my concubine. That caused me, your father, to have great shame.

⁵ Simeon and Levi, you two brothers have both acted like criminals. You use your swords to act violently. ⁶ I do not want to be with you when you make evil plans. I am too honorable to join you in your meetings, because you killed people when you became very angry, and you hamstringed oxen just to have fun.

⁷ God says, 'I will curse them for being very angry, for acting very cruelly when they were very furious. I will scatter their

descendants throughout Israel land.'

⁸ Judah, your older and younger brothers will praise you. They will bow down before you, because you will thoroughly defeat your enemies.

⁹ Judah is like a young lion that has returned to its den satisfied after eating the animals that it has killed. He is like a lion that lies down and stretches out after eating; no one would dare to disturb it.

¹⁰ There will always be a ruler from the descendants of Judah. Each one will hold a scepter to show that he has authority as a king. He will do that until nations bring tribute to him and show that they will obey him.

¹¹ The grapevines of his descendants will produce grapes very abundantly. As a result, they will not object to tying their young donkeys to the grapevines in order that they can eat the leaves of the grapevines. Wine will be very plentiful, with the result that they will wash their clothes in wine; they will wash their cloaks in wine that is as red as blood. ¹² Their eyes will be red because of drinking too much wine, but their teeth will be very white because of drinking much milk from the cows.

¹³ Zebulun, your descendants will live by the seashore where there will be a safe harbor for ships. Their land will extend north as far as the city of Sidon.

¹⁴ Issachar, your descendants will be like strong donkeys that are lying down between two groups of sheep. so tired that they cannot get up! ¹⁵ They will see that their resting place is good and that the land pleases them very much. But they will bend their backs to carry heavy loads and be forced to work for others.

¹⁶ Dan, although your tribe will be small, your leaders will rule their people just as the leaders of other tribes of Israel will

rule their people. ¹⁷ Your descendants will be like snakes at the side of a road, like poisonous snakes lying beside a path. They will strike the heels of horses that pass by, causing the riders to fall backwards as the horses rear up on their hind legs."

¹⁸ Then Jacob prayed, "Yahweh, I am waiting for you to rescue me from my enemies."

¹⁹ Then Jacob continued telling his sons what would happen in the future. He said, "Gad, your tribe will be attacked by a group of bandits, but your tribe will pursue and attack them.

²⁰ Asher, your descendants will eat good tasting food; they will produce food that is delicious enough for kings to eat.

²¹ Naphtali, your descendants will be like deer that run free, deer that have beautiful fawns.

²² Joseph, you will have many descendants. Their children will be as many as the fruit on a vine near a spring of water, whose branches extend over a wall.

²³ Their enemies will attack them fiercely, and shoot at them with bows and arrows and pursue them. ²⁴ But they will hold their bows steady and their arms will remain strong, because of the power of my mighty God, because of Yahweh, who guides and provides for me, as a shepherd guides and provides for his sheep. The people of Israel will ask Yahweh to protect them, as people take refuge on top of a high rock.

²⁵ God, the one whom I worship, will help your descendants. God Almighty will bless them by sending them rain from the sky and by giving them water from deep below the ground. He will give them many children and will nourish them.

²⁶ The blessings that I want God to give you are great ones. They are greater than the blessings that come from the eternal

mountains, than the ones that come from the everlasting hills. Joseph, I pray that these blessings will be given to you, because you are the leader of your brothers.

²⁷ Benjamin, your descendants will be like vicious wolves. In the morning they will kill their enemies like a wolf devours its prey, and in the evening they will divide among their warriors the spoils that they seized from their enemies.”

²⁸ Those twelve sons are the ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel. That is what their father said to them as he blessed them, telling to each one words that were right for him.

²⁹ Then Jacob said to his sons, “I will soon die and join my ancestors who have already died. Bury my body where some of my ancestors are buried, in the cave that is in the field that was bought from Ephron, who belonged to the Heth people group. ³⁰ The field of Machpelah, was east of Mamre, in the land of Canaan. Abraham bought it from Ephron to use as a burial place. ³¹ That is where they buried him and his wife Sarah. That is where they buried my father Isaac and his wife Rebekah. And that is where I buried my wife Leah. ³² That field and the cave in it were bought from the Heth people group; so that is where I want you to bury me.”

³³ When Jacob finished giving those instructions to his sons, he lay down on his bed again. Then he stopped breathing and died.

Chapter 50

¹ Joseph fell on his father’s face and he cried over him and kissed him. ² Joseph commanded his servants who prepared the dead for burial to embalm his father’s body. ³ It took forty days to embalm Ja-

cob’s body, because that is the amount of time that was always required for them to embalm a body. The people of Egypt cried for seventy days because of Jacob’s death. ⁴ When the time of mourning was finished, Joseph said to the king’s officials, “If you are pleased with me, please take this message to the king: ⁵ ‘When my father was about to die, he told me to solemnly promise that I would bury his body in Canaan land, in the tomb that he himself had prepared. So please let me go up to Canaan and bury my father’s body. Then I will return.’”

⁶ After they gave the king the message, he replied, “Tell Joseph, ‘Go up and bury your father’s body, as you swore that you would do.’” ⁷ So Joseph went up to Canaan to bury his father’s body. All of the king’s officials, all the king’s advisors, and all the elders in Egypt went with him. ⁸ His family’s small children and their sheep and goats and their cattle stayed in the region of Goshen. But all the rest of Joseph’s family and his brothers and his father’s family went with him. ⁹ Men riding in chariots and on horses also went along. It was a huge group.

¹⁰ They went to the east side of the Jordan River and arrived at Atad. There was a place there where people threshed the grain to separate the wheat from the chaff. There they mourned loudly for Jacob for a long time. Joseph performed mourning ceremonies for his father for seven days. ¹¹ When the Canaan people group who lived there saw them mourning like that, they said, “This is a sad mourning place for the people of Egypt!” So they named the place Abel Mizraim, which sounds like the Hebrew words that mean “mourning of the Egyptians.”

¹² Then Jacob’s sons did for him what their father had commanded. ¹³ They crossed the Jordan River and carried Jacob’s body

into Canaan land. They buried it in the cave in the field at Machpelah, east of Mamre town. That was the field that Abraham had bought from Ephron, who was one of the Heth people group, to use as a burial place.

¹⁴ After he had buried his father, Joseph and his brothers and all the others who had gone up to Canaan with him for the funeral returned to Egypt.

¹⁵ After Jacob died, Joseph's brothers became worried. They realized what might happen. They said, "What will happen if Joseph is carrying hatred for us and wants to take revenge on us, because of all the evil things we did to him many years ago?" ¹⁶ So they sent someone to tell this to Joseph for them: "Before our father died, he told us this: ¹⁷ 'Say to Joseph, Please forgive your older brothers for the evil thing that they did to you, for their terrible sin against you, because what they did to you was very wrong.' So now we, who are servants of your father's God, ask you, please forgive us for what we did to you." Joseph cried when he received their message. ¹⁸ Then his older brothers themselves came and threw themselves on the ground in front of Joseph, and one of them said, "Please listen. We will be your servants." ¹⁹ But Joseph replied to them, "Do not be afraid! God is the one who punishes people; am I God? ²⁰ As for you, yes, you wanted to do something very evil to me. But God caused something good to come from it! He wanted to save many people from dying of hunger, and that is what happened! Today they are alive! ²¹ So I say again, do not be afraid! I will make sure that you and your children have enough to eat." In this way he reassured them as he spoke to them.

²² Joseph lived with his father's family in Egypt until he was 110 years old. ²³ He lived long enough to see Ephraim's chil-

dren and grandchildren. The children of Joseph's grandson Machir, who was Manasseh's son, were born before Joseph died, and they were recognized as being his descendants. ²⁴ One day Joseph said to his older brothers, "I am about to die. But God will certainly help you. Some day he will lead your descendants up out of this land and take them to Canaan, the land that he solemnly promised to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." ²⁵ Then Joseph said, "When God enables you to do that, you must take my body up from here to Canaan." He made his older brothers solemnly promise to do that.

²⁶ So Joseph died in Egypt when he was 110 years old. His body was embalmed and put in a coffin there.

EXODUS

Chapter 1

¹ These were the sons of Jacob (they all went to the land of Egypt with Jacob, their father, and with their own households). The sons' names were: ² Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, ³ Issachar, Zebulun, Benjamin, ⁴ Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. ⁵ In all, there were seventy people who went with Jacob. His son Joseph was already in Egypt.

⁶ After some time, Joseph and his brothers and everyone else in their family who lived in that generation died. ⁷ But Jacob's descendants gave birth to many children. The number of his descendants grew very large. As a result, there were so many of them that they were everywhere in Egypt. ⁸ However, many years later, a new king began to rule in Egypt. He did not know about all the good things Joseph had done for the people of Egypt long ago. ⁹ He said to his people, "Look at what has happened! The Israelite people have become so many and so powerful that they are dangerous to us! ¹⁰ We must find a way to control them! If we do not do that, there will be more of them. Then, if enemies attack us, the Israelites will join with our enemies and fight against us, and they will escape from our land."

¹¹ So the king and his leaders put masters over the Israelites to cause them to suffer very much by making them work very hard. They made the Israelite people build two cities to store goods for the king. Those cities were named Pithom and Rameses. ¹² But the more they treated the Israelite people badly, the more the number of Israelites grew, and they became so many that they filled the land. So the Egyptian people began to fear the Is-

raelite people. ¹³ They made the Israelite people work very hard. ¹⁴ Because the Israelites were slaves, their lives were very sad. They had to build many buildings with cement and bricks. They also had to do work in the fields. In making the Israelites do all this work, the Egyptian masters treated them very badly.

¹⁵ Now there were two Hebrew midwives. Their names were Shiphrah and Puah. The king of Egypt said to those two women, ¹⁶ "When you help the Hebrew women give birth to their children, if the baby is a boy, you must kill him. If the baby is a girl, you may let her live." ¹⁷ But the midwives feared that God would punish them if they obeyed the king. So they did not do what the king told them to do. They allowed the baby boys to live. ¹⁸ So the king called the two midwives and said to them, "Why are you doing this? Why are you letting the baby boys live?" ¹⁹ One of the midwives said to the king, "The Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women. The Hebrew women are very strong. They give birth to their babies before we can get to them to help them."

²⁰ So God acted kindly toward the midwives, and the Hebrew people became very numerous and strong. ²¹ Because the midwives feared God, God gave them children of their own.

²² Then the king commanded all the Egyptian people, saying, "You must throw into the Nile River every Hebrew baby boy that is born! However, you can allow the baby girls to live."

Chapter 2

¹ Now there was a man who was a descendant of Jacob's son Levi. He married a woman who was also a descendant of Levi. ² She became pregnant and gave

birth to a baby boy. When she saw that he was a healthy baby, she hid him for three months because she was not willing to do what the king commanded. ³ When she was unable to hide him any longer, she got a basket made from tall reeds. She covered the basket with tar so it would float in water. Then she put the baby in the basket and put the basket in the water. It was at the edge of the Nile River in the middle of the tall reeds. ⁴ His older sister was standing close by, watching to see what would happen to him.

⁵ Soon the king's daughter went down to the river to take a bath. Her female servants walked along the riverbank. She saw the basket in the tall reeds in the river, so she sent one of her servants to get it. ⁶ When the servant brought the basket to her, she opened it, and was surprised to see a baby inside that was crying. She felt sad for him, and said, "This must be a Hebrew baby."

⁷ Then the baby's older sister walked up to the king's daughter and said, "Do you want me to go and find a Hebrew woman who will be able to nurse the baby for you?" ⁸ The king's daughter said to her, "Yes, go and find one." So the girl went and found the baby's mother. ⁹ The king's daughter said to the mother, "Please take this baby and nurse him for me. I will pay you for doing that." So the baby's mother took him and nursed him. ¹⁰ Several years later, his mother brought the boy to the king's daughter. She adopted him as though he were her own son. She named him Moses, which sounds like the Hebrew words 'pull out' because she said, "I pulled him out of the water."

¹¹ One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out of the palace area to see his people, the Hebrews. He saw how they had to work very hard. He also saw an Egyptian man beating a Hebrew person. ¹² He

looked around to see if anyone was watching. Seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian man and buried his body in the sand.

¹³ The next day he returned to the same place. He was surprised to see two Hebrew men fighting each other. He said to the man who started the fight, "Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?" ¹⁴ The man replied, "Who made you our ruler and judge? Are you going to kill me just like you killed that Egyptian man yesterday?" Then Moses was afraid, because he thought, "Since this man knows what I did, other people will know, too."

¹⁵⁻¹⁶ When the king heard that Moses killed an Egyptian, he ordered his soldiers to kill Moses. But Moses ran away from the king and left Egypt. He traveled east to the region of Midian and started to live there. Now the man who was the priest for the Midian people, whose name was Jethro, had seven daughters. One day as Moses sat down beside a well, the seven daughters came to the well, got water, and filled the troughs in order to give water to their father's sheep. ¹⁷ Some shepherds came and started to chase away the girls. But Moses helped the girls and got water for their sheep. ¹⁸ When the girls returned to their father Jethro, who was also called Reuel, he asked them, "How is it that you were able to give water to the sheep and come home so quickly today?" ¹⁹ They replied, "A man from Egypt kept other shepherds from chasing us away. He also got water for us from the well and gave water to the sheep."

²⁰ He said to his daughters, "Where is he? Why did you leave him out there? Invite him in so that he can have something to eat!" ²¹ So they did, and Moses ate with them. Moses decided to live there. Later, Jethro gave Moses his daughter Zipporah to be his wife. ²² Later she gave birth to a son, and Moses named him Gershom,

which sounds like the Hebrew word that means “foreigner” because he said, “I am a foreigner living in this land.”

²³ Many years later the king of Egypt died. The Israelite people in Egypt were still crying out because of the hard work they had to do as slaves. They called out for someone to help them, and God heard them.

²⁴ When he heard them crying out, he thought about his promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ²⁵ God saw how the Israelite people were being badly treated, and he wanted to help them.

Chapter 3

¹ One day, Moses took the flock of Jethro his father in law, priest of Midian, to the far side of the wilderness. He came to Mount Horeb, the mountain of God. ² When he was on the mountain, Yahweh appeared as an angel to Moses from inside a burning bush. As Moses looked at the bush, it was not destroyed by the fire. ³ Moses thought, “I will go closer to see this strange sight! Why is the bush not burning up?”

⁴ When Yahweh saw Moses come close to the bush, he called out to Moses, “Moses, Moses!” Moses said to God, “Here I am.” ⁵ God said, “Do not come close to the bush! Because I am God, the ground on which you are standing belongs to me. So take off your sandals to show respect to me.” ⁶ He said, “I am God, the one your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob worshiped.” Moses was afraid that God would kill him if he looked at him, so he turned his head away.

⁷ Then Yahweh said, “I have seen how badly the Egyptians are treating my people in Egypt. I have heard my people shouting in despair because of what the slave drivers are making them do. I know

how my people are suffering. ⁸ So I have come down from heaven to rescue them from the Egyptians. I will lead them to a good and large land, a land where they can grow many crops and raise much livestock, where the descendants of Canaan, Heth, Amor, Periz, Hiv, and Jebus live. ⁹ Truly I have now heard my Israelite people crying. I have seen how badly the Egyptians treat them. ¹⁰ So I am sending you back to Egypt to the king because you will lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.”

¹¹ But Moses said to God, “I am not important enough to go to the king in order to bring your people out of Egypt.” ¹² God said, “I will be with you. When you bring my people out of Egypt, all of you will worship me right here on this mountain. That will prove to you that I am the one who sent you to them.”

¹³ Moses said to God, “If I go to the Israelite people and say to them, ‘God, the one your ancestors worshiped, has sent me to you,’ they will ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what should I say to them?” ¹⁴ God replied to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. Tell the Israelite people that the one named ‘I AM’ has sent you to them.”

¹⁵ God also said to Moses, “You must say to the Israelites, ‘Yahweh, the God of your fathers, the God whom Abraham worshiped, whom Isaac worshiped, and whom Jacob worshiped, has sent me to you. Yahweh is my name forever, and this is what all generations should call me.’ ¹⁶ Go to Egypt and gather together the elders. Say to them, ‘Yahweh, the God whom Abraham worshiped, whom Isaac worshiped, and whom Jacob worshiped, has appeared to me and said: I have seen what the Egyptian people have done to you. ¹⁷ I promise that I will rescue you from being treated badly in Egypt, and I will take you to the land where the descendants of Canaan,

Heth, Amor, Periz, Hiv, and Jebus live. It is a good land where you can grow many crops and raise much livestock.’¹⁸ The elders will do what you say. Then you and the elders will go to the king of Egypt, and you will say to him, ‘Yahweh, whom we Hebrews worship as God, has met with us. So now we ask you to allow us to travel for three days to a place in the wilderness in order that there we may offer sacrifices to Yahweh, our God.’¹⁹ But I know that the king of Egypt will allow you to go only if he sees that he has no other choice.²⁰ So I will use my power by performing many miracles there. Then he will allow you to leave.²¹ When this happens, I will cause the people of Egypt to honor the Hebrew people so that when you leave Egypt, they will give you what you need for the journey.²² At that time, each Hebrew woman will ask for what belongs to the Egyptian women living nearby. The Egyptians will give you all they have—silver and gold jewelry and clothing. You will put these things on your children. In this way, you will take everything from the Egyptians.”

Chapter 4

¹ Moses said to God, “What should I do if they do not believe me or listen to me? What should I do if they say, ‘Yahweh did not appear to you?’”² Yahweh said to him, “What is that in your hand?” Moses answered, “A staff.”³ Yahweh said, “Throw it down on the ground!” So, Moses threw the staff on the ground and it became a snake, and Moses ran away from it.⁴ But Yahweh said to Moses, “Pick up the snake by its tail.” So Moses picked up the snake by the tail, and it became a staff in his hand again.

⁵ Yahweh said, “Do the same thing in front of the Israelite people in order that

they may believe that I, Yahweh, the God whom Abraham worshiped, whom Isaac worshiped, and whom Jacob worshiped, truly appeared to you.”

⁶ Yahweh said to Moses, “Put your hand in your robe.” Moses put his hand in his robe. When he brought his hand out, it had a disease that made the skin look white as snow.⁷ Then Yahweh said, “Put your hand in your robe again.” Moses put his hand back inside his robe. This time when he brought it out, the disease was healed, and it looked like his other hand.⁸ Yahweh said, “You can do that in front of the Israelite people, too. If they do not believe you or listen to you after seeing the first miracle, they will believe you when you perform the second miracle.”⁹ But if they do not believe you or listen to what you say even after you show them these two miracles, get some water from the Nile River and pour it on the dry ground. When you do that, the water that you pour on the dry ground will become blood.”

¹⁰ Then Moses said to Yahweh, “Oh Lord, I have never been good at speaking to people. I am still that way even after you began talking to me. I speak slowly and never know what to say.”¹¹ Then Yahweh said to him, “Who made a man’s mouth? Who is it who makes a man able to speak, hear, see, or not see? Is it not I, Yahweh?”¹² So now go, and I will help you speak, and I will tell you what to say.”¹³ But Moses replied, “Oh Lord, I ask you, please send someone else in my place!”

¹⁴ Then Yahweh became angry with Moses and said to him, “What about Aaron, your brother, the Levite? He is a good speaker. He is on his way here right now, and he will be very happy to see you.”¹⁵ You can talk to him and tell him what to say. I will tell you both what you should do.¹⁶ He will speak for you to the Israelite people.

He will be your spokesman, and he will think of you as if you were me. ¹⁷ Be sure to take with you the staff that is in your hand because you will perform miracles with it."

¹⁸ Moses went back to his father-in-law, Jethro, and said to him, "Let me go back to my people in Egypt to see if they are still alive." Jethro said to Moses, "Go, and may God give you peace."

¹⁹ Yahweh said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, for the men who were looking for you are now dead." ²⁰ So Moses took his wife and sons and set them on a donkey and walked back to Egypt, and he took the staff in his hand as God had told him to do.

²¹ Yahweh said to Moses, "When you return to Egypt, be sure to do all the miracles that I have given you power to do in front of the king. But I will make him reject you, and he will not let the Israelite people leave Egypt. ²² Then say to him, 'This is what Yahweh says: Israel is like my first born son,' ²³ and I say to you, 'Let my son go, so that he may worship me.' But you did not let my son go and because of this, I will kill your firstborn son!"

²⁴ One night, as they were on the way to Egypt, Yahweh appeared to Moses in order to kill him. ²⁵ Then Moses' wife, Zipporah, took a knife and cut off the foreskin of their firstborn son. Then she touched the foreskin to Moses' feet and said, "You are a bridegroom of blood to me." ²⁶ Yahweh did not kill Moses. Zipporah said, "You are a bridegroom of blood to me" because of the circumcision.

²⁷ Meanwhile, Yahweh said to Aaron, "Go into the desert to meet Moses." So Aaron went and met Moses at the mountain of God and kissed him on the cheek. ²⁸ Moses told Aaron everything that Yahweh had said to him and all the miracles that he

had instructed him to do.

²⁹ So Aaron and Moses went and gathered together all of the elders of the Israelites. ³⁰ Aaron told them everything that Yahweh had told Moses, and Moses performed all the miracles as the people watched. ³¹ The Israelites believed Aaron and Moses. When they heard that Yahweh had seen how the Israelite people were being badly treated and that he was going to help them, they bowed down and worshiped him.

Chapter 5

¹ Then Moses and Aaron went to the king. They said to him, "Yahweh God, whom we Israelite people worship, says this to you: 'Let my people go to the desert in order that they may have a festival to honor me!'" ² But the king said, "Yahweh is no one important. I do not need to pay attention to what he says, or let the Israelite people go. I do not know this Yahweh! Furthermore, I will not let the Israelite people go!" ³ Moses and Aaron replied, "Yahweh God, the one we Hebrews worship, has revealed himself to us and told us what to tell you. So we ask you to let us go for three days into the wilderness. We must offer sacrifices to Yahweh God there. If we do not do that, he will cause us to die from diseases or from attacks by our enemies." ⁴ But the king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, why are you preventing the Israelite people from working? Tell those slaves to return to work!" ⁵ The king also said, "Listen to me! You people who now live in this land are more numerous than we Egyptians. Why are you stopping them from working?"

⁶ That same day the king commanded the Egyptian slave bosses and the Israelite assistants who directed the slaves, ⁷ "Do not

continue to give straw to Israelite people for making bricks. Make them go into the fields and gather straw for themselves.

⁸ However, still force them to make the same number of bricks that they did before. Do not lower the number at all. They do not want to work. That is the reason they are asking me to let them go into the wilderness to worship their god. ⁹ Make the men work harder so that they will not have time to listen to lies from their leaders!"

¹⁰ So the slave bosses and Israelite assistants went to where the Israelite people were and said to them, "The king has said that he will no longer give you any straw.

¹¹ So you must go and get straw where you can find it. But you must keep working to make the same number of bricks."

¹² So the Israelite people went all over Egypt to find straw. ¹³ The slave bosses kept telling them, "Do all the work you are assigned each day. Make the same number of bricks as you did before when we gave you straw!" ¹⁴ When they were not able to make enough bricks, the slave bosses working for Pharaoh beat the Israelite assistants with sticks. They asked them, "Why have all the men you are in charge of not been able to make the same number of bricks today as they did before?"

¹⁵ Then the Israelite assistants went to the king and cried out, "Your Majesty, why are you treating us this way? ¹⁶ Now they are not giving us any straw for making bricks, but they keep telling us to make more bricks. And they beat us. But it is because of your own slave bosses that we cannot make as many bricks as before!" ¹⁷ But the king said, "You are lazy and do not want to work! That is why you keep saying, 'Allow us to go to the desert to worship Yahweh.' ¹⁸ So get back to work! We are not going to give you any straw, but

you must keep making the same number of bricks!"

¹⁹ The Israelite assistants knew that they were having a bad time because they had been told, "We are not going to lower the number of bricks you must make each day." ²⁰ As they left the king's palace, they met Aaron and Moses, who were waiting for them there. ²¹ They said to Aaron and Moses, "May Yahweh see what you two have done! May he punish you because you have caused the king and his officials to hate us! You have given them a reason to kill us!"

²² Moses left them and prayed to Yahweh again, saying, "O Yahweh, why have you caused all these evil things to happen to your people? And why did you send me here? ²³ Ever since I went to the king and told him what you told me to say, he has treated your people very badly, and you have not done anything to help them!"

Chapter 6

¹ Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Now you will see what I will do to the king and his people. I will make him let my people go. In fact, by my power I will force him to chase them from his land!"

² God also said to Moses, "I am Yahweh. ³ I am the one who appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and told them that I was God Almighty, but I did not tell them that my name was Yahweh. ⁴ I also made my covenant with them, promising to give them the land of Canaan. That was the land in which they were living as foreigners. ⁵ Furthermore, I have heard the Israelite people groan because of the hard work that the Egyptians have been making them do as their slaves. I have thought about the covenant that I made. ⁶ So tell the Israelite people that I said this:

'I am Yahweh. I will free you from the burdens of heavy work that the Egyptians have forced upon you. I will free you from being their slaves. With my great power and by punishing them very harshly, I will save you. ⁷ I will cause you to become my own people, and I will be your God, the one you worship. You will truly know that I am Yahweh God, the one who has freed you from the burdens of work as slaves of the Egyptians. ⁸ I will bring you to the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. You will live in it forever. I, Yahweh, am promising this.'"

⁹ Moses told that to the Israelite people, but they did not believe what he said. They were very sad because of the hard work they were made to do as slaves.

¹⁰ Then Yahweh said to Moses, ¹¹ "Go and tell the king of Egypt again that he must allow the Israelite people to leave his land!"

¹² But Moses said to Yahweh, "Please listen to me. Even the Israelite people have not paid attention to what I told them. I am a poor speaker. So why should the king pay attention to what I tell him?" ¹³ But Yahweh spoke to Aaron and Moses, "Tell the Israelite people and the king of Egypt that I have called you two to lead the Israelite people out of Egypt."

¹⁴ Now here is a list of the ancestors of Moses and Aaron.

The sons of Reuben, who was Jacob's oldest son, were: Hanok, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. They were ancestors of the clans that have those same names.

¹⁵ The sons of Simeon were: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jakin, Zohar, and Shaul. Shaul's mother was a woman from the land of Canaan. They also were ancestors of clans that have those same names.

¹⁶ These are the names of the sons of Levi, in the order in which they were born: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. Levi was 137

years old when he died.

¹⁷ The sons of Gershon were Libni and Shimei. They were ancestors of clans that have those names.

¹⁸ The sons of Kohath were Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. Kohath was 133 years old when he died.

¹⁹ The sons of Merari were Mahli and Mushi. All these were the ancestors of the clans that descended from Levi, in the order in which his sons were born.

²⁰ Amram married his father's sister, Jochebed. She was the mother of Aaron and Moses. Amram lived 137 years.

²¹ The sons of Izhar were Korah, Nepheg, and Zichri.

²² The sons of Uzziel were Mishael, Elzaphan, and Sithri.

²³ Aaron married Elisheba. She was the daughter of Amminadab and sister of Nahshon. Elisheba gave birth to four sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

²⁴ The sons of Korah were Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph. They were the ancestors of the Korahite people.

²⁵ Aaron's son Eleazar married one of the daughters of Putiel, and she gave birth to Phinehas. That ends the list of the families and clans that were descended from Levi. ²⁶ Aaron and Moses were the ones to whom Yahweh said, "Lead all the tribes of the Israelite people out of Egypt." ²⁷ They were the ones who spoke to the king of Egypt in order to bring the Israelite people out of Egypt. ²⁸ On the day that Yahweh spoke to Moses in Egypt, ²⁹ he said, "I am Yahweh. You must tell the king everything that I say to you." ³⁰ But Moses said to Yahweh, "Please listen to me. I am not a good speaker. So why should the king listen to what I tell him?"

Chapter 7

¹ Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Listen to me. I will cause the king to see you as a god, and Aaron will be like a prophet because he will speak for you. ² You must tell everything I command you to your older brother Aaron, and he will tell it all to the king. He must tell the king to let the Israelite people leave his land. ³ But I will make the king stubborn. Because of this, even though I will do many kinds of miracles here in Egypt, ⁴ the king will not believe what you say. Then I will punish the people of Egypt very severely, and I will lead the tribes of my Israelite people out of Egypt. ⁵ Then, when I show my great power to the Egyptian people and bring the Israelite people out from among them, they will know that I am Yahweh, the all-powerful God."

⁶ Aaron and Moses did everything that Yahweh told them to do. ⁷ At that time, Moses was 80 years old, and Aaron was 83 years old.

⁸ Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron, ⁹ "If the king says to you, 'Show me that God sent you by performing a miracle,' then say to Aaron, 'Throw your staff down in front of the king in order that it may become a snake.'" ¹⁰ So Aaron and Moses went to the king and did what Yahweh told them to do. Aaron threw his staff down in front of the king and his officials, and it became a snake. ¹¹ Then the king called his sorcerers and men who did magic. They did the same thing, using their magic. ¹² They all threw down their staffs, and the staffs became snakes. But Aaron's staff, which had become a snake, swallowed up all their snakes! ¹³ But the king continued to be stubborn, just as Yahweh had said he would, and he would not believe what Aaron and Moses said.

¹⁴ Then Yahweh said to Moses, "The king

is very stubborn. He refuses to allow my people to go. ¹⁵ So tomorrow morning, go to him as he is going down to the Nile River to bathe. Wait for him on the riverbank. When he comes out of the water, show him the staff, the one that had become a snake. ¹⁶ Say to him, 'Yahweh God, the one we Hebrews worship, sent me to you to tell you to let my people go in order that they may worship him in the desert. We told you that, but you have not listened to us. ¹⁷ So now Yahweh says this: "This is the way you will know that I am Yahweh, the all-powerful God. I am going to strike the water that is in the Nile River with the staff that is in my hand. When I do that, the water will become blood. ¹⁸ Then the fish in the Nile River will die, and the water in the river will smell bad. The Egyptians will not be able to drink water from the river.'"

¹⁹ Yahweh said to Moses, "When you are talking to the king, say to Aaron, 'Hold your staff out as though you were holding it over all the water in Egypt—over the rivers, the canals, the ponds, and over the pools of water, in order that all of it may become blood.' When Aaron does that, there will be blood throughout Egypt, even in wooden jars and in stone jars."

²⁰ So Aaron and Moses did what Yahweh told them to do. As the king and his officials were watching, Aaron lifted up his staff and then struck the water in the Nile River with it. All the water in the river turned to blood. ²¹ Then all the fish died. The water smelled bad, with the result that the Egyptians could not drink water from the river. Everywhere in Egypt the water became red like blood. ²² But the Egyptian men who did magic did the same thing using their magic. So the king remained stubborn, and he would not listen to what Aaron and Moses said, just as Yahweh said would happen. ²³ Then the

king turned and went back to his palace, and he did not think any more about it. ²⁴ All the Egyptians dug into the ground near the Nile River to get water to drink because they could not drink the water from the river.

²⁵ Then one week passed after Yahweh turned the water in the Nile River into blood.

Chapter 8

¹ Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Go back to the king and tell him, 'Yahweh says that you must let my people go in order that they can worship me in the desert. ² But if you do not let them go, I will punish you by sending frogs to cover your country. ³ Not only will the Nile River be full of frogs, but also the frogs will come up out of the river into your house. They will come into your bedroom and onto your bed. They will be in the houses of your leaders and all the rest of your people. They will even get into your ovens and your pans for mixing the materials for baking bread. ⁴ The frogs will jump up on you, your officials, and on all the rest of your people.'"

⁵ Yahweh also said to Moses, "Say this to Aaron: 'Hold your staff in your hand and stretch it out as though you were stretching it over the river, the canals, and the pools, and cause frogs to come up from all this water and to cover the land of Egypt.'"

⁶ After Moses told that to him, Aaron stretched out his hand as though he were stretching it over all the water in Egypt. Then the frogs came up from the water and covered Egypt. ⁷ But the men who did magic did the same thing, and they caused more frogs to come up from the water onto the land. ⁸ Then the king called Moses and said, "Ask Yahweh to take away these frogs from me and my

people. After that happens, I will allow your people to go to worship Yahweh." ⁹ Moses said to the king, "I will be glad to pray for you, for your officials, and for the rest of your people. I will ask Yahweh to get rid of the frogs from all your houses. The only frogs left will be those in the Nile River. Just tell me when I should pray." ¹⁰ The king replied, "Tomorrow." So Moses said, "I will do what you say, and then you will know that Yahweh God, the one we worship, is the only true god, and that there is no other god like him. ¹¹ The frogs will leave you, your officials, and all the rest of your people. The only ones left will be in the Nile River."

¹² Then Moses and Aaron left the king. Moses prayed to Yahweh, asking him to take away all the frogs he had brought to the king's land. ¹³ Yahweh did just what Moses asked him to do. As a result, all the frogs in the houses, in their courtyards, and in their fields died. ¹⁴ The people gathered together all the dead frogs into big piles, and the land smelled very bad. ¹⁵ But when the king saw that the problem was ended, he became stubborn again. Just as Yahweh had said would happen, the king did not do what Aaron and Moses told him.

¹⁶ Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Tell Aaron to strike the ground with his staff. When he does that, all the fine particles of earth will become gnats all over the land of Egypt." ¹⁷ Moses and Aaron obeyed Yahweh. Aaron struck the ground with his staff, and all over Egypt the fine particles of earth became gnats. The gnats covered the people and all their animals. ¹⁸ The men who worked magic tried to cause gnats to appear, but they could not do it. So the gnats stayed on the people and on their animals. ¹⁹ The men who worked magic said to the king, "It is God who has done this with his power!" But

the king continued to be stubborn, and he would not pay attention to what Aaron and Moses said, just as Yahweh had said.

²⁰ Then Yahweh said to Moses, “Get up early tomorrow morning. Go down to the river and wait for the king. When he comes to bathe, say to him, ‘This is what Yahweh says to you: “Let my people go, in order that they may worship me in the desert.”’ ²¹ I warn you that if you do not let my people go, I will send swarms of flies to you. They will come on you, on your officials, and on the rest of your people. The houses of all you Egyptians will be full of flies. They will even cover the ground on which you will be standing. ²² But when that happens, I will treat the region of Goshen differently, because my people live there. There will be no swarms of flies there. In that way, you will know that I, Yahweh, am doing these things here in this land. ²³ I will show you how I act toward my people and how I act toward your people. This miracle is going to happen tomorrow!”

²⁴ Early the next morning, Moses told that to the king, but the king would not listen. So Yahweh did what he said he would do. He sent great swarms of flies into the palace of the king and into the houses of his officials. The whole country of Egypt was ruined by the flies. ²⁵ Then the king called Aaron and Moses and said, “You Israelite people can go and worship your god, but you must do it here in this land.” ²⁶ But Moses replied, “It would not be right for us to do that because we will offer sacrifices that are very offensive to the Egyptian people. If we offer sacrifices that the Egyptian people do not like, they will kill us by throwing stones at us! ²⁷ We need to travel for three days into the wilderness. There we will offer sacrifices to Yahweh, the God we worship, just as he commands us.” ²⁸ So the king said, “I will let your peo-

ple go to offer sacrifices to Yahweh, your god, in the desert. But you must not go very far. Now pray for me!” ²⁹ Moses said, “Listen to me! After I leave you, I will pray to Yahweh, asking that tomorrow he will cause the swarms of flies to leave you, your officials, and the rest of your people. But do not lie to us again by refusing to let our people go to offer sacrifices to Yahweh!”

³⁰ Then Moses left the king and prayed to Yahweh. ³¹ Yahweh did what Moses asked. He got rid of the swarms of flies from around the king, his officials, and the rest of his people. No flies remained. ³² But the king was stubborn this time also, and he did not allow the Israelite people to go.

Chapter 9

¹ Then Yahweh said to Moses, “Go to the king and say to him, ‘This is what Yahweh, the one we Hebrews worship, says: “Allow my people to go, in order that they may worship me.”’ ² If you still refuse to let them go, ³ I warn you that I will punish you with my power by sending a terrible disease on all your livestock to make them sick and die—on your horses, on your donkeys, on your camels, on your cattle, and on your flocks of sheep and goats. ⁴ But I, Yahweh, will not treat the livestock that belongs to the Israelite people the same as yours. You will see that none of the livestock that belongs to the Israelite people will die.” ⁵ Tell Pharaoh that I will do this thing in the land tomorrow.”

⁶ The next day Yahweh did what he said that he would do. A terrible disease came upon all of the Egyptians’ livestock, and all of the livestock died. But none of the Israelite livestock died. ⁷ The king sent men to look at what happened, and they were

surprised to see that none of the Israelite animals had died. But after they told that to the king, he continued to be stubborn, and he did not let the Israelite people go.

⁸ Then Yahweh said to Aaron and Moses, "Take a few handfuls of ashes from a furnace. Moses will throw them up into the air in front of the king. ⁹ The ashes will spread all over the country of Egypt like fine dust. Everywhere in the land, the ashes will cause boils to be upon both the Egyptian people and their animals." ¹⁰ So they got some ashes and went and stood in front of the king. Moses threw the ashes up into the air. The ashes spread all over, causing boils to be upon both the Egyptian people and their animals. All the boils became open sores. ¹¹ Even the men who worked magic had boils. Because of this, they were not able to face Moses because the men who worked magic had boils just like all the rest of the Egyptian people. ¹² But Yahweh caused the king to continue to be stubborn. He did not pay any attention to what Moses and Aaron said, just as Yahweh had told Moses would happen.

¹³ Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Get up early tomorrow morning. Go and stand in front of the king and tell him that Yahweh God, the one whom the Hebrew people worship, says this: 'Let my people go in order that they may worship me in the wilderness. ¹⁴ If you do not let them go, this time I will punish with disasters, not only your officials and the rest of your people, but also you yourself in order that you might know there is no god like me anywhere in the world. ¹⁵ By this time I could have used my power to strike you and your people with terrible diseases that would have killed you all. ¹⁶ But I have let you live. The reason I have let you live is to show you my power so that people all over the earth will know how great I am. ¹⁷ You are still acting proudly and

refusing to let my people go. ¹⁸ So listen to this: About this time tomorrow I will cause large balls of ice to fall in Egypt. From the time Egypt first became a nation, there has never been an ice storm as bad as this one will be. ¹⁹ So you should send a message to all people to put under shelter their cattle and everything else that they own that is out in the fields. The ice will fall on every person and every animal that is out in the fields and that is not brought under a shelter, and they will all die.'" So Moses did what Yahweh said.

²⁰ Some of the king's officials who heard what Yahweh had said became very afraid. So they brought all their animals and their slaves under shelters. ²¹ But those who did not listen to what Yahweh had said left their slaves and their animals in the fields. ²² Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Raise your hand up toward the sky, in order that balls of ice may fall all over the land of Egypt—on the people, on their animals, and on all the plants in the fields." ²³ So Moses lifted his staff up toward the sky. And Yahweh sent down balls of ice all over the land of Egypt. There was also thunder and lightning. ²⁴ While large balls of ice were falling, there was thunder, and lightning struck the ground. There had never been an ice storm like that since Egypt first became a country. ²⁵ The ice struck everything that was in the fields all over Egypt—every person and every animal. The ice destroyed the plants in the fields and stripped the leaves off the trees. ²⁶ Only in the region of Goshen, where the Israelite people were living, was there no ice.

²⁷ Then the king sent someone to summon Aaron and Moses. He said to them, "This time I admit that I have sinned. What Yahweh has done is right, and what I and my people have done is wrong. ²⁸ Pray to Yah-

weh! We cannot take any more of this thunder and ice! I will let your people go; they do not have to stay in Egypt any longer.”

²⁹ Moses replied, “As soon as I go out of this city, I will lift up my hands and pray to Yahweh. Then the thunder will cease, and no more ice will fall. This will happen in order that you will know that Yahweh, not your gods, controls everything that happens on the earth. ³⁰ But as for you and your officials, I know that you do not yet fear Yahweh God.”

³¹ When the ice fell, the flax was ruined because the blossoms were forming, and the barley was ruined because its grain was ripe. ³² But none of the wheat was ruined, because its shoots were still very small.

³³ So Moses left the king and went outside the city. He lifted up his hands toward Yahweh and prayed. Then the thunder and the ice storm stopped, and the rain also stopped falling on the land of Egypt. ³⁴ But when the king saw that the rain, the ice storm, and the thunder had stopped, he sinned again. He and his officials continued to be stubborn. ³⁵ So, just as Yahweh had predicted by what he told Moses, the king did not allow the Israelite people to leave.

Chapter 10

¹ Then Yahweh said to Moses, “Go to the king again. I have made him and his officials stubborn. I have done so in order that I may have a good reason to do all these miracles among them. ² I have also done so in order that you would be able to tell your children and your grandchildren how I caused the Egyptians to act very foolishly when I performed all these miracles. Then all of you will know that I am Yahweh God.”

³ So Aaron and Moses went to the king and said to him, “Yahweh God, the one whom we Hebrews worship, says this, ‘How long will you stubbornly refuse to do what I tell you? Let my people go in order that they may worship me in the wilderness! ⁴ If you do not let them go, I warn you that tomorrow I will bring locusts into your country. ⁵ They will cover the ground so that you will not even be able to see it. They will eat everything that the ice storm did not destroy. They will eat everything that is left on the trees that is still growing. ⁶ They will fill your houses and the houses of all your officials and of all the rest of the Egyptians. There will be more locusts than you or your parents or your grandparents have ever seen from the time your ancestors first came to this land until now!’” Then Moses, along with Aaron, turned and left the king.

⁷ The king’s officials said to him, “How long is this man going to bring bad things upon us? Let the Israelites go in order that they may worship Yahweh, their god. Do you not yet understand that this man has ruined Egypt?” ⁸ So they brought Aaron and Moses back to the king. He said to them, “All right, you can go and worship Yahweh, your god. But who are the ones who will go?” ⁹ Moses replied, “We all need to go, everyone, including those who are young and those who are old. We need to take our sons, our daughters, and our flocks of sheep, goats, and herds of livestock because we must have a festival to honor Yahweh.”

¹⁰ So the king replied, “I never want Yahweh to help you, and I myself will never let you take your children and your wives with you! It is clear that you are planning not to return. ¹¹ So, no, I will not let you all go. The Israelite men may go and worship Yahweh if that is what you want.” Then the king drove Moses and Aaron from his

palace.

¹² Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Reach out your hand as though you were stretching it over the land to welcome the locusts. They will come to the country of Egypt and eat every plant that is left in the land, every plant that the ice storm did not destroy."

¹³ So Moses held out his staff as though he were stretching it over the whole land of Egypt. Then Yahweh caused a strong wind to blow from the east, and it blew over the land all that day and all that night. By the next morning, it had brought the locusts. ¹⁴ The locusts swarmed all over Egypt. The swarm of locusts was larger than any that had ever been seen in Egypt, and there will never be a swarm of locusts like that again in the land. ¹⁵ They covered the surface of the ground and made it appear black. They ate all the plants in the land and everything on the trees that had not been destroyed by the ice storm. Nothing that was green was left on any plant or on any tree anywhere in Egypt.

¹⁶ The king quickly called Aaron and Moses and said, "I have sinned against Yahweh, your god, and against you two. ¹⁷ So now I ask you to forgive me this one time for having sinned. Please pray to Yahweh, your god, to take away this terrible disaster that will cause us all to die."

¹⁸ So Moses and Aaron left the king, and Moses prayed to Yahweh. ¹⁹ Then Yahweh changed the wind so that it blew strongly from the west, and it blew all the locusts into the Sea of Reeds. There was not one locust left anywhere in the country of Egypt.

²⁰ But Yahweh made the king stubborn again, and the king did not let the Israelite people go.

²¹ Yahweh said to Moses, "Reach your hand up toward the sky in order that there

may be darkness over all the land of Egypt, a darkness so complete that people will have to feel around to know where to walk." ²² So Moses reached his hand toward the sky, and it became very dark all over Egypt for three days and nights. ²³ People could not see each other. No one left his house during that whole time. But there was light in the area where the Israelite people lived.

²⁴ The king called Moses and said, "All right, you may go and worship Yahweh. Your wives and your children may go with you. But your flocks of sheep and goats and your herds of cattle must remain here." ²⁵ But Moses replied, "No, you must let us take along the sheep and goats in order that we may have some of them to sacrifice and give as burnt offerings to Yahweh, our God. ²⁶ Our livestock must also go with us; we are not going to leave one animal behind. We must take them to worship Yahweh. We will not know which animals to sacrifice until we get to where we are going."

²⁷ But Yahweh made the king continue to be stubborn. The king would not let the Israelite people go. ²⁸ The king said to Moses and Aaron, "Get out of here! Make sure that you never come to see me again! The day you see me again, I will have you killed!" ²⁹ Moses replied, "You are correct! You will never see me again!"

Chapter 11

¹ Then Yahweh said to Moses, "I will bring one more disaster on the king of Egypt and on all his people. After that, he will let you leave. In fact, he will chase you out of Egypt. ² So now, speak to all the Israelite people. Tell them to ask all their Egyptian neighbors, both men and women, to give them their silver and gold jewelry." ³ Yah-

weh made the Egyptians highly respect the Israelite people. In fact, the king's officials and all the rest of the people thought that Moses was a very great man.

⁴ Then Moses went to the king and said, "This is what Yahweh says: 'About midnight tonight I will go through Egypt, ⁵ and I will cause all the firstborn sons to die. From the king's oldest son to the oldest son of the slave woman who grinds grain, and the oldest son of everyone else. I will also kill the oldest males of your livestock. ⁶ When that happens, people all over Egypt will lament loudly. They will lament more loudly than they ever have lamented before and more than they ever will again. ⁷ But among the Israelite people it will be so quiet that not even a dog will bark! Then you will know for sure that I, Yahweh, am treating the Egyptians differently from the Israelites.' ⁸ Then all these officials of yours will come and bow down before me and will say, 'Please get out of Egypt, you and all the Israelite people!' After that, we will leave Egypt!" When Moses had said that, he left the king very angrily.

⁹ Then Yahweh said to Moses, "The king will not listen to what you say. So I will perform more miracles in the land of Egypt."

¹⁰ Aaron and Moses did all these miracles in front of the king, but Yahweh made the king stubborn. The king did not let the Israelite people leave his land.

Chapter 12

¹ Yahweh said to Aaron and Moses in Egypt, ² "From now on, this month will be the first month of the year for you Israelites. ³ Tell all the Israelite people that in each family, the man who heads the family must take a lamb or a young

goat for his household. ⁴ If there are not enough people in his family to eat a whole cooked lamb, then his family and the family that lives next door may share one animal. Decide how many lambs you need according to the number of people in each family and according to how much each person can eat. ⁵ The lambs or goats that you choose must be males, one year olds, and they must not have any defects. ⁶ You must take special care of these animals until the fourteenth day of the month. On that day, all the Israelite people must kill the lambs or goats in the evening. ⁷ Then they must take some of the blood from the lambs or goats, and they must smear it on the two doorposts and on the tops of the doorframes of the houses in which they will eat the meat. ⁸ They must roast the animals immediately and eat the meat that night. They must eat it with bitter herbs and with bread that is baked without yeast. ⁹ You must not eat any of the meat raw, and you must not boil the meat. You must roast it whole without cutting off the head or the legs or without removing the internal parts. ¹⁰ You must eat all the meat that evening; do not let any of the meat remain to be eaten the next morning. If any of the meat is left the next morning, you must burn it all. ¹¹ When you eat it, you must be dressed ready to travel. You must have your sandals on your feet and your walking staff in your hands. You must eat it hurriedly. It will be a festival called Passover to honor me, Yahweh. ¹² On that night I will go through all the land of Egypt, and I will kill all the oldest males in Egypt, both humans and animals. By doing this, I will punish all the gods in Egypt. It is I, Yahweh God, who am speaking to you! ¹³ The blood that you smear on the doorways will be a mark to show me the houses in which you Israelites live. When I see the blood, I will pass over those houses, and I will not harm the people

who live there when I come to punish the Egyptians.

¹⁴ Each year, you must celebrate this festival on this day to remember what I, Yahweh, have done for you. In all the generations to come, each year you must celebrate this festival. It must continue forever. ¹⁵ For seven days you must eat bread that has no yeast in it. On the first day of that week, you must get rid of all the yeast that is in your houses. During those seven days, if anyone eats bread that is baked with yeast in it, you must drive that person out from your people. ¹⁶ On the first day of that week, you must have a holy meeting. You must do the same thing on the seventh day. People must not work on those two days. The only work they may do is to prepare food for you to eat.

¹⁷ Every year you must keep celebrating this Festival of Unleavened Bread because it will remind you that it was on this day that I brought your tribes out of the land of Egypt. So every year, in all the generations to come, you must celebrate this day as a festival. It must continue forever. ¹⁸ In the first month of the year, on the fourteenth day of that month, the only bread you may eat is bread that has no yeast in it. You must keep doing that each day until the twenty-first day of that month. ¹⁹ For those seven days you must not have any yeast in your house. During that time, if anyone, either an Israelite or a foreigner, eats bread made with yeast, that person will no longer be an Israelite. ²⁰ In your houses, do not eat anything that has yeast in it during those seven days."

²¹ Then Moses summoned all the leaders of the Israelite people. He said to them, "Each family should select a lamb and kill it, in order that you may eat it to celebrate the festival that will be called 'Passover.'

²² Let the lamb's blood drain into a bowl. Get a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the

blood. Then wipe some of the blood on the top of the doorframe and on the doorposts of your houses. The people in each house must stay inside the house until the next morning. ²³ When Yahweh goes through Egypt to kill the oldest male in each Egyptian family, he will see the blood on your doorframes, and he will pass over those houses. He will not allow the angel who causes people to die to enter your houses and kill your oldest sons. ²⁴ You and your descendants must celebrate this ritual forever. ²⁵ When you arrive in the land that Yahweh will give to you as he promised, you must keep celebrating this ritual every year. ²⁶ When your children ask you, 'What does this ritual mean?' ²⁷ you must tell them, 'This ritual is to remember how your ancestors sacrificed lambs on the night that Yahweh's angel passed over the houses of the Israelite people when they were in Egypt. He killed the oldest males in all the Egyptian houses, but he did not kill the sons in our houses.'" After Moses told them this, the people all bowed their heads and worshiped Yahweh. ²⁸ Then the Israelite people did exactly what Yahweh told Aaron and Moses to tell them to do.

²⁹ At midnight Yahweh killed all the oldest sons of the Egyptian people, all over Egypt. This included the king's oldest son, the oldest sons of the prisoners in the dungeons, and the oldest sons of everyone else. He also killed the oldest males of all the Egyptians' livestock. ³⁰ That night the king, all his officials, and all the rest of the Egyptian people awoke and discovered what had happened. They wailed loudly all over Egypt because in every house someone's son had died.

³¹ That night the king called Aaron and Moses and said, "Get up, you and all the other Israelite people, and leave my country now! Go and worship Yahweh, as you

requested! ³² Take your flocks of sheep and goats and herds of cattle, and leave! And ask Yahweh to bless me, also!"

³³ The Egyptians asked the Israelite people to leave their country quickly. They said, "If you do not do that, we will all die!" ³⁴ So the Israelite people prepared to leave at once. They took the bowls in which they mixed the dough to make bread and the dough that was in the bowls without any yeast in it, and they wrapped the bowls in their cloaks. They put the bowls on their shoulders and left. ³⁵ Then the Israelite people did as Moses told them. They went to their Egyptian neighbors and asked them for silver and gold jewelry and clothing. ³⁶ Yahweh caused the Egyptian people to greatly respect the Israelite people, so they gave them what they asked for. In that way, the Israelites carried away the wealth of the Egyptian people.

³⁷ The Israelite people walked from the city of Rameses to the town of Succoth. There were about 600,000 men who went, in addition to the women and children.

³⁸ Many other people who were not Israelites went along with them. There was also a large amount of livestock, including flocks of sheep and goats and herds of cattle. ³⁹ On their way, they baked bread with the dough that they carried with them when they had been told to leave Egypt. The dough did not have yeast in it because they were told to leave Egypt so quickly that they did not have enough time to get food ready to take with them or enough time to mix yeast in the dough.

⁴⁰ The Israelite people had lived in Egypt for 430 years. ⁴¹ On the day that those 430 years ended, on that very day, all the tribes of Yahweh's people left Egypt. ⁴² It was a night when the Israelites stayed awake as Yahweh brought them out of Egypt. So this same night every year is a

night that is dedicated to Yahweh, a night when the Israelite people in every generation remember how Yahweh kept their ancestors safe.

⁴³ Then Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron, "These are my instructions about the Passover ritual: Do not let foreigners eat the Passover meal. ⁴⁴ But any male slaves that you have bought may eat it after you have circumcised them. ⁴⁵ Do not let people who are living among you that are not Israelites, or servants whom you pay money to and who stay only for a while, eat the Passover meal. ⁴⁶ Each family must eat the Passover meal inside its own house. Do not take any of the food outside the house. Do not break the bones of the lamb. ⁴⁷ All the Israelite people must celebrate this festival. ⁴⁸ When someone from another country comes to live with you and wants to celebrate the Passover festival, circumcise all the males in his household. Then he can eat the Passover meal, and you should treat that man as though he had been born an Israelite. But do not allow men who have not been circumcised to eat the Passover meal. ⁴⁹ These rules apply to people who were born as Israelites and to foreigners who come and live among you."

⁵⁰ All the Israelite people obeyed Moses and Aaron and did what Yahweh had commanded. ⁵¹ On that very day, Yahweh brought all the tribes of the Israelite people out of Egypt.

Chapter 13

¹ Yahweh said to Moses, ² "Set apart all the firstborn males in order that they may belong to me. The firstborn males of the Israelite people and of their animals will be mine."

³ Moses said to the people, "Do not forget

this day! This is the day that you left Egypt. This is the day you were freed from being their slaves. Yahweh has brought you out of Egypt by his great power. Do not eat any bread that has yeast in it whenever you celebrate this day. ⁴ You are leaving Egypt on this day which is the first day of the month of Aviv. ⁵ Later, when Yahweh brings you into the land where the descendants of Canaan, Heth, Amor, Hiv, and Jebus now live, the land that he promised to give to you, a land that will be very good for raising livestock and growing crops, you must celebrate this festival in this month every year. ⁶ For seven days the bread that you eat must not have any yeast in it. On the seventh day there must be a festival to honor Yahweh. ⁷ Do not eat bread that has yeast in it for seven days. You should not have any yeast or bread made with yeast anywhere in your land. ⁸ On the day the festival starts, you must tell your children, 'We are doing this to remember what Yahweh did for our ancestors when they left Egypt.' ⁹ This ritual will remind you how Yahweh brought your ancestors out of Egypt with his great power. The ritual will be like something you tie on your forehead or on your wrist. It will remind you to recite to others what Yahweh has instructed you. ¹⁰ So you must celebrate this festival every year at the time Yahweh has appointed.

¹¹ Yahweh will bring you into the land where the descendants of Canaan live, as he promised to you and your ancestors that he would do. When he gives that land to you, ¹² you must give to Yahweh the firstborn males of all your animals. These all will belong to Yahweh. ¹³ You may keep the firstborn male donkeys, but you must buy them back by killing a lamb in the place of the donkey. If you do not want to buy back the donkey, you must kill it by breaking its neck. You must buy back every one of your own firstborn sons. ¹⁴

In the future, when one of your children asks, 'What does this mean?' you must say to him, 'Yahweh brought our ancestors out of Egypt with his great power, and freed us from being slaves there. ¹⁵ The king of Egypt did not let them leave his land, so Yahweh killed all the firstborn males in Egypt, both the boys and the firstborn of their livestock. That is why we now sacrifice to Yahweh all the firstborn of our livestock, but we buy back our own firstborn sons.' ¹⁶ This will remind you about how Yahweh brought our ancestors out of Egypt by his great power; it will be like something you tie on your wrist or on your forehead to remind you of that."

¹⁷ When the king of Egypt let the Israelite people go, God did not lead them to go through the land of the Philistines. That was a shorter road, but God said, "It would be bad if my people changed their minds when they realized that they will have to fight the Philistines to take their land. Then they would decide to go back to Egypt." ¹⁸ Instead, God led them to go around through the wilderness toward the Sea of Reeds. When the Israelite people left Egypt, they were carrying weapons to fight their enemies.

¹⁹ Moses had them take along the bones of Joseph with them because Joseph long ago had made the Israelite people promise that they would do that. He had said to them, "God will rescue your descendants out of Egypt. When that happens, you must carry my bones with you."

²⁰ The Israelite people left Succoth and walked to Etham at the edge of the wilderness, and they set up their tents there. ²¹ When they walked during the daytime, Yahweh went in front of them in a tall white cloud to show them the way. During the night, he went in front of them in a tall cloud that looked like a fire. By doing this, he enabled them to travel in the

daytime and also at nighttime. ²² The tall cloud did not leave them. It was always in front of them, as a bright white cloud in the daytime and like a tall column of fire in the night.

Chapter 14

¹ Then Yahweh said to Moses, ² "Tell the Israelite people to turn around and go back and set up their tents in front of Pi Hahiroth. That town is between Migdol and the sea, near Baal Zephon. Set up your tents there close to the sea. ³ When the king knows you have done that, he will think, 'The Israelite people are confused. They are wandering around, and the desert blocks their path.' ⁴ But I will make the king stubborn again, and he will take his army and come after you. Then my people will praise me for winning a victory over the king and his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am Yahweh." So Moses told the Israelites that, and they did what he told them to do.

⁵ When someone told the king that the Israelite people had left during the night, he and his leaders changed their minds and said, "What have we done? The Israelite people will no longer be our slaves!" ⁶ So the king got his chariot and his army ready. ⁷ Then he selected six hundred of the best chariots, and in each chariot he placed a driver, a soldier, and a commander, and they left. ⁸ Yahweh made the king of Egypt stubborn, so he and his army went to pursue the Israelites. The Israelites marched out with confidence. ⁹ The Egyptian army, with all the king's horses and chariots and horsemen, went after the Israelites. They caught up with them as they were camped near the sea close to Pi Hahiroth, in front of Baal Zephon.

¹⁰ When the king's army got near, the Israelite people were surprised to see that the Egyptians were marching toward them. They were terrified, so they cried out to Yahweh to help them. ¹¹ Then they said to Moses, "Certainly you did not think that there was not enough room in Egypt for us to be buried. So why did you bring us here to die in this wilderness? Look what you have done to us by bringing us out of Egypt! ¹² That is what we told you when we were in Egypt. We said, 'Leave us alone, and let us work for the Egyptians.' It would have been better for us to be slaves for the Egyptians than to die here in the desert!"

¹³ Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid! Stand strong and see how Yahweh will rescue you. He will save you today, and the result will be that the Egyptians that you are looking at today—you will never see them again. ¹⁴ Yahweh will fight for you! Just stay calm. There is nothing else that you will have to do."

¹⁵ Then Yahweh said to Moses, "You must not call out to me for help any longer in this situation. Instead, tell the people to go forward. ¹⁶ Lift up your staff and stretch it out as though you were stretching it over the sea. The water will move away so that the Israelite people can go in the middle of the sea, walking on dry ground between the walls of water on each side. ¹⁷ I will make the Egyptians stubborn so that they will try to follow the Israelites. Then because of what I will do to the king, his army, his chariots, and his horsemen, my people will praise me. ¹⁸ When I have won a glorious victory over the king, his chariots, and his horsemen, the other Egyptians will know that I am Yahweh, the God who can do anything."

¹⁹ Then the angel of God, who had been in front of the Israelite people, moved and went behind them. The tall, bright cloud

that had been in front of them also moved behind them ²⁰ until it was between the Egyptian army and the Israelite people. The cloud caused the Egyptian army to be in the darkness, but it gave light for the Israelites. As a result, neither group could come near the other group during the whole night.

²¹ That evening, Moses stretched out his hand as though he were stretching it over the sea. Then Yahweh sent a strong wind from the east. It blew all night and pushed the water apart, and it caused the land between the water to dry up. ²² Then the Israelite people went on the dry land in the middle of the sea. The water was like a wall on each side of them, on the right side and on the left side. ²³ Then the Egyptian army went after them into the middle of the sea with their horses and their chariots and chariot drivers. ²⁴ Just before dawn, Yahweh looked down from the fiery cloud, and then he caused the Egyptian army to panic. ²⁵ He caused the wheels of the chariots to get stuck in the ground so that they could hardly move. So the Egyptians said, "Yahweh is fighting for the Israelites against us; let us get out of here!"

²⁶ Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Stretch out your arm as though you were stretching it over the sea. Then the water will come back on the Egyptians, on their chariots, and their horsemen." ²⁷ So Moses stretched out his arm, and, as the sun was rising, the water returned to its normal level. The Egyptians tried to escape, but Yahweh hurled them back into the sea. ²⁸ The water returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and the whole Egyptian army that had tried to follow the Israelites into the sea. Every one of the Egyptians died. ²⁹ But the Israelite people had already crossed through the sea by walking on dry ground, with the water

being like two walls, one on the right side and one on the left side.

³⁰ That is the way Yahweh saved the Israelite people from the Egyptian army on that day. The Israelite people saw the Egyptians lying dead. Their bodies washed up on the shore. ³¹ The Israelites saw what Yahweh did to the Egyptians by his great power, and they were in awe of Yahweh. They trusted in Yahweh, and they also trusted in Moses.

Chapter 15

¹ Then Moses and all the Israelite people sang a song to Yahweh. They sang,

"I will sing to Yahweh because he has won a great victory;

He has thrown the horses and their riders into the sea!

² Yahweh is the one who makes me strong, and he is the one I sing about.

He is the one who has saved me.

He is my God, and I will praise him.

He is the one my father worshiped,
and I will tell others how great he is.

³ Yahweh is a warrior;

Yahweh is his name.

⁴ He has thrown the king's chariots and his army into the sea;

The king's best officers all drowned in the Sea of Reeds.

⁵ The water covered them like a flood;
they sank to the bottom like a stone.

⁶ O Yahweh, your power is immense;
with that power, O Yahweh, you have crushed the enemy into pieces.

⁷ We honor you greatly because you have defeated your enemies.

Because you were angry with them, you have destroyed them

like a fire burns up straw.

⁸ You blew on the sea,

and the water piled up high;

the water stood up like two walls.

In the deepest part of the sea the water became thick,

as though it were frozen.

⁹ Our enemies said, 'We will go after them

and catch up to them.

We will draw our swords

and strike them.

After we defeat them,

we will divide up everything we take from them.'

¹⁰ But you blew on them with your breath,

and then the sea covered them.

They sank like lead in the big waves.

¹¹ Yahweh, among their gods, there is no god like you!

You are glorious, completely different from all that you made.

There is no one like you!

Everyone fears and praises you for all the miracles you do!

¹² When you stretched out your right hand,

the earth swallowed up our enemies!

¹³ You never stop loving us, the people that you have rescued;

with your power you are leading us to the land where you yourself live.

¹⁴ The people of other nations will hear what you have done,

and they will tremble.

The people in Philistia will be terrified.

¹⁵ The chiefs in Edom will be dismayed.

The leaders in Moab will be so afraid that they will shake. All those who live in Canaan will faint.

¹⁶ They will be terrified and fearful because of your great strength.

But they will be as silent as stones

until we, your people, march past them,

the people you freed from being slaves in Egypt.

¹⁷ You will bring us into the promised land of Canaan.

You will enable us to live on your hill,

in the place that you, Yahweh, have chosen to be your home,

in the holy place, our Lord,

that you yourself will build.

¹⁸ O Yahweh, you will rule forever!"

¹⁹ When the king's horses and chariots and horsemen tried to go through the sea, Yahweh caused the water to come back and cover them. But the Israelite people walked through the middle of the sea on dry ground. ²⁰ Then Miriam, who was Aaron's older sister and a prophetess, picked up her tambourine, and went out dancing with all the other women who had tambourines. ²¹ Miriam sang to Yahweh this song:

"Sing to Yahweh

because he has triumphed gloriously over his enemies.

He has thrown the horses and their riders into the sea."

²² Then Moses led the Israelite people away from the Sea of Reeds. They went to the wilderness of Shur. They walked for three days, but they could not find any water. ²³ So they went on and came to a place named Marah. There was water there, but they could not drink it because it was bitter. That is why they named the place Marah, which is the Hebrew word that means ‘bitter.’ ²⁴ The people complained to Moses, saying, “What are we going to drink?” ²⁵ So Moses prayed to Yahweh. Then Yahweh showed him a tree. So he took one of the branches and threw it into the water, and the water became good to drink. There at Marah, Yahweh gave them a fixed rule by which to live. He also tested them there to determine if they would obey him. ²⁶ He said, “I am Yahweh, your God. If you will obey me when I speak to you and do those things that are right to me, and listen to all the things that I tell you, I will keep you from all the diseases that I brought on the Egyptians. Do not forget that I am Yahweh, the one who heals you.”

²⁷ After they left Marah, they came to a place named Elim. There were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees there. So they camped there.

Chapter 16

¹ They left Elim, and all the Israelite people came to the wilderness of Sin between Elim and Sinai Mountain. That was on the fifteenth day of the second month after they left Egypt. ² There in the wilderness, the Israelite people complained against Aaron and Moses. ³ They said to them, “We wish that Yahweh had killed us in Egypt! There we had meat to eat and all the bread that we wanted. But you have brought us into this desert in order that we will all starve to death!”

⁴ Yahweh said to Moses, “Listen to what I am going to do. I am going to send something from the sky that will take the place of bread for you. When I do that, the people must go out of their tents every day and gather enough to eat on that day. When I do that, I will find out whether they will obey me or not. ⁵ On the sixth day after I start doing that, they will be able to gather twice as much as on the other days and not have to gather any on the seventh day. Then they can prepare it to eat it.”

⁶ So Aaron and Moses said to all the Israelite people, “This evening you will know that it was Yahweh, not us, who brought you out of Egypt. ⁷ Tomorrow morning you will see how great Yahweh is because he has heard how you have complained against him. He is the one to whom you have really complained because we are just his servants.” ⁸ Then Moses also said, “Each evening Yahweh will give you meat to eat, and each morning he will give you something that will take the place of bread because he has heard what you have complained about. Yahweh is the one to whom you have really complained, not us. We are just his servants.”

⁹ Then Moses said to Aaron, “Tell all the Israelite people, ‘Come and stand here in the presence of Yahweh because he has heard what you have been complaining about.’”

¹⁰ So Aaron told them that. As Aaron was talking to all the Israelite people, they looked toward the desert and were surprised to see the dazzling light of Yahweh in the cloud that had been leading them.

¹¹ Then Yahweh said to Moses, ¹² “I have heard what the Israelite people have been complaining about. So say to them, ‘At twilight, you will have meat to eat, and tomorrow morning you will have some-

thing that will take the place of bread. You will have all you want of it to eat. Then you will know that I am Yahweh, your God.’”

¹³ That evening quails appeared, and there were so many that they covered the campsite. The next morning there was something like small drops of water all around the campsite. ¹⁴ When the water dried up, on the ground there was a thin layer of something that looked like small white flakes. It looked like ice laying on the ground. ¹⁵ When the Israelite people saw it, since they had never seen it before and did not know what it was, they said to each other, “What is it?” Moses replied to them, “It is something Yahweh has given you to eat, to take the place of bread. ¹⁶ This is what Yahweh has commanded: Each of you should gather as much as you need to eat. Gather two liters for each person who lives in your tents.”

¹⁷ So that is what the Israelite people did. Some gathered more and some gathered less. ¹⁸ But when they measured what they had gathered, those who had gathered a lot did not have anything left over. Those who had gathered less still had enough to eat. Each person gathered just enough.

¹⁹ Moses said to them, “Do not leave any of it to eat tomorrow morning!” ²⁰ Some of them did not pay any attention to what Moses said. They kept some of it until the next morning. However, it was full of maggots and smelled rotten. That made Moses angry.

²¹ Each morning they gathered as much as they needed. Later, when the sun got hot, what was left on the ground melted.

²² On the sixth day after they started gathering it, each person was able to gather four liters, which was twice as much as they gathered on the other days. When

the leaders of the people came to Moses and told him about that, ²³ Moses said to them, “This is what Yahweh has told you: Tomorrow will be a day for you to rest. It will be a day for Yahweh. So today, bake or boil what you will need for today and for tomorrow. Whatever is left this evening, you should put aside and keep it to eat tomorrow.”

²⁴ So they did what Moses told them. What was left over, they kept until the next day. It did not spoil and did not get maggots in it! ²⁵ On that day, Moses said, “Eat today what you have saved from yesterday because today is a day of rest to Yahweh. Today you will not find any of that food outside. ²⁶ Every week, you must gather it for six days; but on the seventh day, which will be a day of rest for you, you will not find any.” ²⁷ On the seventh day, some of the people went outside their tents to gather some of that food, but there was none. ²⁸ Then Yahweh told Moses to say this to the people: “Yahweh is angry because for a long time you people have refused to do all the things that he has told you to do! ²⁹ Listen! Yahweh has given you a day of rest. So on the sixth day of each week, he will be giving you enough of this food for two days. Each of you should stay in his tent and do no work on the seventh day!” ³⁰ So the people rested on the seventh day.

³¹ The Israelite people called this food ‘manna,’ which sounds like the Hebrew word that means ‘what is it?’ It looked white, like the color of coriander seeds, and it tasted like thin wafers made with honey. ³² Moses said, “This is what Yahweh has told you: ‘You must keep two liters of it for all future generations so that they can see the food that took the place of bread that I gave to your ancestors when I brought them out of Egypt.’” ³³ And he said to Aaron, “Take a jar, and put two

liters of manna in it. Then put it in a place where Yahweh can see it. It is to be kept like that for all future generations.”³⁴ As Yahweh had commanded Moses, Aaron put the jar in front of the box that contained the stone slabs on which the Ten Commandments were written.³⁵ The Israelite people ate manna every day for forty years until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.³⁶ Now two liters is a tenth of an ephah.

rock.” Moses did what God had said, and the elders were there with him when the water flowed out of the rock.⁷ Moses gave that place two names in the Hebrew language—Masseh, which means ‘testing,’ and Meribah, which means ‘complaining.’ He gave it the name Massah because the Israelite people were testing Yahweh, saying “Is Yahweh really among us and able to help us, or not?” and Moses gave it the name Meribah because they were complaining all the time to him.

Chapter 17

¹ Obeying what Yahweh commanded, all the Israelite people moved from the wilderness of Sin. They traveled from one place to another. They camped at a place called Rephidim, but there was no water there for the people to drink.² So the people complained to Moses again, saying, “Give us water to drink!” Moses replied to them, “Why are you speaking against me? And why are you trying to test whether Yahweh has the power to give you what you need?”³ But the people were very thirsty, and they continued to complain to Moses. They were saying, “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt? Did you bring us here to cause us and our children and animals to die from thirst?”

⁴ So Moses prayed to Yahweh. He said, “How shall I deal with these people? They are almost ready to kill me by throwing stones at me!”⁵ Yahweh said to Moses, “Lead the people and walk in front of them. Take some of the elders of the Israelite people with you. Carry in your hand the staff you used to strike the Nile River.⁶ Listen to me! I will stand in front of you on top of a large rock at the foot of Mount Sinai. Strike the rock with your stick. When you do that, water for the people to drink will flow out of the

⁸ Then the people of Amalek came and fought against the Israelite people at Rephidim.⁹ Moses said to Joshua, “Choose some men to go out and fight against the people of Amalek tomorrow. I will stand on the top of the hill, holding the staff that God told me to carry.”¹⁰ So Joshua obeyed Moses. He took some men to fight against the people of Amalek. While they were fighting, Aaron, Hur, and Moses went up to the top of the hill so that they could see the whole battle area.¹¹ Whenever Moses lifted up his arms, the Israelite men started to win the battle; whenever he lowered his arms, the people of Amalek started to win.¹² But Moses’ arms became tired. So Aaron and Hur rolled a large stone for him to sit on. While he was sitting on it, those two held up his arms, one man on either side of him. In that way, they kept his arms lifted up until the sun went down.¹³ In this way Joshua and the men with him defeated the people of Amalek in battle.¹⁴ Then Yahweh said to Moses, “Write an account of this battle and then read it to Joshua. Also write that I will completely destroy the people of Amalek.”¹⁵ Then Moses built a stone altar there and named it “Yahweh is my flag.”¹⁶ He said, “A promise was made in front of the throne of Yahweh: Yahweh will fight against the people of Amalek forever!”

Chapter 18

¹ Jethro, who was the priest for the people of Midian, and who was also Moses' father-in-law, heard about all that God had done for the Israelite people. He heard about how Yahweh had brought them out of Egypt. ² Moses had sent his wife Zipporah and his two sons back home when he was returning to Egypt. But now Jethro came to him, ³ bringing Zipporah and her sons. One son was named Gershom, which sounds like the Hebrew word that means "foreigner" because Moses had said, "I have been a foreigner living in another land." ⁴ Her other son was named Eliezer, which sounds like the Hebrew word that means "God helps me" because Moses had said, "God, whom my father worshiped, has helped me and saved me from being killed by the king of Egypt."

⁵ While Moses was camped with the Israelite people in the wilderness near Sinai, God's holy mountain, Jethro came to him, bringing along Moses' wife and two sons. ⁶ Jethro had sent a message to Moses, "I, your father-in-law, Jethro, am coming to see you. I am bringing your wife and her two sons!" ⁷ So Moses went out of the campsite to meet his father-in-law. He bowed before him and kissed him on the cheek. They both asked each other, "Have you been well?" Then they went into Moses' tent. ⁸ Moses told Jethro everything that Yahweh had done to the king and all the other people in Egypt in order to help the Israelite people. He also told him about the troubles they had experienced on the way, and about how Yahweh had helped them. ⁹ Jethro was happy when he heard all that Yahweh had done for the Israelite people. ¹⁰ He said, "Praise Yahweh, who has rescued you from the power of the Egyptian army, and out of

the power of the king of the Egyptians (who is called Pharaoh), and has set the Israelites free from the control of the Egyptian people!" ¹¹ Now I know that Yahweh is greater than all other gods because he rescued you from the power of the proud Egyptians when they were causing you to suffer." ¹² Then Jethro brought an animal to sacrifice by burning it on the altar as an offering, and he also offered other sacrifices to God. Aaron and the Israelite elders went with them to eat a meal with Jethro to honor God.

¹³ The next day, Moses sat down at the place where he settled disputes among the people. The people were bringing their disputes to Moses from the morning until the evening. ¹⁴ When Jethro saw everything that Moses was doing for the people, he said, "Why are you doing all this for the people? Why are you doing this by yourself, and why are all the people standing around you from the morning until the evening, asking you to make decisions for them?" ¹⁵ Moses replied, "I am doing this because the people keep coming to me to find out what God desires. ¹⁶ When they have a dispute about something, they come to me, and they ask me to decide which of them is right. I also tell them all of God's laws and instructions." ¹⁷ Jethro said to him, "What you are doing is not good for you or for the people. ¹⁸ You and these people will wear yourselves out! This work is too much for you. You are not able to do it by yourself. ¹⁹ Now listen to what I will tell you to do. If you do what I suggest, God will help you. You should continue to speak to God and tell him about the people's disputes. ²⁰ You should also teach them what God has commanded and instructed you. You should also explain to them how they should conduct their lives and the things that they should do. ²¹ In addition, you should choose some other men to help

you. Choose men who have respect for God and who will not accept bribes. Appoint some of them to make decisions for groups of ten people, some for groups of fifty people, some for groups of a hundred people, and some for groups of a thousand people. ²² Allow them to serve to settle disputes for the people. The difficult matters they can bring to you, but the matters that are not difficult, they can decide themselves. That will make the work easier for you as they help you do that work. ²³ If you do that, and if God agrees, you will be able to endure the stress, and all the people will be able to go home peacefully with their disputes settled quickly.”

²⁴ Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all that Jethro told him. ²⁵ Then Moses chose capable men from among the Israelite people and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. ²⁶ Moses chose them to decide about the people’s disputes. They brought the difficult cases to Moses, but they decided the matters that were not difficult by themselves. ²⁷ Then Moses said goodbye to his father-in-law, and Jethro returned home.

Chapter 19

¹ In the third month after leaving Egypt, they came to the wilderness of Sinai. ² After they left Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai, and they set up their tents at the base of the mountain. ³ Moses climbed up the mountain to talk with God. Yahweh called to him from the top of the mountain and said, “This is what I want you to say to the Israelite people, the descendants of Jacob, ⁴ ‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians. You have seen what I did for you and how I brought you as

if you had been on eagles’ wings here to me. ⁵ So now, if you do what I tell you and obey all that I command you, you will be my own people. You will be my special possession from among all of the people, for all the earth is mine. ⁶ You will be people over whom I will rule, and you will be a kingdom where everyone will worship me like priests, and you will be a nation only for me.’ That is what you must tell the Israelite people.”

⁷ So Moses went down the mountain and called the elders of the people. He told them everything that Yahweh had told him to tell them. ⁸ The people all said, “We will do everything that Yahweh has told us to do.” Then Moses climbed back up the mountain and reported to Yahweh what the people had said.

⁹ Then Yahweh said to Moses “Listen carefully. I will come to you from inside a thick cloud. When I am speaking to you, the people will hear it, and they will always believe that you are their leader.” Then Moses told Yahweh what the people said. ¹⁰ Then Yahweh said to Moses, “Go back down to the people again. Tell them to get ready for my coming. They must purify themselves today and tomorrow, and wash their clothes, too. ¹¹ They must do that to be ready on the third day. On that day I will come down to Mount Sinai to where all the people can see me. ¹² You must make a boundary around the base of the mountain, and tell them, ‘Be sure that you do not climb the mountain or even go near it. Anyone who even touches the base of the mountain must be killed.’ ¹³ Do not let anyone touch any person or any animal that touches the mountain. You must kill any person or animal that touches the mountain by throwing stones at it or shooting it with arrows. But when you hear a long, loud trumpet sound, the people can come close to the base of the

mountain.”

¹⁴ So Moses went down the mountain again and told the people to purify themselves and to get ready for Yahweh’s coming. They did what Moses told them to do, and they also washed their clothes. ¹⁵ Then Moses said to the people, “Be ready on the third day, and you men must not sleep with your wives until after then.”

¹⁶ On the third day, during the morning, there was thunder and lightning and a very dark cloud on the mountain. A trumpet sounded very loudly, and the people in the camp shook because they were very afraid. ¹⁷ Then Moses led the people outside the camp to meet with God. They stood around the base of the mountain. ¹⁸ Then Yahweh descended on Mount Sinai so that the entire mountain was covered in smoke and surrounded by fire. The smoke rose up like the smoke from the chimney of a furnace, and the whole mountain shook violently. ¹⁹ As the sound of the trumpet continued to become louder, Moses spoke to Yahweh, and Yahweh answered him in a loud voice that sounded like thunder. ²⁰ Then Yahweh came down again onto the top of Mount Sinai, and he summoned Moses to come up to the top of the mountain. So Moses went up. ²¹ Yahweh said to Moses, “Go down again and warn the people not to cross the boundary in order to look at me. If they do that, many of them will die. ²² Also, the priests who come near me must purify themselves, because I am coming to them. If they do not do that, I will punish them.”

²³ Then Moses said to Yahweh, “The people will not climb the mountain because you commanded them, saying, ‘Set a boundary around the mountain, to set it apart.’”

²⁴ Yahweh said to Moses, “Go down the mountain and bring Aaron back up with you. But do not allow the priests or other

people to cross the boundary to come up to me. If they cross it, I will punish them.” ²⁵ So Moses went down the mountain again and told the people what Yahweh had said.

Chapter 20

¹ Then God spoke these words to the Israelite people. ² “I am Yahweh your God, the one you worship. I am the one who brought you out of the land of Egypt. I am the one who freed you from being slaves there. ³ You must worship only me; you must not worship any other god. ⁴ You must not carve a figure to worship that represents anything in the sky or that is on the ground or that is in the water under the ground. ⁵ You must not bow down to any idol and worship it because I am Yahweh your God, and I will not allow you to worship any other gods. I will punish those who sin and hate me. I will punish not only them, but also I will punish their descendants down to the third and fourth generation. ⁶ However, I will never stop loving thousands of generations of those who love me and obey my commandments.

⁷ Do not use my name carelessly because I am Yahweh your God, the one whom you should worship, and I will certainly punish those who use my name for wrong purposes.

⁸ Do not forget that the seventh day of every week belongs to me, so keep those days only for me. ⁹ There are six days each week for you to do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a day of rest, a day dedicated to me, Yahweh your God, the one whom you should worship. On that day you must not do any work. You and your sons and daughters and your male and female slaves must not work. You must not

even force your livestock to work, and you must not allow foreigners to work, those strangers who are living in your country.

¹¹ I, Yahweh, created the sky, the earth, the ocean, and everything that is in them in six days. Then I stopped my work of creating everything and rested on the seventh day. That is the reason that I, Yahweh, have blessed the rest day and set it apart to be a sacred day.

¹² Honor your father and your mother, in order that you may live a long time in the land that I, Yahweh your God, will give you.

¹³ Do not murder anyone.

¹⁴ Do not commit adultery with anyone.

¹⁵ Do not steal anything.

¹⁶ Do not falsely accuse anyone of committing a crime.

¹⁷ Do not covet someone else's house, someone else's wife, someone else's male or female slave, someone else's livestock, someone else's donkeys, or anything else that another person owns."

¹⁸ When the people heard the thunder and saw the lightning, and when they heard the sound of the trumpet and saw the smoke on the mountain, they were afraid and trembled. They stood at a distance

¹⁹ and said to Moses, "If you speak to us, we will listen. But do not let God speak anymore to us. We are afraid that if he speaks anymore to us, we will die." ²⁰ Moses replied to the people, "Do not be afraid! God has come to determine how you will behave. He wants you to honor him and to not sin."

²¹ Then, as the people watched from a distance, Moses went close to the black cloud where God was.

²² Yahweh said to Moses, "Say this to the Israelite people, 'You have heard how I, Yahweh, have spoken to you from heaven. ²³ I

told you that you must not make any idols of silver or gold that you will worship instead of me. ²⁴ Make for me an altar from earth. Sacrifice on it your burnt offerings, your offerings to promise friendship with me, and also your sheep and oxen. Worship me in any place that I choose for you to honor me; if you do that, I will come to you and bless you. ²⁵ If you make for me an altar from stones, do not make it from stones that you have cut to make them look nice because you will make the altar unsuitable for worshipping me if you use tools to cut the stones. ²⁶ Do not make an altar that has steps in front of it because if you do that, God could see your naked body as you go up the steps."

Chapter 21

¹ "Here are some other instructions to give to the Israelite people. ² When you buy a Hebrew slave, he is to serve you for only six years. In the seventh year you must free him from being your slave, and he does not have to pay you anything for setting him free. ³ If he was not married before he became your slave, and if he marries someone while he is your slave, his wife is not to be set free with him. But if he was married before he became your slave, you must free both him and his wife.

⁴ If the master of a slave gives him a wife, and she gives birth to sons or daughters while her husband is a slave, only the man is to be freed. His wife and children will continue to be slaves of their master. ⁵ But when it is time for the slave to be set free, if the slave says, 'I love my master and my wife and my children, and I do not want to be set free,' ⁶ then his master must take him to the place where they worship God. There he must make the slave stand against the door or the doorpost. Then the master will use an awl to make a hole in

the slave's ear and fasten something to the slave's ear to show that he will own that slave for the rest of his life.

⁷ If a man sells his daughter to become a slave, she should not be set free after six years as the male slaves are. ⁸ If the man who bought her wanted her to be his concubine, but if later he is not pleased with her, he must sell her back to her father. He must not sell her to a foreigner because that would be breaking the contract he made with the girl's father. ⁹ If the man who buys her wants her to be a wife for his son, he must then treat her as though she were his own daughter. ¹⁰ If the master takes another slave girl to be another woman for himself, he must continue to give the first slave concubine the same amount of food and clothing that he gave to her before, and he must continue to sleep with her as before. ¹¹ If he does not do these three things for her, he must free her from being a slave, and she is not required to pay anything for being set free.

¹² If someone hits a man in order to kill him and the man dies, then that person should also be put to death. ¹³ But if the one who hit the other did not mean to kill that person, the one who hit him can go to a place that I will choose for you, and he will be safe there. ¹⁴ But if someone gets angry with another person and kills him on purpose, even if the murderer runs to the altar, you must kill him.

¹⁵ Anyone who strikes his father or mother must be killed.

¹⁶ Anyone who kidnaps another person, either in order to sell that person or to keep him as a slave, must be killed.

¹⁷ Anyone who curses or insults his father or his mother must be killed.

¹⁸ Suppose two people fight, and one hits the other with a stone or his fist. Suppose

the person he strikes does not die but is injured and has to stay in bed for a while, ¹⁹ but later he is able to walk outside using a cane. Then they must not punish the person who hit him, except that they must make him pay the injured person the money he could not earn while he was recovering as well as the costs for healing.

²⁰ If someone hits his male or female slave with a stick, and if the slave dies, then the one who struck him must be punished. ²¹ But if the slave lives for a day or two after he is hit and then dies, you must not punish the one who hit him. Not having that slave to be able to work for him any longer is enough punishment.

²² If two people are fighting and they hurt a pregnant woman so that she has a miscarriage but the woman is not harmed in any other way, the one who hurt her must pay a fine. He must pay whatever the woman's husband asks after a judge approves of the fine. ²³ But if the woman is hurt in another way, the one who hurt her must be caused to suffer in the same way that he caused her to suffer. If she dies, he must be killed. ²⁴ If her eye is hurt, or if he knocks out her teeth, or her hand or foot is hurt, ²⁵ or if she is burned or bruised, the one who hurt her must be hurt in the same way. ²⁶ If the owner of a slave strikes the eye of his male or female slave and that eye becomes blind, he must free that slave because of what he did to the slave's eye. ²⁷ If someone knocks out one of his slave's teeth, he must free the slave because of what he did to the slave's tooth.

²⁸ If a bull gores a man or woman with the result that the person dies, you must kill the bull by throwing stones at it, but do not eat it. The owner of the bull is not guilty. ²⁹ But if the bull had attacked people several times before and its owner had been warned, but he did not keep the bull inside a fence, and it gores a man

or woman to death, then you must kill the bull by throwing stones at it, and you must also kill its owner. ³⁰ However, if the owner of the bull can pay a fine to save his own life, he must pay the full amount that the judges say that he must pay. ³¹ If someone's bull attacks and gores another person's son or daughter, you must treat the bull's owner according to that same rule. ³² If a bull attacks and gores a male or female slave, its owner must pay to the slave's owner thirty pieces of silver, and you must kill the bull by throwing stones at it.

³³ Suppose someone has a pit and does not keep it covered, and someone's bull or donkey falls into it and dies. ³⁴ Then the owner of the pit must pay for the animal that died. He must give the money to the animal's owner, but then he can take away the animal that died and do whatever he wants to with it. ³⁵ If someone's bull hurts another person's bull so that it dies, the owners of both bulls must sell the bull that is living, and they must divide between them the money that they get for it. They must also divide between them the meat of the animal that died. ³⁶ However, if people know that the bull often attacked other animals before, and its owner did not keep it inside a fence, then the owner of that bull must give the owner of the bull that died one of his own bulls, but he can take away the animal that died and do whatever he wants to with it."

Chapter 22

¹ "If someone steals a bull or a sheep and then kills it or sells it, he must pay five bulls for the bull that he stole, and he must pay four sheep for the sheep that he stole.

² If a thief is caught while he is breaking into someone's house at night, if the one

who catches him kills the thief, he is not guilty of killing him. ³ But if that happens during the daytime, the one who killed the thief is guilty of murdering him.

A thief must pay for what he stole. If he has no animal with which to pay for the one that he stole, he must be sold to become someone else's slave, and the money from his sale must be used to pay for what he stole. ⁴ If a thief still has the animal when he is caught, whether it is a bull or a donkey or a sheep, and it is still alive, the thief must pay back the stolen animal as well as another one of the same kind.

⁵ If someone allows his animals to eat grass in his field or in his vineyard, and if the animals stray away and eat the plants in another person's field, the owner of the animals must pay the owner of that field by giving him the best from his own field or vineyard.

⁶ If someone starts a fire and it spreads through the grass and starts burning in someone else's field, and the fire burns grain that is growing or grain that is already cut and stacked, then the person who started the fire must pay for what has been lost.

⁷ Suppose that someone gives another person some money or other valuable item and asks him to keep it in his house for a while. And suppose that a thief steals it from that person's house. If the thief is caught, the thief must pay back twice as much as he stole. ⁸ But if the thief is not caught, the owner of the house from which the item was stolen must stand before the judges so that the judges can say whether the owner of the house was the one who took the other man's valuable item.

⁹ If two people argue about which one of them owns a bull or a donkey or a sheep or some clothing, or something else that

has been lost, they must stand before the judges. The one whom the judges say is lying must pay back to the real owner twice as many bulls or donkeys or sheep or items of clothing.

¹⁰ Suppose someone gives his donkey or bull or sheep or some other animal to someone else and asks him to take care of it for a while, and the animal dies or is injured or is stolen while no one is watching.

¹¹ Then the person who was taking care of the animal must swear, knowing that God is listening, that he did not steal the animal. If he did not steal it, the owner of the animal must accept that the other person is telling the truth, and the other person will not have to pay anything back to the owner. ¹² But if the animal was stolen while he was supposed to be taking care of it, the man who promised to take care of it must pay back the owner for the animal.

¹³ If he says that the animal was killed by wild animals, he must bring back the remains of the animal that was killed and show it to the animal's owner. If he does that, he will not have to pay anything for the animal.

¹⁴ If someone borrows an animal, and if that animal is hurt or dies when its owner is not there, the one who borrowed it must pay the owner for the animal. ¹⁵ But if that happens when the owner of the animal is there, the one who borrowed it will not have to pay back anything. If the man who borrowed it only rented it, the money that he paid to rent it will be enough to pay for the animal dying or being injured."

¹⁶ "If a man forces a girl to sleep with him, a girl who is a virgin and who is not engaged to be married, he must pay the bride price for her and marry her. ¹⁷ But if her father does not allow her to marry him, he must pay to the woman's father money that is the same as the bride price money that men pay for virgins.

¹⁸ You must kill any woman who practices sorcery.

¹⁹ You must kill any person who sleeps with an animal like a man sleeps with a woman.

²⁰ You must offer sacrifices only to Yahweh. You must kill anyone who offers a sacrifice to any other god.

²¹ You must not mistreat a foreigner who comes to live among you. Do not forget that you were previously foreigners in Egypt.

²² You must not mistreat any widow or any orphan. ²³ If you mistreat them and they ask me to help them, I will help them, ²⁴ and I will be angry with you; I will cause you to die in war. Your wives will become widows, and your children will no longer have fathers.

²⁵ If you lend money to any of my people who are poor, do not act like a moneylender and require him to pay interest on the money. ²⁶ If he gives you his cloak to guarantee that he will pay the money back, you must give the cloak back to him before the sun goes down ²⁷ because he needs it to keep him warm during the night. That is the only covering that poor people have when they sleep at night. If you do not act mercifully toward him by giving back his cloak, when he cries out to me asking for my help, I will help him because I always act mercifully.

²⁸ Do not insult God, and do not call on God to do harmful things to any ruler of your people.

²⁹ Do not withhold from me the best parts of the grain that you harvest, or of the olive oil or the wine that you produce. You will give your firstborn sons to me.

³⁰ Similarly, your firstborn male cattle and sheep belong to me. After those animals are born, allow them to stay with their

mothers for seven days. On the eighth day you will give them to me.

³¹ You are people who are set apart to me. I detest the meat of any animal that has been killed by wild animals. Therefore do not eat such meat. Instead, throw it where the dogs can eat it.”

Chapter 23

¹ ”Do not lie about other people. Do not help someone who is guilty by lying about what happened.

² Do not join with a group of people who are planning to do something evil. Do not tell the same lies they do and so keep the judge from deciding the case justly. ³ When a poor person is on trial, do not testify in his favor just because he is poor and you feel sorry for him.

⁴ If you see someone’s bull or donkey when it is wandering away loose, take it back to its owner even if the owner is your enemy. ⁵ If you see someone’s donkey that has fallen down because of its heavy load, help the owner to get the donkey up again even if he is someone who hates you. Do not just walk away without helping him.

⁶ Decide the cases of poor people who are on trial as fairly as you judge the cases of other people.

⁷ Do not accuse people falsely. Do not decide that innocent and righteous people should be killed because I will punish people who do such an evil thing.

⁸ Do not accept money that is a bribe because officials who accept bribes are not able to decide what is right to do, and they do not allow innocent people to be treated fairly.

⁹ Do not mistreat foreigners who live among you. You know how foreigners

often feel because the Egyptians did not treat you well when you were foreigners there.

¹⁰ For six years, plant seeds in your ground and gather the harvest. ¹¹ But on the seventh year you must not plant anything. If things grow without your planting seeds, allow the poor people to harvest and eat the crops. If there are still crops left over, allow the wild animals to eat them. Do the same thing with your grapevine and your olive trees.

¹² You may work for six days each week, but on the seventh day you must rest and not work. Also on the seventh day you must allow your work animals, your slaves, and the foreigners who live among you to rest and to become ready to work again.

¹³ Make certain that you obey everything that I have commanded you to do. Do not pray to other gods. Do not even mention their names.

¹⁴ Every year you must travel to three festivals to honor me. ¹⁵ The first one is the Festival of Bread with no Yeast. Celebrate it in the month of Aviv, which is the month in which you left Egypt. Celebrate it in the way that I commanded you; eat the bread for seven days. Always bring an offering when you come to worship me. Do not come empty-handed. ¹⁶ The second festival is the Festival of Harvest. During that festival you must offer to me the first parts of your crops that grow from the seeds that you planted. The third festival is the Festival of Finished Harvest. That will be after you finish harvesting your grain, your grapes, and your fruit. ¹⁷ Every year, at each of these times, all the men must gather together to worship me, Yahweh God.

¹⁸ When you sacrifice an animal and offer it to me, you must not offer bread that has

been baked with yeast. When you offer sacrifices, burn the fat from the animals on that same day so that no fat remains the next morning.

¹⁹ Each year, when you harvest your crops, take the best of what you harvest first, go to the place where you worship me, and give it to me, Yahweh God. When you kill a young animal, do not cook it by boiling it in its mother's milk."

²⁰ "I am going to send an angel ahead of you to guard you as you travel and to bring you safely to the place that I have prepared for you. ²¹ Pay attention to what he says and obey him. Do not rebel against him because he will have my authority and he will punish you if you rebel against him. ²² But if you pay attention to what he says and if you do all that I tell you to do, I will fight against all of your enemies. ²³ My angel will go ahead of you and will take you to where the Amor, Heth, Periz, Canaan, Hiv, and Jebus people groups live, and I will completely get rid of them. ²⁴ Do not bow down before their gods or worship them. Do not do the things that they think that their gods want them to do. Destroy their gods and smash to pieces their sacred stones.

²⁵ You must worship me, Yahweh your God. If you do that, I will bless your food and water, and I will protect you from becoming sick. ²⁶ No women in your land will have miscarriages, and no women will be unable to become pregnant. I will enable you to live a long time.

²⁷ I will cause the people who oppose you to become very afraid of me. I will kill all of the people that you come close to. Then I will cause them to turn around and run away from you. ²⁸ I will cause your enemies to become terrified. I will expel the Hiv, Canaan, and Heth people groups from your land. ²⁹ I will not remove all of them in less than one year. If I did

that, your land would become deserted, and there would be very many wild animals that would attack you. ³⁰ I will remove those people groups slowly, a few at a time, until the number of your people increases and you are able to live everywhere in the land. ³¹ I will cause the borders of your land to extend from the Sea of Reeds in the southeast to the Mediterranean Sea in the northwest, and from the wilderness of Sinai in the southwest to the Euphrates River in the northeast of the country. I will give you the power to remove the people who live there so that you will remove them as you occupy more of the country. ³² You must not make any agreement with those people or with their gods. ³³ Do not allow those people to live in your land in order that they do not cause you to sin against me. If you worship their gods, you will not be able to escape from worshiping them and sinning against me just as someone caught in a trap is unable to escape."

Chapter 24

¹ Then Yahweh said to Moses. "Come up to me on top of this mountain, you and Aaron and his sons Nadab and Abihu. Also take along seventy of the Israelite elders. While you are still some distance from the top of the mountain, there you may worship me. ² Moses, I will allow you alone to come near to me. The others must not come near, and the rest of the people must not come up the mountain."

³ Moses went and told the people everything that Yahweh had said and all that he had commanded. The people all replied together, saying, "We will do everything that Yahweh has told us to do." ⁴ Then Moses wrote down everything that Yahweh had commanded. Early the next

morning Moses built a stone altar. He also set up twelve stones, one for each of the Israelite tribes. ⁵ He also chose some young men. They burned sacrifices to Yahweh and they also sacrificed some cattle as offerings to promise friendship with him. ⁶ Moses took half of the blood of the animals that were slaughtered and put it in bowls. The other half of the blood he threw against the altar. ⁷ Then he took the scroll on which he had written everything that Yahweh had commanded in the covenant that he had made, and he read it aloud while all the people were listening. Then all the people said, "We will do all that Yahweh has told us to do. We will obey everything."

⁸ Then Moses took the blood that was in the bowls and threw it on the people. He said, "This is the blood that confirms the covenant that Yahweh has made with you when he gave you all these commands."

⁹ Then Moses along with Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy Israelite elders went up the mountain, ¹⁰ and they saw God, the one whom the Israelite people worship. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of blue stones called sapphires. They were as clear as the sky is when there are no clouds. ¹¹ God did not harm those Israelite elders because of their having seen him. They saw God, and they ate and drank together!

¹² Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Come up to me on top of this mountain. While you are here, I will give you two stone slabs on which I have written all the laws that I have given to you to teach the people." ¹³ Then Moses went with his servant Joshua part of the way up the mountain where God was. ¹⁴ Now Moses had said to the elders, "Stay here with the other people until we return! Do not forget that Aaron and Hur will be with you, so if anyone has a dispute while I am gone, he can go to

those two men." ¹⁵ Then Moses went the rest of the way up the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. ¹⁶ The glory of Yahweh came down on the mountain and covered it for six days. On the seventh day, Yahweh called to Moses from the middle of the cloud. ¹⁷ When the Israelite people looked at the top of the mountain, the glory of Yahweh was like a big fire burning there. ¹⁸ Moses went into the cloud on top of the mountain and was there for forty days and nights.

Chapter 25

¹ Yahweh said to Moses,

² "Tell the Israelites that they must give offerings to me. Receive from the people every offering that they want to give to me.

³ These are the things that they may offer: gold, silver, bronze, ⁴ blue and purple and scarlet dyed wool, fine linen, goats' hair for making cloth, ⁵ ram skins that have been tanned, sea cow hides, hard wood from acacia trees, ⁶ olive oil to burn in the lamps, spices to put in the olive oil for anointing the priests, and spices to put in the sweet-smelling incense, ⁷ onyx stones and other expensive stones to be fastened to the priest's sacred apron and to be put on the chest pouch that is to be fastened to the apron. ⁸ Tell the people to make a big sacred tent for me so that I can live in it in their midst. ⁹ They must make the sacred tent and all the things that will be used inside it according to the plan that I will show you.

¹⁰ Tell the people to make a sacred chest from acacia wood. It is to be one meter long, three-quarters of a meter wide and three-quarters of a meter high. ¹¹ Cover the chest with pure gold inside and outside and put a gold border around the top of it. ¹² They must make four rings from

gold and fasten them to the legs of the chest. Put two rings on each side of the chest. ¹³ They must make two poles from acacia wood, and they must cover them with gold. ¹⁴ They must put the poles into the rings on the sides of the chest so that the chest can be carried by the poles. ¹⁵ The poles must always be left in the rings; they must not take the poles out of the rings. ¹⁶ Put inside the chest the two stone slabs that I will give you on which I have written my commandments.

¹⁷ Tell them to make a lid for the chest from pure gold; it will be the place where I will cover people's sins. It also is to be one meter long and three-quarters of a meter wide. ¹⁸ Tell them to hammer a large lump of gold into the form of two creatures that have wings for the two ends of the lid. ¹⁹ One of these is to be put at each end of the chest, but the gold from which they are made must be joined to the gold from which the lid is made. ²⁰ Tell them to place the winged creatures so that their wings touch each other and spread out over the lid. The two winged creatures were facing each other and they both were looking toward the center of the chest. ²¹ Put the stone slabs that I will give you inside the chest. Then fasten the lid onto the top of the chest. ²² I will set times to talk with you there. From above the lid of the chest, between the two winged creatures, I will tell to you all my laws that you must transmit to the Israelite people.

²³ Tell them to make a table from acacia wood. It is to be one meter long, one-half of a meter wide, and three-quarters of a meter high. ²⁴ Tell them to cover it with pure gold and put a gold border around it. ²⁵ Tell them to make a rim all around it, four-fifths of a meter wide, and to put a gold border around the rim. ²⁶ Tell them to make four rings from gold and fasten them to the four corners of the table, one

ring close to each leg of the table. ²⁷ The rings should be fastened to the table near the rim at the legs in order to carry the table with poles. ²⁸ Make two poles from acacia wood and cover them with gold. The poles for carrying the table are to be inserted into the rings. ²⁹ Also tell them to make plates, spoons, jars, and bowls to be used when the priests pour out wine to offer to me. They must all be made from pure gold. ³⁰ On the table in front of the chest, there must always be the bread to display before me that the priests have offered to me.

³¹ Tell them to make a lampstand from pure gold. They must hammer one large lump of gold to make its base and its shaft. The branches of the lampstand, the cups for holding the oil, the flower buds and the flower petals that decorate the branches of the lamp, the base, and the shaft are all to be hammered from one big lump of gold. ³² There are to be six branches on the lampstand, three on each side of the shaft. ³³ Each of the branches is to have on it three gold decorations that will look like almond blossoms. These decorations must also have flower buds and flower petals. ³⁴ On the shaft of the lampstand there are to be four gold decorations that also look like almond blossoms, each one with flower buds and petals. ³⁵ On each side, there is to be one flower bud beneath each of the branches. ³⁶ All these buds and branches, along with the shaft, are to be hammered from one large lump of pure gold. ³⁷ Also tell them to make seven small cups for holding oil. One is to be put on top of the shaft and the others are to be put on top of the branches. Place these cups so that when the lamps are lit, the light will shine toward the front of the lampstand. ³⁸ Tell them to make tongs from pure gold, to remove the burned wicks and trays in which to put the burned wicks. ³⁹ Tell them to use thirty-three kilo-

grams of pure gold to make the lampstand, the tongs, and the trays. ⁴⁰ Make sure that they make these things according to the instructions that I am giving you here on this mountain.”

Chapter 26

¹ ”Tell the people to make the sacred tent using ten long strips of fine linen. They must take blue, purple, and red thread, and a skilled craftsman must embroider these strips with designs that represent the winged creatures that are above the chest. ² Each strip is to be twelve and one-half meters long and one and four-fifths meters wide. ³ Tell them to sew five strips together to make one set, and to sew the other five strips together to make another set. ⁴ For each set, they must make loops of blue cloth and fasten them along the outer edge of the strip, at the end of each set. ⁵ They must put fifty loops on the edge of the first set, and fifty loops at the edge of the second set so that the loops are opposite to each other. ⁶ Tell them to make fifty gold clasps to fasten both of the sets together. As a result, the inside of the sacred tent will be as though it were one piece.

⁷ Also tell them to make a cover for the sacred tent from eleven pieces of cloth made from goats’ hair. ⁸ Each piece of cloth is to be thirteen and one-half meters long and one and four-fifths meters wide. ⁹ Tell them to sew five of these pieces of cloth together to make one set, and sew the other six pieces of cloth together to make another set. They must fold the sixth piece of cloth in half to make it double over the front of the sacred tent. ¹⁰ Tell them to make one hundred loops of blue cloth, and to fasten fifty of them to the outer edge of the one set and fasten fifty to the outer edge of the other set. ¹¹

Tell them to make fifty bronze clasps and put them in the cloth loops to join the two sets together. As a result, the cover for the sacred tent will be as though it were one piece. ¹² Let the extra part of the cover, the part that extends beyond the linen cloth, hang over the back of the sacred tent. ¹³ The extra half-meter of each cover, the part that extends beyond the linen cloth on each side, must hang over the two sides of the sacred tent to protect the sides. ¹⁴ Tell them to make two more covers for the sacred tent. One is to be made from rams’ skins that have been dyed red, and the top cover is to be made from fine leather.

¹⁵ Tell them to make forty-eight frames from acacia wood, frames that will be set up to hang the sacred tent covers from them. ¹⁶ Each frame is to be four and one-half meters long and three-quarters of a meter wide. ¹⁷ They must make two projections at the bottom of each frame. These will be to fasten the frames to the bases underneath them. They must make these projections at the bottom of each frame. ¹⁸ Make twenty frames for the south side of the sacred tent. ¹⁹ Tell them to make forty silver bases to go underneath them. Two bases will go under each frame. The projections at the bottom of each frame are to be made to fit into the bases. ²⁰ Similarly, tell them to make twenty frames for the north side of the sacred tent. ²¹ They must make forty silver bases for them also with two bases to be put under each frame. ²² For the rear of the sacred tent, on the west side, tell them to make six frames. ²³ Also tell them to make two extra frames, one for each corner of the rear of the sacred tent, to provide more support. ²⁴ The two corner frames must be separated at the bottom but together at the top. At the top of each of the two corner frames there must be a gold ring for holding the crossbar. ²⁵

In that way, for the rear of the sacred tent there will be eight frames, and there will be sixteen bases, two under each frame.

²⁶ Tell them to make fifteen crossbars from acacia wood. Five of them will be for the frames on the north side of the sacred tent, ²⁷ five will be for the south side, and five for the frames at the rear of the sacred tent, the west side. ²⁸ Tell them to fasten the crossbars on the north, south, and west sides of the sacred tent to the middle of the frames. The two long ones must extend from one end of the sacred tent to the other, and the crossbar on the west side must extend from one side of the sacred tent to the other. ²⁹ Tell them to cover the frames with gold, and make gold rings to fasten the crossbars to the frames. The crossbars must also be covered with gold. ³⁰ Build the sacred tent in the way that I have shown you here on this mountain."

³¹ "Tell them to make a curtain from fine linen. A skilled craftsman must embroider it with blue, purple, and red yarn making designs to represent the winged creatures that are above the chest. ³² Tell them to suspend the curtain from four posts made from acacia wood and covered with gold. Set each post in a silver base. ³³ They must hang the top of the curtain by hooks that are fastened to the roof of the sacred tent. Behind the curtain, in the room called the very holy place, they must put the chest containing the two stone slabs on which I have written my commandments. That curtain will separate the holy place from the very holy place. ³⁴ On top of the chest in the very holy place they must put the lid. ³⁵ In the room that is outside of the very holy place, they must put the table for the sacred bread on the north side, and put the lampstand on the south side. ³⁶ Tell them to make a curtain to cover the entrance of the sacred tent. They must make it from fine linen,

and a skilled weaver must embroider it with blue, purple, and red yarn. ³⁷ To hold up this curtain, they must make five posts from acacia wood. They must cover them with gold and fasten gold clasps to them. Also they must make a bronze base for each of these posts.

Chapter 27

¹ "Tell them to make an altar from acacia wood. It is to be square, two and one-tenth meters long on each side, and make it one and one-third meters high. ² They must make a projection that looks like a horn on each of the top corners. The projections must be carved from the same block of wood as the altar. Tell them to cover the whole altar with bronze. ³ They must make pans in which to put the ashes from the animal sacrifices. Also they must make shovels for cleaning out the ashes, basins, and forks for turning the meat as it cooks, and buckets for carrying hot coals. All of these things must be made from bronze. ⁴ Also tell them to make a bronze grating to hold the wood and burning coals. They must fasten to each of the corners of the altar a bronze ring for carrying the altar. ⁵ They must put the grating under the rim that is around the altar. They must make it so that it is inside the altar, halfway down. ⁶ For carrying the altar, they must make poles from acacia wood and cover them with bronze. ⁷ They must put the poles through the rings on each side of the altar. The poles are for carrying the altar. ⁸ The altar will be like a box, made from boards of acacia wood. They must make it according to these instructions that I am giving you here on this mountain.

⁹ Around the sacred tent there is to be a courtyard. To form the courtyard, tell

them to make curtains of fine linen. On the south side, the curtain is to be 44 meters long. ¹⁰ To support the curtain, tell them to make twenty bronze posts, and one bronze base for each post. To fasten the curtains to the posts, they must make silver hooks, and metal rods covered with silver to fasten the curtains to the hooks. ¹¹ They must make the same kind of curtains for the north side of the courtyard. ¹² On the west side of the courtyard they must make a curtain twenty-two meters long. The curtains are to be supported by ten posts, with a base under each post. ¹³ On the east side, where the entrance is, the courtyard must also be twenty-two meters wide. ¹⁴⁻¹⁵ Tell them to make a curtain seven meters wide with three posts and three bases for each side of the entrance to the courtyard. ¹⁶ They must make a curtain from finely twined linen nine meters long for the entrance. A skilled weaver must embroider it with blue, purple, and red yarn. It must be supported by four posts, each one with a base under it. ¹⁷ All the posts around the courtyard must have bands of silver around them. The clasps must be made of silver, and the bases must be made of bronze. ¹⁸ The whole courtyard, from the east entrance to the west end, must be forty-six meters long and twenty-three meters wide, and the curtains that enclose it must be two and one-third meters high. All the curtains must be made of fine linen, and all the bases under the posts must be made of bronze. ¹⁹ All the things that are not made of gold that are to be used inside the sacred tent and in the courtyard, and all the tent pegs to support the sacred tent and the curtains, must be made of bronze.

²⁰ Command the Israelite people that they must bring to you the best kind of pure olive oil to burn in the lamp. They must bring this oil to you so that the lamp is al-

ways burning. ²¹ Outside the curtain of the tabernacle, where the sacred chest of Yahweh is kept, Aaron and his sons must take care to keep the lamps burning every day from evening to morning. The Israelite people must obey this regulation throughout all future generations."

Chapter 28

¹ "Call your older brother Aaron and his sons—Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. Set them apart from the rest of the Israelite people in order that they can serve me as priests. ² Tell the people to make beautiful clothes for Aaron, clothes that are suitable for one who has this dignified and sacred work. ³ Talk to all the workmen, those to whom I have given skill to build things. Tell them to make clothes for Aaron to wear when he is set apart to become a priest to serve me. ⁴ The clothes that they are to make are a sacred pouch for Aaron to wear over his breast, a sacred apron, a robe, an embroidered tunic, a turban, and a sash. These are the clothes that your older brother Aaron and his sons must wear as they serve me by doing the work that priests do. ⁵ The skilled workmen must use fine linen and blue, purple, and red yarn to make these clothes.

⁶ The skilled workmen must make the sacred apron from fine linen, and they must skillfully embroider it with blue, purple, and red yarn, and with fine gold wire.

⁷ It must have two shoulder straps that will join the front part to the back part.

⁸ A carefully woven belt, which must be made from the same materials as the sacred apron, must be sewn onto the apron.

⁹ A skilled workman must take two onyx stones and carve on them the names of the twelve sons of Jacob. ¹⁰ He must en-

grave the names in the order in which Jacob's sons were born. He must engrave six names on one stone and the other six names on the other stone.¹¹ A gem cutter should engrave these names on the two stones. Then he should mount the stones in gold settings.¹² Then he should fasten the stones onto the shoulder straps of the sacred apron to represent the twelve tribes of Israel. In that way, Aaron will carry the names of the tribes on his shoulders in order that I, Yahweh, will never forget my people.¹³ The settings for the stones must be made from gold.¹⁴ Tell them to make two chains of gold that are braided like cords and to fasten the chains to the settings."

¹⁵ Tell the skilled workman to make a sacred pouch for Aaron to wear over his chest. He will use this to find out what I want the people to do. They must make it of the same materials as the sacred apron, and they must embroider it in the same way with gold, blue, purple, and red fine linen.¹⁶ It is to be square, and the material must be folded double so that it is 23 centimeters long and 23 centimeters wide.¹⁷ The skilled workman must fasten four rows of valuable stones onto the pouch. In the first row, he must put a red ruby, a yellow topaz, and a red garnet.¹⁸ In the second row, he must put a green emerald, a blue sapphire, and a diamond.¹⁹ In the third row he must put a red jacinth, a white agate, and a purple amethyst.²⁰ In the fourth row, he must put a yellow beryl, an onyx, and a green jasper. All of these stones must be mounted in gold settings.²¹ A gem cutter should engrave on each of these twelve stones the name of one of the sons of Jacob. These names will represent the twelve tribes of Israel.²² The two chains that are made from pure gold and braided like cords are for attaching the sacred pouch to the sacred apron.²³ The workman must make

two gold rings and attach them to the upper corners of the sacred pouch.²⁴ He must make two gold cords and fasten one end of each cord to one of the rings.²⁵ He must fasten the other end of each cord to the two settings that enclose the stones. In that way, the sacred pouch will be attached to the shoulder straps of the sacred apron.²⁶ Then he must make two more gold rings and attach them to the lower corners of the sacred pouch on the inside edges next to the sacred apron.²⁷ He must make two more gold rings and attach them to the lower part of the front of the shoulder straps near to where the shoulder straps are joined to the sacred apron just above the sash.²⁸ The skilled workman must tie the rings on the sacred pouch to the rings on the sacred apron with a blue cord so that the sacred pouch is above the sash and does not come loose from the sacred apron.²⁹ In that way, Aaron will have the names of the twelve tribes of Israel in the sacred pouch close to his chest for making decisions when he enters the holy place.³⁰ Put into the sacred pouch the two things—named Urim and Thummim—that the priest will use to determine my answers to the questions he asks. In that way, they will be close to his chest when he enters the holy place to talk to me. He will use them to determine what my will is for the Israelite people."

³¹ "Tell the workmen to weave only purple cloth for the robe that is to be worn underneath the priest's sacred apron.³² It is to have an opening through which the priest can put his head. They must sew a border around this opening to keep the material from tearing.³³ At the lower edge on the robe, they must fasten decorations that look like pomegranate fruit. They must be woven from blue, purple, and red yarn.³⁴ Between each of these decorations, they must fasten a tiny gold bell.³⁵ When Aaron enters the holy place

in the sacred tent to do his work as a priest and when he leaves the sacred tent, the bells will ring as he walks. As a result, he will not die because of disobeying my instructions.

³⁶ Tell them to make a tiny ornament of pure gold, and tell a skilled workman to engrave on it the words, ‘Dedicated to Yahweh.’ ³⁷ They should fasten this ornament to the front of the turban by a blue cord. ³⁸ Aaron must always wear the turban on his forehead. Aaron himself must accept the guilt of the Israelite people because of any failure to offer their holy gifts to Yahweh as he commanded. When Aaron does this, Yahweh may accept their gifts.

³⁹ Tell them to weave the long-sleeved tunic from fine linen. Also they must make from fine linen a turban and a sash, and they must embroider designs on it.

⁴⁰ Tell them to make beautiful long-sleeved tunics, sashes, waistbands, and caps for Aaron’s sons. Make ones that will be suitable for those who have this dignified work. ⁴¹ Put these clothes on your older brother Aaron and on his sons. Then set them apart for this work by anointing them with olive oil in order that they may serve me by being priests. ⁴² Also tell them to make linen undershorts for them. The undershorts should extend from their waists to their thighs in order that no one can see their private parts. ⁴³ Aaron and his sons must always wear those undershorts when they enter the sacred tent or when they come near to the altar to offer sacrifices in the holy place. If they do not obey this ritual, I will cause them to die. Aaron and all his male descendants must obey this rule forever.”

Chapter 29

¹ “Do the following things to dedicate

Aaron and his sons to serve me by being priests. Select one young bull and two rams that do not have any defects. ² Bake three kinds of bread using finely ground wheat flour without yeast. Bake some buns that do not have any olive oil in them, bake some buns that have olive oil in the dough, and bake some thin wafers that will be smeared with olive oil after they are baked. ³ Put them in a basket and offer them to me when you sacrifice the young bull and the two rams. ⁴ Take Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the sacred tent, and wash them with water. ⁵ Then put the special clothes on Aaron—the long-sleeved tunic, the robe that will be worn underneath the sacred apron, the sacred apron, the sacred pouch, and the sash. ⁶ Put the turban on his head, and fasten to the turban the ornament that has the words ‘Dedicated to Yahweh’ engraved on it. ⁷ Then take the oil and pour some on his head to dedicate him. ⁸ Then bring his sons and put the long-sleeved tunics on them. ⁹ Put the sashes around their waists and the caps on their heads. That is the ritual by which you are to dedicate them to be priests. Aaron and his male descendants must serve me by being priests forever.

¹⁰ Then bring the young bull to the entrance of the sacred tent. Tell Aaron and his sons to put their hands on the head of the young bull. ¹¹ Then, while they are doing that, kill the young bull by slitting its throat and catch the blood in a bowl. ¹² Take some of that blood with your finger and smear it on the projections of the altar. Throw the rest of the blood against the base of the altar. ¹³ Take all the fat that covers the inner organs of the young bull, the fatty covering of the liver and the two kidneys with the fat on them, and burn all these on the altar as an offering to me. ¹⁴ But the meat of the young bull and its hide and intestines must be burned outside the

camp. That will be an offering for your sins.

¹⁵ Then select one of the rams, and tell Aaron and his sons to put their hands on its head. ¹⁶ Then kill the ram by slitting its throat. Catch some of the blood and sprinkle it upon all four sides of the altar. ¹⁷ Then cut the ram into pieces. Wash its inner organs and its legs, and put those with the head. ¹⁸ Then burn them completely on the altar with the rest of the ram. That will be a burnt offering to me, Yahweh, and the smell will please me.

¹⁹ Take the other ram that was selected for these rituals, and tell Aaron and his sons to put their hands on its head. ²⁰ Then kill the ram by slitting its throat, and catch some of the blood in a bowl. Smear some of the blood on the lobe of the right ears of Aaron and his sons, and on the thumbs of their right hands, and on the big toes of their right feet. Throw the rest of the blood against the four sides of the altar. ²¹ Wipe up some of the blood that is on the altar, mix it with some of the oil for anointing, and sprinkle it on Aaron and his clothes, and on his sons and their clothes. By doing this, you will dedicate them and their clothes to me.

²² Also, cut off the ram's fat, its fat tail, and the fat that covers the inner organs, the covering of the liver, the two kidneys with the fat on them, and the right thigh. (This ram is for setting Aaron and his sons apart for me as priests.) ²³ From the basket, also take one of each of the kinds of bread that was baked without yeast—one made with no oil, one with oil, and one thin wafer. ²⁴ Put all these things in the hands of Aaron and his sons. Then tell them to lift them up high to dedicate them to me. ²⁵ Then take them from their hands and burn them on the altar, on top of the other things that were placed there. That also will be an offering to me, and its smell

will please me. ²⁶ Then take the breast of the second ram that was killed, and lift it up high for an offering to me. But then this part of the animal will be for you to eat. ²⁷ Set apart for me the ram's breast that you lifted high to offer to me. Also set apart for me the ram's thigh that you presented to me, both of these pieces that came from the ram that was slaughtered when you set apart for me Aaron and his sons as priests. ²⁸ In the future, whenever the Israelite people present to me, Yahweh, offerings to restore fellowship with each other, the breast and the thigh of animals that they present to me will be for Aaron and his male descendants to eat.

²⁹ After Aaron dies, the special clothes that he wore will belong to his sons. They are to wear those clothes when they are set apart to become priests. ³⁰ Aaron's son who becomes priest and enters the sacred tent and performs rituals in the holy place must stay in the sacred tent, wearing these special clothes, for seven days.

³¹ Take the meat of the other ram that was sacrificed to set apart Aaron and his sons, and boil it in the courtyard. ³² After it is cooked, Aaron and his sons must eat it, along with the bread that is left in the basket, at the entrance to the sacred tent. ³³ They must eat the meat of the ram that was sacrificed to cover your sins when they were dedicated to do this work. They are the only ones who are permitted to eat this meat. Those who are not priests are not allowed to eat it because it is reserved for the priests. ³⁴ If any of this meat or some of the bread is not eaten that night, no one is permitted to eat any of it the next day. It must be completely burned because it is sacred.

³⁵ These are the rituals that you must follow during those seven days when you dedicate Aaron and his sons for this work. You must do all that I have commanded

you. ³⁶ Each of those seven days you must also sacrifice a young bull for an offering to me in order that I may forgive sins. Also you must make another offering to make the altar pure in my sight. You must also anoint the altar with olive oil to set it apart. ³⁷ Perform these rituals every day for seven days to set apart the altar and make it pure. Then the altar will be most holy, and whatever touches it must be treated as holy.

³⁸ You must also sacrifice lambs and burn them on the altar. Each of those seven days you must sacrifice two lambs. ³⁹ One lamb must be sacrificed in the morning, and one must be sacrificed in the evening. ⁴⁰ With the first lamb, also offer two liters of finely ground wheat flour mixed with a liter of the best kind of olive oil, and one liter of wine as an offering. ⁴¹ In the evening, when you sacrifice the other lamb, offer the same amounts of flour, olive oil, and wine as you did in the morning. This will be an offering to me, Yahweh, that will be burned, and its smell will please me. ⁴² You and your descendants must continue making these offerings to me, Yahweh, throughout all future generations. You must offer them at the entrance to the sacred tent. That is where I will meet with you and speak to you. ⁴³ That is where I will meet with the Israelite people, and the brilliant light of my presence will cause that place to be holy. ⁴⁴ I will dedicate the sacred tent and the altar. I will also dedicate Aaron and his sons to serve me by being priests. ⁴⁵ I will live among the Israelite people, and I will be their God. ⁴⁶ They will know that I am Yahweh God, the one who brought them out of Egypt in order that I might live among them. I am Yahweh, the God whom they worship."

Chapter 30

¹ "Tell the skilled workers to make an altar from acacia wood for burning incense.

² It is to be square, one-half meter on each side. It is to be one meter high. Tell them to make a projection that looks like a horn on each of the top corners. The projections must be carved from the same block of wood from which the altar is made. ³

They must cover the top and the four sides, including the projections, with pure gold. Put a gold border around the altar near the top. ⁴ They must make two gold rings for carrying the altar. They must attach them to the altar below the border, one on each side of the altar. These rings are for the poles for carrying the altar. ⁵

Tell them to make these two poles from acacia wood and cover them with gold. ⁶ They must put this incense altar outside the curtain that hangs in front of the sacred chest and its lid. That is the place where I will talk with you. ⁷

Aaron must burn sweet-smelling incense on this altar. He must burn some every morning when he takes care of the lamps, ⁸ and he must burn some in the evening when he lights the lamps. The incense must always be burning throughout all future generations. ⁹ The priests must not burn on the altar any incense that I have not told you to burn, or burn any animal on it, nor any flour offering for me, nor pour any wine on it as an offering. ¹⁰ One time every year Aaron must perform the ritual for making this altar pure. He must do it by putting on its four projections some of the blood from the animal that was sacrificed to cover people's sins. Aaron and his descendants must do this ritual throughout all future generations. This altar must be dedicated to me, Yahweh."

¹¹ Yahweh said to Moses, ¹² "When your leaders take a census of the Israelite peo-

ple, each man who is counted must pay to me a price to save his life. They must do this in order that no disaster will happen to them while the people are being counted. ¹³ Every man who is counted must pay to me six grams of silver. They must use the official standard of the tabernacle when they weigh the silver. This silver is to be an offering to Yahweh. ¹⁴ All the men who are at least twenty years old must pay this amount to me when the people are counted. ¹⁵ Rich men must not pay more than this amount, and poor men must not pay less than this amount when they pay this money to save their lives. ¹⁶ Your leaders must collect this money from the Israelite people and give it to those who will take care of the sacred tent. You Israelites will see the leaders collect this money and remember that you need to make payment to me so you can live."

¹⁷ Yahweh said to Moses, ¹⁸ "Tell the skilled workers to make a bronze washbasin and a bronze base for it. They must put it between the sacred tent and the altar and must fill it with water. ¹⁹ Aaron and his sons must wash their hands and their feet with this water ²⁰ before they enter the sacred tent and before they come to the altar to burn offerings as sacrifices. If they wash, they will obey my instructions and will not die. ²¹ They must wash their hands and their feet in order that they will not die. They and the males descended from them must obey this ritual throughout all generations."

²² Yahweh said to Moses, ²³ "Tell the people to collect some of the finest spices—six kilograms of liquid myrrh, three kilograms of sweet-smelling cinnamon, three kilograms of a sweet-smelling cane, ²⁴ and six kilograms of cassia. Be sure that they use the official standard when they weigh these things. ²⁵ Tell an expert perfumer to mix these with four liters of olive oil

to make sacred oil for anointing. ²⁶ Use this oil for anointing the sacred tent, the sacred chest, ²⁷ the table and all the things that are used with it, the lampstand and all the things that are used to take care of it, the altar for burning incense, ²⁸ and the altar for offering sacrifices that the priests will burn, along with all the things that are used with it, and the basin and its stand. ²⁹ Dedicate them by anointing them in order that they will be reserved for me. If any person or thing that is not allowed to do so touches the altar, no one will be allowed to touch that person or thing. ³⁰ Anoint Aaron and his sons. By doing that, you will dedicate them to serve me by being priests. ³¹ Tell the Israelite people, "This oil will be my special oil that must be used throughout all future generations. ³² You must not pour it on the bodies of people who are not priests, and you must not make other oil to be like it by mixing those same things. This oil is reserved for me, and you must consider it to be such. ³³ Yahweh will view anyone who makes ointment like this for any other purpose, or anyone who puts any of this ointment on someone who is not a priest, as no longer belonging to his people."

³⁴ Yahweh also said to Moses, "Have an expert perfumer take equal parts of several sweet spices: Stacte—a resin from certain gum plants, onycha—from certain shellfish or mollusks, galbanum—another kind of gum resin, and pure frankincense—yet another sort of gum resin. ³⁵ Have him mix them together to make some perfume and add some salt to keep it pure and special for me. ³⁶ Have him beat some of it into a fine powder. Then I want you to take some of it into the sacred tent and sprinkle it in front of the sacred chest. You all must consider this incense to be completely reserved for me. ³⁷ The people must not mix the same spices to make incense for them-

selves. This incense must be dedicated to me, Yahweh. ³⁸ I will view anyone who makes incense like this to use it for perfume as no longer belonging to my people.”

Chapter 31

¹ Yahweh said to Moses, ² ”I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri and grandson of Hur, from the tribe of Judah. ³ I have filled him with my Spirit, and I have given him special ability to make things; I have enabled him to know how to do very skilled work. ⁴ He can engrave skillful designs in gold, silver, and bronze. ⁵ He can cut jewels and enclose them in tiny gold settings. He can carve things from wood and do other skilled work. ⁶ I have also appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamach, from the tribe of Dan, to work with him. I have given special ability to other men also in order that they can make all the things that I have commanded you to be made. ⁷ Those things include: The sacred tent, the sacred chest and its lid, all the other things that will be inside the sacred tent, ⁸ the table and all the things that are used with it, the pure gold lampstand and all the things that are used to take care of it, the altar for burning incense, ⁹ the altar for offering sacrifices that will be burned and all the things that will be used with it, and the washbasin and its base. ¹⁰ Also included in these things were all the beautiful, special clothes for Aaron and his sons to wear when they work as priests; ¹¹ the oil for anointing, and the sweet-smelling incense for the holy place. The craftsmen must make all these things exactly as I have told you that they should do.”

¹² Yahweh said to Moses, ¹³ ”Tell the Israelite people, ’Obey my instructions regarding the Sabbath days for rest. Those

days will remind me and you and your descendants, throughout all future generations, that I, Yahweh, have set you apart to be my people. ¹⁴ You must obey my rules about the Sabbath days for rest because you must regard them as special for me. Those who treat these days with disrespect must be killed; this will show that I no longer consider them to belong to my people. ¹⁵ You may work for six days each week, but the seventh day of each week is a solemn rest day, dedicated to me, Yahweh. Anyone who does any work on a Sabbath day of rest is to be killed. ¹⁶ You Israelite people must respect the Sabbath days of rest, and you and your descendants must observe them throughout all future generations. I will always require this of you. ¹⁷ The Sabbath days of rest will remind you Israelite people and me of our covenant because I, Yahweh, created the heavens and the earth in six days, and on the seventh day I stopped doing that work and rested.”

¹⁸ When Yahweh finished talking with Moses on the top of Mount Sinai, he gave him the two stone slabs on which he had engraved his commandments with his own fingers.

Chapter 32

¹ Moses stayed on top of the mountain a long time. When the people saw that he was not returning, they went to Aaron and said to him, “Make us gods who will lead us on our journey. We do not know what happened to that man Moses, who brought us here out of Egypt.” ² Aaron said to them, “All right, I will do that. Tell your wives and your children to take off all their gold earrings and bring them to me.” ³ So the people took off all their gold earrings and brought them to Aaron. ⁴ He

melted the gold in a fire. He poured the gold into a mold and made a statue that looked like a young bull. The people saw it and said, "This is the god of the Israelite people! This is the one who rescued us from the land of Egypt!"

⁵ When Aaron saw how the people reacted, he built an altar in front of the bull. Then he announced, "Tomorrow we will have a festival to honor Yahweh!" ⁶ So the people got up early the next morning and brought animals to kill and burn as sacrifices on the altar. They also brought sacrifices to restore fellowship with others. Then they sat down to eat and to drink wine. After a while, they got up and had a wild party.

⁷ Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Go down from the mountain because your people, the ones that you brought up here from Egypt, have become bad. ⁸ They have already left the road that I showed them and have stopped obeying me! They have made a statue of a young bull from melted gold. They have worshiped it and offered sacrifices to it. They are saying, 'This is the god of the Israelite people! This is the one who brought us up from Egypt!'

⁹ I know that these people are very stubborn. ¹⁰ I am very angry with them, so I am going to get rid of them. Do not try to stop me! Then I will cause you and your descendants to become a great nation."

¹¹ But Moses pleaded with his God, Yahweh, and said, "Yahweh, you should not be angry with your people! These are the people whom you saved from Egypt with very great power! ¹² Do not do anything that would allow the people of Egypt to say, 'Their god led them out from our country, but he did that only because he wanted to kill them in the mountains and get rid of them completely! Do not do to your people this terrible thing that you have just said that you will do! Stop be-

ing so angry! Change your mind! ¹³ Think about your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. You solemnly promised them, saying, 'I will enable you to have as many descendants as the stars that are in the sky.' You said to them, 'I will give to your descendants all the land that I am promising to give them. It will be their land forever.'"

¹⁴ So Yahweh changed his mind. He did not do to his people the terrible thing that he said he would do.

¹⁵ Then Moses left from where God was; he went down the mountain, carrying in his hands the two stone slabs on which Yahweh had engraved his commandments. He had written on both sides of the slabs. ¹⁶ God himself had made the slabs, and he was the one who had engraved the commandments on them.

¹⁷ Joshua heard the people shouting very loudly. So when Moses got near the camp, Joshua met him and said, "There is a noise in the camp that sounds like the noise of a battle!" ¹⁸ But Moses said,

"No, that does not sound as though the people have won a victory;

it does not sound as though they have been defeated in a battle!

It sounds as though they are singing!"

¹⁹ As soon as Moses came close to the camp and saw the statue of the bull and the people dancing, he became very angry. He threw the stone tablets down onto the ground at the base of the mountain, and they broke. ²⁰ Then he took the statue of the bull that they had made and melted it in the fire. When it cooled, he ground it into fine powder. Then he mixed the powder with water and forced the Israelite people to drink it. ²¹ Then Moses said to Aaron, "Did these people do something to you that led you to make them sin in this way?" ²² Aaron replied, "Please do

not be angry with me, my lord. You know that these people are likely to do wicked things. ²³ They said to me, 'Make for us an idol who will lead us on our journey! As for that man Moses, the one who brought us up here from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him.' ²⁴ So I said to them, 'Everyone who is wearing gold earrings should take them off.' So they took them off and gave them to me. I threw them into the fire, and out came this statue of a young bull!"

²⁵ Moses saw that Aaron had allowed the people to get out of control and to do things that would make their enemies think the Israelite people were foolish. ²⁶ So he stood at the entrance to the camp and shouted, "Everyone who is loyal to Yahweh should come close to me!" So all the men in the tribe of Levi gathered around him. ²⁷ Then he said to them, "Yahweh, the God of the Israelite people, commands that every one of you should fasten your sword to your side, and then go through the camp from this gate to the other one. Each one of you must kill the other men, whether they are your brother, your friend, or your neighbor." ²⁸ The men in the tribe of Levi did what Moses told them to do, and they killed three thousand men on that day. ²⁹ Moses said to the men in the tribe of Levi, "Today you have become special servants of Yahweh by killing even your own sons and your brothers. As a result Yahweh has blessed you."

³⁰ The next day, Moses said to the people, "You have sinned very greatly. But I will now climb up the mountain again to talk with Yahweh. Perhaps I can persuade him to forgive you for sinning like this." ³¹ So Moses went up the mountain and said to Yahweh, "I am sorry to admit that these people sinned very greatly when they made for themselves a gold

idol and worshiped it. ³² But now I ask you to forgive them for their sin. If you will not forgive them, then erase my name from the book in which you have written the names of your people." ³³ But Yahweh said to Moses, "It is only those who have sinned against me whose names I will erase from that book. ³⁴ Now go back down and lead the Israelite people to the place about which I told you. Keep in mind that my angel will go in front of you. But, at the time that I decide, I will punish them for their sin."

³⁵ Later Yahweh caused the people to become sick because they had told Aaron to make the statue of a young bull.

Chapter 33

¹ Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Leave this place and go with the people whom you led out of Egypt. Go to the land that I promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that I would give to their descendants. ² I will send my angel ahead of you, and I will remove from that land the people of Canaan, Amor, Heth, Periz, Hiv, and Jebus. ³ You will go to a land that will be very good for raising livestock and growing crops. But I will not go with you myself because if I did that, I might annihilate you while you are traveling because you are very stubborn people."

⁴ When the people heard these words, they were sad, and no one wore fancy clothing anymore. ⁵ Yahweh had said to Moses, "Tell the Israelite people, 'You are very stubborn. If I were to go with you for even a moment, I would kill you. Now take off your fine clothing to show that you are sorry for your sin. Then I will decide how I will punish you.'" ⁶ After the Israelite people left Mount Sinai, they wore no more fancy clothing.

⁷ As the Israelite people were traveling, whenever they stopped and set up their tents, Moses set up the sacred tent outside the camp, far from the camp. He called it “the tent of meeting.” Everyone who wanted Yahweh to decide something for them would go out of the camp to the tent of meeting. ⁸ Whenever Moses went out to the tent of meeting, all the people would stand at their own tent entrances and watch him until he had walked into the tent of meeting. ⁹ Whenever Moses went into the tent of meeting, the tall cloud would come down and stay at the tent entrance, and then Yahweh would talk with Moses. ¹⁰ When the people saw the tall cloud at the entrance of the tent of meeting, they would all worship Yahweh at their own tent entrances. ¹¹ Yahweh would speak to Moses face to face like someone speaks to his friend. Then Moses would return to the camp. But his young helper, Joshua son of Nun, would stay in the tent of meeting.

¹² Moses said to Yahweh, “It is true that you have told me, ‘Lead the people to the land that I will show you,’ but you have not told me whom you will send with me! Nevertheless, you have said that you know me well and that you are pleased with me. ¹³ So now, if you are truly pleased with me, I ask you, please tell me the things that you are going to do in order that I may know you better and continue to please you. Please remember that the Israelite people are the people whom you chose to belong to you.” ¹⁴ Yahweh replied, “I will go with you, and I will give you rest.” ¹⁵ Moses replied, “If you do not go with me, do not make us leave this place. ¹⁶ The only way that others will know that you are pleased with me and with your people is if you go with us! If you go with us, it will show that we are different from all the other people on the earth.” ¹⁷ Yahweh replied to Moses, “I will do what you have

asked because I know you well and I am pleased with you.”

¹⁸ Then Moses said, “Please let me see you in all your power.” ¹⁹ Yahweh replied, “I will let you see how great and powerful I am, and I will tell you clearly that my name is Yahweh. I will act very kindly and be merciful to all those whom I choose. ²⁰ But I will not let you see my face because anyone who sees my face will die. ²¹ But look! Here is a place close to me where you can stand on a large rock. ²² When I come past you in all my power, I will put you in a large hole in the rock, and I will cover your face with my hand until I have passed by. ²³ Then I will take my hand away, and you will see my back, but you will not see my face.”

Chapter 34

¹ Yahweh said to Moses, “Cut two slabs of stone that will be like the first slabs, the ones that you broke. Then I will write on them the words that were on the first slabs. ² Get ready tomorrow morning, and come up to the top of Mount Sinai again to talk with me there. ³ Do not allow anyone to come up with you. I do not want anyone else to be anywhere on the mountain. Do not even allow any sheep or cattle to graze at the base of the mountain.” ⁴ So Moses cut two slabs of stone that were like the first ones. He rose early the next morning, picked up the slabs, and carried them in his hands up to the top of Mount Sinai, as Yahweh had told him. ⁵ Then Yahweh came down in the tall cloud and stood with Moses there. Then he pronounced his own name, Yahweh, in front of Moses. ⁶ Yahweh passed in front of him and said, “I am Yahweh God. I always act mercifully and kindly toward people and I do not get angry quickly. I truly love people and I do

what I promise to do for them. ⁷ I love people for thousands of generations. I forgive people for all kinds of sins. But I will certainly punish those who are guilty. I will punish not only them, but also I will punish their descendants, down to the third and fourth generation.”

⁸ Moses bowed low down on the ground and worshiped Yahweh. ⁹ He said, “My Lord, if you are now pleased with me, I ask that you go with us. These people are very stubborn, but forgive us for all our sins, and accept us as the people who belong to you forever.”

¹⁰ Yahweh replied, “I am about to make a covenant with your people, the Israelite people. As they are watching, I will perform great miracles. They will see miracles that no one has ever done on the earth in any people group. Everyone among your people will see the great things that I, Yahweh, will do. I will do things for you all that will make you fear me. ¹¹ Do what I tell you to do today. I am about to make the Amor, Canaan, Heth, Periz, Hiv, and Jebus people groups leave the land. ¹² But be careful that you do not make a covenant to live peacefully with any of the people who live in the land into which you are going because if you do that, you will begin to do the evil things that they do. It will be like falling into a trap. ¹³ You must tear down their altars, destroy their idols, and cut down the poles that they use to worship Asherah. ¹⁴ You must worship only me, and not worship any other god because I, Yahweh, always guard my honor, and I will not allow you to worship any other gods. ¹⁵ Do not make a covenant to live peacefully with any group that lives in that land. When they worship their gods and offer sacrifices to them and invite you to join them, do not join them. If you join them, you will eat the food that they sacrifice to their

gods, and you will not be faithful to me. You will be like women who commit adultery, who are not faithful to their husbands. ¹⁶ If you take some of their women to be wives for your sons, these women will worship their own gods, and they will also make your sons worship their gods.

¹⁷ Do not pour melted metal into molds to make statues to worship.

¹⁸ Each year, during the month of Aviv, celebrate the Festival of Bread with no Yeast. During that festival, for seven days you must not eat bread made with yeast, as I commanded you, because it was in that month that you left Egypt.

¹⁹ Your firstborn sons and the firstborn male animals of your cattle and sheep and goats belong to me. ²⁰ The firstborn of your male donkeys also belong to me. But you may buy them back by offering to me lambs in their place. If you do not do that, you must kill these animals by breaking their necks. You must also buy back your firstborn sons. You must bring an offering to me each time you come to worship me.

²¹ Each week you may work for six days, but on the seventh day you must rest. Even during the times when you are plowing the ground and harvesting your crops, you must rest on the seventh day.

²² Each year celebrate the Festival of Harvest when you begin to harvest the first crop of wheat, and also celebrate the Festival of Finished Harvest when you finish harvesting the grain and fruit.

²³ Three times each year all the men must come to worship me, Yahweh, the God of the Israelite people. ²⁴ I will make the people groups leave the land, and I will make your territory larger. No one will try to conquer your country when you come to worship Yahweh your God three times each year, during your festivals.

²⁵ When you sacrifice an animal to me, do

not offer bread that is made with yeast. During the Passover festival, when you sacrifice lambs, do not keep any of the meat until the next morning.

²⁶ You must bring to my tent of meeting the first part of the grain that you harvest every year. When you kill a young animal, do not cook it by boiling it in its mother's milk."

²⁷ Yahweh said to Moses, "Write down the words that I have told you. By giving you these commands, I have made a covenant with you and with the Israelite people."

²⁸ Moses was there on the top of the mountain with Yahweh for forty days and nights. During that time he did not eat or drink anything. He engraved on the stone slabs the words of the Ten Commandments which belonged to Yahweh's covenant.

²⁹ When Moses came back down the mountain carrying in his hand the two stone slabs on which were written the Ten Commandments, he did not know that his face was shining. ³⁰ When Aaron and the Israelite people saw Moses, they were amazed that his face was shining, and they were afraid to come near him. ³¹ But Moses called to them, and Aaron and the other Israelite leaders came to him, and he talked with them. ³² Afterwards, all the Israelite people came near, and he told them all the commands that Yahweh had given to him on Mount Sinai. ³³ When Moses finished talking to the people, he covered his face with a cloth. ³⁴ Whenever Moses entered the tent of meeting to talk with Yahweh, he would remove the cloth. When he came back out, he would always tell the Israelite people everything that Yahweh had commanded him to tell them. ³⁵ The Israelite people would see that Moses' face was still shining. Then he would put the cloth back on his face again until the next time that he went to

talk with Yahweh.

Chapter 35

¹ Moses gathered all the Israelite people together and said to them, "This is what Yahweh has commanded you to do. ² Each week you may work for six days, but on the seventh day, you must rest. It is a sacred day, dedicated to Yahweh. Anyone who does any work on the seventh day must be killed. ³ Do not light a fire in your homes on the rest days."

⁴ Moses also said to all the Israelite people, "This is what Yahweh has commanded. ⁵ Make offerings to Yahweh. Everyone who wants to should bring to Yahweh an offering. The offerings can be gold, silver, or bronze, ⁶ fine white linen, blue, purple or red woolen cloth, cloth made from goats' hair, ⁷ rams' skins that are tanned, sea cow skins, wood from acacia trees, ⁸ oil for the lamps, spices to put into the olive oil for anointing and to put into the sweet-smelling incense, ⁹ onyx stones or other valuable stones to fasten onto the priest's sacred apron and to put on his sacred chest pouch.

¹⁰ All the skilled workers among you should come and make all the things that Yahweh has commanded— ¹¹ the sacred tent with its covering, its fasteners, its frames, its crossbars, its posts, and its bases; ¹² the sacred chest with its poles and its lid; the curtain that will separate the holy place from the very holy place. ¹³ The workers also made the table with the poles for carrying it and all the things that will be used with the table; the bread to display before God; ¹⁴ the lampstand for the lamps with all the things that will be used to take care of them; the oil for the lamps; ¹⁵ the altar for burning incense and the poles for carrying the altar; the oil

for anointing and the sweet-smelling incense; the curtain for the entrance of the sacred tent; ¹⁶ the altar for offering sacrifices that will be burned and its bronze grating; the poles for carrying the altar and all the things that will be used with it; the washbasin and its base. ¹⁷ They workers made the curtains to surround the courtyard and the posts and bases for the posts to support the curtains; the curtain for the entrance to the courtyard; ¹⁸ the pegs and ropes for the sacred tent; ¹⁹ and the beautiful clothes that Aaron and his sons are to wear when they do their work in the holy place.”

²⁰ Then all the Israelite people returned to their tents. ²¹ Everyone who wished to bring an offering to Yahweh did so. They brought some of the things that would be used to make the sacred tent, all the other items that would be used in the rituals, and everything needed to make the sacred clothes for the priests. ²² All the men and women who wished to brought gold ornaments, earrings, rings, necklaces, and many other kinds of things made of gold, and they dedicated them to Yahweh. ²³ Many people who had blue, purple, or red woolen cloth or fine white linen or cloth made from goats’ hair, or rams’ skins that were tanned, or leather made from sea cow skins, brought some of these things. ²⁴ All those who had silver or bronze brought them as offerings to Yahweh. All those who had some acacia wood that could be used for any of the work for the people to worship Yahweh brought it. ²⁵ All the women who were skilled to make cloth brought fine linen thread and blue, purple, or red woolen yarn that they had made. ²⁶ All the women who wanted to made thread from goats’ hair. ²⁷ All the leaders brought onyx stones and other fine stones to be fastened to Aaron’s sacred apron and his sacred chest pouch. ²⁸ They also brought spices to put into the

sweet-smelling incense, and they brought olive oil for the lamps and for the oil for anointing and for putting in the sweet-smelling incense. ²⁹ All the Israelite men and women who wanted to brought these things to offer them to Yahweh for doing the work that he had commanded Moses to do.

³⁰ Moses said to the Israelite people, “Listen carefully. Yahweh has chosen Bezalel son of Uri and grandson of Hur, from the tribe of Judah. ³¹ Yahweh has enabled his Spirit to live in Bezalel, has given him ability and knowledge, and has enabled him to know how to do very skilled work. ³² He can engrave skillful designs in gold, silver, and bronze. ³³ He can cut jewels and enclose them in tiny gold frames and can carve things from wood and do other skilled work. ³⁴ Yahweh has also given to him and to Oholiab son of Ahisamak, from the tribe of Dan, the ability to teach their skills to others. ³⁵ He has given to them the ability to do all kinds of work that is done by craftsmen—those who create artistic things, those who make fine white linen, those who embroider designs using blue, purple, or red woolen yarn, and those who make linen cloth. They are able to plan many kinds of artistic work.

Chapter 36

¹ Bezalel and Oholiab will take up this work along with all the other gifted men to whom Yahweh had given skills and the understanding to do all the work needed to build up the sacred tent. These men followed all the instructions that Yahweh gave them.

² So the cra called Bezalel and Oholiab and all the other skilled men to whom Yahweh had given special ability and who wanted to do some of the work. ³ Moses gave

them all the things that the people had brought as offerings to Yahweh for making the sacred tent. But the people continued bringing more things every morning.⁴ As a result, the men who were doing various things to make the sacred tent came to Moses, each of them what Yahweh commanded them.⁵ So the craftsmen said to Moses, "The people are bringing more than we need to do the work that Yahweh has commanded us!"⁶ So Moses gave them a message that others proclaimed throughout the camp, saying "No one should bring anything more as an offering to make the sacred tent!" When the people heard that, they did not bring anything more.⁷ What they had already brought was enough to do all the work. In fact, it was more than was needed!

⁸ All the most skilled men among the workmen made the sacred tent. They made it from ten strips of fine linen, and they carefully embroidered it using blue, purple, and red woolen yarn to make figures that resembled the winged creatures. Bezalel designed all this.⁹ Each strip was twelve and four-fifths meters long and one and four-fifths meters wide.¹⁰ Bezalel and his men sewed five strips together to make one set, and they sewed the other five strips together to make the other set.¹¹ For each set, Bezalel and his men made loops of blue cloth and fastened them on the outer edge of the strip, at the end of each set.¹² They put 50 loops on the edge of the first set, and 50 loops on the edge of the second set.¹³ They made 50 gold fasteners to attach both of the sets together. In that way, the inside of the sacred tent was as though it were one piece.¹⁴ Bezalel and his men made a cover for the sacred tent from 11 pieces of cloth made from goats' hair.¹⁵ Each piece of cloth was eighteen and one-third meters long and one and four-fifths meters wide.¹⁶ They sewed five of these pieces of cloth to-

gether to make one set, and they sewed the other six pieces of cloth together to make another set.¹⁷ They made one hundred loops of blue cloth. They fastened fifty of them to the outer edge of the one set and they fastened fifty to the outer edge of the other set.¹⁸ Bezalel and his men made 50 bronze clasps and joined the two sets together with them. In that way it formed one cover.¹⁹ They made two more covers for the sacred tent. They made one from rams' skins that had been tanned, and they made the top cover from goatskin leather.²⁰ Bezalel and his men made forty-eight frames from acacia wood and set them up to support the covers for the sacred tent.²¹ Each frame was four and three-fifths meters long and three-quarters of a meter wide.²² They made two projections at the bottom of each frame. These were for fastening the frames to the bases underneath them. Each frame had these projections.²³ The skilled workmen made twenty frames for the south side of the sacred tent.²⁴ Bezalel and his men made forty silver bases to go underneath them. Two bases went under each frame. The projections on each frame fit into these bases.²⁵ Similarly, they made twenty frames for the north side of the sacred tent.²⁶ They also made forty silver bases for them with two bases under each frame.²⁷ For the rear of the sacred tent, on the west side, Bezalel and his men made six frames.²⁸ They also made two extra frames, one for each corner of the rear of the sacred tent, to provide extra support.²⁹ The two corner frames were separate from each other at the bottom but joined together at the top. At the top of each of the two corner frames, Bezalel and his men fastened a gold ring for holding the crossbar.³⁰ In that way, for the rear of the sacred tent there were eight frames, and there were 16 bases, two bases under each frame.³¹ Bezalel and

his men made 15 crossbars from acacia wood. Five of them were for the frames on the north side of the sacred tent,³² five for the south side, and five for the frames at the rear of the sacred tent, the west side.³³ The workmen made crossbars on the north, south, and west sides of the sacred tent and fastened them to the middle of the frames. The two long crossbars extended from one end of the sacred tent to the other, and the crossbar on the west side extended from one side of the sacred tent to the other.³⁴ The workmen covered the frames with gold and fastened gold rings to the poles. They then put the crossbars into the rings. They also covered the crossbars with gold.

³⁵ Bezalel and his men made a curtain from fine white linen. Skilled craftsmen embroidered it with blue, purple, and red woolen yarn, making designs to represent the winged creatures.³⁶ They hung the curtain from four posts that were made from acacia wood and covered with gold. They set each post in a silver base.³⁷ Bezalel and his men made a curtain to cover the entrance of the sacred tent. They made it from fine linen, and a skilled weaver embroidered it with blue, purple, and red woolen yarn.³⁸ To support this curtain, they also made five posts from acacia wood and fastened gold clasps to them. They covered the posts and their rods with gold and made a bronze base for each of those posts.

Chapter 37

¹ Then Bezalel and his men made the sacred chest from acacia wood. It was one meter long, three-quarters of a meter wide, and three-quarters of a meter high.

² They covered it with pure gold inside and outside the chest, and they made a

gold border around the top of it.³ They made four rings from gold and fastened them to the legs of the chest. They put two rings on each side of the chest.⁴ They made two poles from acacia wood and covered them with gold.⁵ They put the poles into the rings on the sides of the chest, in order that Levites could carry the chest using the poles.⁶ They made a lid for the chest. It also was one meter long and three-quarters of a meter wide.⁷ Bezalel and his men made two winged creatures from hammered gold, to put them on the two ends of the chest's lid.⁸ They put one creature at each end of the chest, and they joined the gold of the creatures to the gold of the lid so that the creatures were one piece with the lid.⁹ They placed the winged creatures so that their wings touched each other and spread out over the lid. The creatures faced each other, looking toward the lid's center.

¹⁰ Bezalel and his men made a table from acacia wood. It was one meter long, one-half meter wide, and three-quarters of a meter high.¹¹ They covered it with pure gold, and they put a gold border around it.¹² They made a rim all around it, four-fifths of a meter wide. Then they put a gold border around the rim.¹³ They made four rings from gold and fastened the rings to the four corners of the table, one ring close to each leg of the table.¹⁴ Bezalel and his men fastened the rings to the table near the rim.¹⁵ They made two poles from acacia wood and covered them with gold. They then inserted the poles for carrying the table into the rings.¹⁶ They also made from pure gold all the things for the table—the plates, the cups, the jars and the bowls to be used when the priests poured out wine to offer to Yahweh.¹⁷ Bezalel and his men made the lampstand from pure gold. Its base and shaft were hammered from one large lump of gold. The cups

for holding the oil, the flower buds and the petals that decorated the branches of the lamp, the base, and the shaft were all hammered from one big lump of gold.

¹⁸ There were six branches on the lampstand, three on each side of the shaft. ¹⁹ Each of the six branches had on it three things that looked like almond blossoms. These things also had flower buds and flower petals. ²⁰ On the shaft of the lampstand there were four gold cups that also looked like almond blossoms, each one with flower buds and flower petals. ²¹ On each side, beneath and extending from each branch, there was one flower bud. ²² All these flower buds and branches, along with the shaft, were hammered from one large lump of pure gold. ²³ Bezalel and his men also made seven small cups for holding oil. They made from pure gold the tongs for removing the burned wicks and the trays in which to put the burned wicks. ²⁴ They used thirty-three kilograms of pure gold to make the lampstand and all the things that the priests would use to take care of it.

²⁵ Bezalel and his men made the altar for burning incense from acacia wood. It was square, one-half meter on each side and one meter high. They made a projection that looked like a horn on each of the top corners. The projections were carved from the same block of wood as the altar. ²⁶ They covered the top and the four sides, including the projections, with pure gold. They put a gold border around the altar near the top. ²⁷ Bezalel and his men made two gold rings for carrying the altar. Then they attached them to the altar below the border, one on each side of the altar. The poles for carrying the altar fit into those rings. ²⁸ They made those two poles from acacia wood and covered them with gold. ²⁹ They also made the sacred oil for anointing and the pure sweet-smelling incense. A skilled perfumer mixed the incense to-

gether.

Chapter 38

¹ Bezalel and his men made the altar for burning sacrifices out of acacia wood. It was square, two and one-third meters on each side, and it was one and two-fifths meters high. ² They made a projection that looked like a horn on each of the top corners. The projections were carved from the same block of wood from which the altar was made. They covered the whole altar with bronze. ³ They made the pans in which to put the ashes from the animal sacrifices. They also made the shovels for cleaning out the ashes. They made the basins and forks for turning the meat as it cooked, and buckets for carrying hot coals. They made all of these things from bronze. ⁴ They also made a bronze grate to hold the wood and burning coals. They put the grate under the rim that was around the altar. They made it so that it was inside the altar, halfway down. ⁵ They made bronze rings in which to put the poles for carrying the altar, and fastened them to each of the corners of the altar. ⁶ They made the poles from acacia wood and covered them with bronze. ⁷ They put the poles for carrying the altar through the rings on each side of the altar. The altar was like an open box, made from boards of acacia wood.

⁸ Bezalel and his men made the washbasin and its base from bronze. The bronze was from the mirrors that belonged to the women who worked at the entrance of the sacred tent.

⁹ Around the sacred tent Bezalel and his helpers made a courtyard. To form the courtyard, they made curtains of fine white linen. On the south side, the curtain was forty-five and three-quarters meters

long.¹⁰ To support the curtain, they made twenty bronze posts and twenty bronze bases, one for under each post. To fasten the curtains to the posts, they made silver hooks, and they made metal rods covered with silver.¹¹ They made the same kind of curtains, posts, bases and hooks for the north side of the courtyard.¹² On the west side of the courtyard, they made a curtain twenty-three meters long. They also made ten posts to support the curtains and ten bases, with silver hooks and metal rods covered with silver.¹³ On the east side, where the entrance is, the courtyard was twenty-three meters wide.¹⁴ On one side of the entrance, Bezalel and his men made a curtain about seven meters wide with three posts and three bases.¹⁵ On the other side of the entrance, they made a curtain about seven meters wide with three posts and three bases.¹⁶ They made all the curtains around the courtyard from fine linen.¹⁷ All the posts around the courtyard were made of bronze, but they covered the tops with silver. They connected the posts with metal rods that they covered with silver. They also made the clasps and hooks with silver.¹⁸ For the entrance of the courtyard, they made a curtain from fine white linen, and a skilled weaver embroidered it with blue, purple, and red woolen yarn. The curtain was nine meters long and two and one-third meters high, just like the other curtains around the courtyard.¹⁹ All the curtains were made of fine linen. They were supported by four posts, and under each post was a base made of bronze. All the posts around the courtyard were connected with metal rods covered with silver. The clasps were made of silver, and the tops of the posts were covered with silver.²⁰ All the tent pegs to support the sacred tent and the curtains around the courtyard were made of bronze.

used to make the sacred tent. Moses told some men from the tribe of Levi to count all the materials used and write down the amounts. Ithamar son of Aaron the priest, supervised those men.²² Bezalel son of Uri and grandson of Hur made all the things that Yahweh had commanded Moses to make.²³ Bezalel's helper was Oholiab son of Ahisamak, from the tribe of Dan. Oholiab was a skilled engraver who made artistic things. He embroidered designs using blue, purple, and red woolen yarn, and linen.²⁴ All the gold that was used to make the sacred tent weighed 965 kilograms. They used the official standard when they weighed the gold.²⁵ All the silver that the people contributed when the leaders took the census weighed about 3,320 kilograms. They also used the official standard when they weighed the silver.²⁶ All the men who were at least twenty years old were counted, and they each paid the required amount. That was a total of 603,550 men.²⁷ They used 33 kilograms of silver for making each of the one hundred bases to put under the posts to support the curtains of the sacred tent, for a total of 3,300 kilograms in all.²⁸ Bezalel and his helpers used the twenty kilograms of silver that was not used for the bases to make the rods and the hooks for the posts and to cover the tops of the posts.²⁹ The bronze that the people contributed weighed about 2,300 kilograms.³⁰ With the bronze Bezalel and his helpers made the bases to support the posts at the entrance of the sacred tent. They also made the altar for burning sacrifices with its grate and the tools to be used with it,³¹ the bases for the posts that supported the curtains that surrounded the courtyard, the bases for the entrance to the courtyard, and the pegs for the sacred tent and for the curtains around the courtyard.

²¹ Here is a list of the amounts of metal

Chapter 39

¹ Bezalel, Oholiab, and the other skilled workmen made the beautiful clothes for Aaron to wear while he did his work as a priest in the holy place. They made them from blue, purple, and red woolen cloth, just as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

² They made the sacred apron from fine white linen and from blue, purple, and red woolen cloth. ³ They hammered some thin sheets of gold and cut them into thin strips that they embroidered into the fine linen and into the blue, purple, and red cloth. ⁴ The sacred apron had two shoulder straps, to join the front part to the back part at its sides. ⁵ A carefully woven belt, which was made from the same materials as the sacred apron, was sewn onto the sacred apron. This was made exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses. ⁶

Bezalel and his men cut two onyx stones and enclosed them in a tiny frame, and a skilled gem cutter engraved on the stones the names of the twelve sons of Jacob. ⁷

They fastened the stones to the shoulder straps of the sacred apron to represent the twelve tribes of Israel, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses. ⁸

They made the sacred chest pouch with the same materials as the sacred apron and embroidered it in the same way. ⁹ It was square, and the material was folded double, so that it was twenty-three centimeters on each side. ¹⁰ They fastened four rows of valuable stones onto the pouch. In the first row, they put a red ruby, a yellow topaz, and a red garnet. ¹¹

In the second row, they put a green emerald, a blue sapphire, and a white diamond. ¹² In the third row they put a red jacinth, a white agate, and a purple amethyst. ¹³

In the fourth row, they put a yellow beryl, a red carnelian, and a green jasper. They put tiny gold frames around each of the stones. ¹⁴ On each of the twelve stones they engraved

the name of one of the sons of Jacob, to represent one of the twelve tribes of Israel.

¹⁵ They made two chains from pure gold and braided them like cords, to attach the sacred pouch to the sacred apron. ¹⁶ They made two gold rings, and they attached them to the upper corners of the sacred pouch. ¹⁷ They fastened one end of each gold chain to a ring. ¹⁸ They fastened the other end of each chain to one of the two settings that enclosed the stones and then attached the sacred pouch to the shoulder straps of the sacred apron. ¹⁹ Then they made two more gold rings and attached them to the lower corners of the sacred pouch, on the inside edges, next to the sacred apron. ²⁰ They made two more gold rings and attached them to the lower part of the front of the shoulder straps, near to where the shoulder straps were joined to the sacred apron, just above the carefully woven sash. ²¹ They tied the rings on the sacred pouch to the rings on the sacred apron with a blue cord, so that the sacred pouch was above the sash and would not come loose from the sacred apron. They did these things just as Yahweh had instructed Moses to do.

²² They made the robe that was to be worn underneath the priest's sacred apron; they used only blue cloth. ²³ It had an opening through which the priest would put his head. They sewed a border around this opening to prevent the material from tearing. ²⁴ At the lower edge on the robe they fastened decorations that resembled pomegranate fruit. The decorations were woven from blue, purple, and red woolen yarn. ²⁵ Between each of these decorations, they fastened a tiny bell made from pure gold ²⁶ for Aaron to wear while he did his work as a priest. They made all these things exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

²⁷ They wove long-sleeved tunics from

fine linen for Aaron and his sons. ²⁸ They also made a turban of fine linen for Aaron to wear around his head. They made the caps and the undershorts for Aaron's sons from fine linen. ²⁹ They made the embroidered sash for Aaron from fine linen and from blue, purple, and red woolen cloth, and they embroidered designs on it using blue, purple, and red woolen yarn, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses. ³⁰ They also made the tiny ornament of pure gold and had a skilled workman engrave on it the words, "Dedicated to Yahweh." ³¹ They fastened this to the front of the turban by a blue cord, just as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

³² Finally, they finished all the work of making the sacred tent and brought everything to Moses. They had made them exactly as Yahweh had commanded them to. ³³ They brought to him the sacred tent and all the things that were used with it—the hooks, the frames, the crossbars, the posts and their bases; ³⁴ the coverings for the sacred tent that were made of tanned rams' skins and goatskins; the curtains; ³⁵ the sacred chest that contained the stone slabs on which the commandments were written and the lid for the chest. ³⁶ The workers also finished these items for the sacred tent: The table with all the things to be used with it and the bread to display before God; ³⁷ the lampstand made of pure gold with all its lamps and the things that were used to take care of it, and the oil for the lamps; ³⁸ the golden altar for burning incense, the oil for anointing, the sweet-smelling incense, and the curtain for the entrance to the sacred tent; ³⁹ the bronze altar for burning sacrifices with its bronze grating, the poles for carrying it, and all the other things that were used with it, as well as the washbasin and its base. ⁴⁰ They also brought the curtains that would surround the courtyard, the posts and bases that supported them,

the curtain for the entrance to the courtyard and its ropes, the tent pegs, and all the other things that would be used in the sacred tent; ⁴¹ the beautiful sacred clothes for Aaron and his sons to wear when they did their work in the holy place, and the clothes for his sons to wear as they did their work as priests. ⁴² The people of Israel had done all this work exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses. ⁴³ Then Moses saw all the work that they had done. Truly, they had done everything exactly as Yahweh had commanded that it should be done. Then Moses blessed the workmen.

Chapter 40

¹ Then Yahweh said to Moses, ² "Next year, on the first day of the first month, tell the people to set up the sacred tent. ³ Put inside it the sacred chest that contains the stone slabs on which are engraved the Ten Commandments, and hang its curtain in front of it. ⁴ Bring the table into the sacred tent, and place on it all the things that they made for it. Then bring in the lampstand and set the lamps in it. ⁵ Put the gold altar for burning incense in front of the sacred chest, and set up the curtain at the entrance of the sacred tent. ⁶ Put the altar for burning sacrifices in front of the sacred tent. ⁷ Put the washbasin between the sacred tent and the altar, and fill it with water. ⁸ Hang the curtains around the courtyard, and also hang up the curtain that your workmen made for the entrance. ⁹ Then take the oil for anointing and put it on the sacred tent and everything that is in it, to set it all apart for me. Then it will be very special, reserved only for me. ¹⁰ Also put some of the oil on the altar on which the priests will burn the sacrifices that they will offer to me. Also put some of the oil on all the things that they will use at the altar, and set them apart for me. Then

they will be special, reserved only for me.

¹¹ Also put some of the oil on the washbasin and its base, to set them apart for me. ¹² Then bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the sacred tent, and wash them with water. ¹³ Then set Aaron apart for me by putting his special clothes on him and by pouring oil on him. Do this so he may serve me as a priest who comes before me. ¹⁴ Also bring Aaron's sons and put their special tunics on them; ¹⁵ then pour oil on them just as you did on their father. Do this so that they also may worship me as priests. By pouring oil on them, you will cause them and their descendants to be priests throughout all their future generations."

¹⁶ Moses and the men working with him did all these things exactly as Yahweh had commanded him to do. ¹⁷ On the first day of the first month of the next year, the year after the people had come out of Egypt, the people set up the sacred tent. ¹⁸ They did what Moses told them to do; they set up the sacred tent and its bases; they set up the frames, attached the crossbars, and put up the posts for the curtains. ¹⁹ Then they spread out the coverings over the sacred tent, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses. ²⁰ Then Moses took the two stone slabs on which the commandments were written and put them into the sacred chest. He caused the workmen to put the carrying poles into the rings on the chest and put the lid on top of it. ²¹ Then Moses took the chest into the holy place inside the sacred tent and hung the curtain. After he did that, the people who were outside could not see the chest. He did all this exactly as Yahweh had commanded him. ²² He caused the workmen to set the table inside the sacred tent, on the north side, outside the curtain. ²³ They placed on the table the bread in order to display it before Yahweh, exactly as Yahweh had commanded

Moses to do. ²⁴ Moses's workmen set the lampstand inside the sacred tent, on the south side, on the other side of the table. ²⁵ Then they set the lamps on the lampstand in Yahweh's presence, exactly as Yahweh had commanded. ²⁶ Moses's workmen set the gold altar for burning incense inside the sacred tent, in front of the curtain that separated the holy place from the very holy place, ²⁷ and they burned some sweet-smelling incense on it, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses to do. ²⁸ Moses's workmen hung the curtain at the entrance to the sacred tent. ²⁹ At the entrance to the sacred tent, they placed the altar for offering sacrifices that the priests were to burn. Then they burned on it the meat and the flour that they offered, exactly as Yahweh had commanded Moses to do. ³⁰ They set the washbasin between the sacred tent and the bronze altar, and they filled the washbasin with water. ³¹⁻³² Every time Moses, Aaron, or Aaron's sons went into the sacred tent or went up to the altar, they washed their hands and feet, exactly as Yahweh had commanded them through Moses to do. ³³ Moses's workmen hung up the curtains that surrounded the courtyard and the altar, and they hung the curtain at the entrance to the courtyard. In this way Moses caused the people to complete all that work.

³⁴ Then the tall cloud covered the sacred tent, and Yahweh's power and brilliant light filled the sacred tent. ³⁵ Because the light was very bright, Moses was not able to enter the sacred tent. ³⁶ From that day, whenever the people of Israel wanted to move to another place, they went only when the cloud rose from above the sacred tent and moved on. ³⁷ If the cloud did not rise, they stayed where they were and waited for the cloud to rise and move. ³⁸ Wherever they traveled, the cloud that showed Yahweh's presence was above the sacred tent during the day, and a bright

fire was over it at night. All the people of Israel could see it at any time, for as long as they were traveling to the land that God had promised to give them.

LEVITICUS

Chapter 1

¹ While Moses was standing near the entrance to the sacred tent, Yahweh called to him from inside the tent. He said to Moses ² to say this to the Israelite people: "When any of you brings an offering to Yahweh, bring one of your sheep or goats or cattle.

³ If what you are offering is a bull to be completely burned on the altar, it must be without any defect. You must take it to the entrance to the sacred tent, in order that it may be acceptable to Yahweh. ⁴ You must lay your hands on the head of the bull. When you do that, Yahweh will accept its death in your place to forgive you for the sins that you have committed. ⁵ You must slaughter the young bull in front of Yahweh. Then Aaron's sons, who are priests, will bring the blood and throw it against all sides of the altar near the entrance to the sacred tent. ⁶ You must remove the skin of the animal and cut the animal into pieces. You must wash the inner parts and the legs of the bull. ⁷ Then Aaron's sons will put wood on the altar and light a fire. ⁸ Then they will arrange the pieces, including the head and the fat, on the burning wood. ⁹ Then one of the priests will completely burn all of it on the altar. And the good odor will be pleasing to Yahweh.

¹⁰ If you are offering a sheep or a goat, it must be a male without any defect. ¹¹ You must slaughter it in front of Yahweh, on the north side of the altar and drain all the blood into a bowl. Then Aaron's sons will sprinkle the blood against all sides of the altar. ¹² You must cut the animal into pieces. You must wash the inner parts and the legs of the animal. Then the priests will arrange the pieces, including the head and the fat, on the burning wood. ¹³ Then

one of the priests will take all of it and completely burn all of it on the altar. And the good odor as the sacrifice burns will be pleasing to Yahweh.

¹⁴ If what you are offering to Yahweh is birds, you must offer a dove or a young pigeon. ¹⁵ The priest will take it to the altar and wring off its head. Then he will burn the head on the altar. He will drain out the bird's blood onto the side of the altar. ¹⁶ Then he will remove the bird's craw and what is inside it, and throw it on the east side of the altar, where they also throw the ashes. ¹⁷ Then he will grasp the bird's wings and tear the bird open partially, but never all the way. Then he will burn it completely in the fire on the altar. And the good odor will be pleasing to Yahweh.

Chapter 2

¹ If you bring to Yahweh an offering of flour, it must consist of finely ground flour. You must pour olive oil on it, as well as some incense, ² and take it to one of the priests. The priest will take a handful of it and burn it on the altar. That part will symbolize how our prayers go up to Yahweh as we give him thanks for his goodness. ³ The part of that flour offering that is not burned will belong to Aaron and his sons. It is something set apart for the priests out of the offerings that you will give to Yahweh.

⁴ If you bring an offering that is made from flour, something that is baked in an oven, it must be made from finely ground flour. You may bring loaves made from flour mixed with olive oil but without yeast, or you may bring wafers with olive oil smeared on them, but also made without yeast. ⁵ If your flour offering is cooked on a griddle, it must be made from

Chapter 3

finely ground flour mixed with olive oil and without yeast. ⁶ You must crumble it and pour olive oil on it. That will be your offering made from flour. ⁷ If your offering that is made from flour is cooked in a pan, it must be made of finely ground flour mixed with olive oil. ⁸ Bring to Yahweh your flour offering. Give it to the priest, and he will take it to the altar. ⁹ He will take a part of it that will symbolize that all the flour offering belongs to Yahweh. He will burn that part on the altar, and the good odor as it burns will be pleasing to Yahweh. ¹⁰ The part of the flour offering that is not burned will belong to Aaron and his sons. It is something set apart for God from the offerings given to Yahweh by burning them in a fire.

¹¹ Every flour offering that is made from grain and that you bring to Yahweh must be made without yeast, because you must not put any yeast or honey in any offering to Yahweh that a priest burns on the altar. ¹² You may bring to Yahweh an offering of the first part of your harvest, but that offering is not to be burned on the altar to produce a good odor that will be pleasing to Yahweh. ¹³ Put salt on all your offerings that are made from flour. The salt represents the covenant that your God made with you, so be sure that you do not forget to put salt on those flour offerings.

¹⁴ If you bring to Yahweh a flour offering from the first part of your harvest of grain, offer some new grain that has been crushed and roasted in a fire. ¹⁵ Put olive oil and incense on it, and that will be your offering made from flour. ¹⁶ The priest will take a part of it that will symbolize that all the offering truly belongs to Yahweh. He will burn that part on the altar, to be an offering given to Yahweh by burning it in a fire.

¹ When you offer to Yahweh an animal to promise friendship with him, you may bring a bull or a cow from your herd of cattle, but what you present to Yahweh must be an animal that has no defects.

² You must bring the animal to the entrance to the sacred tent. You must lay your hands on its head. Then you must slaughter it and catch some of its blood in a bowl. Then one of Aaron's sons, one of the priests, will sprinkle the blood against all sides of the altar. ³ From that offering you must bring to Yahweh a sacrifice that a priest will burn in the fire. That will consist of all the fat that covers the inner parts of the animal, or which is attached to them— ⁴ the kidneys and the fat that is attached to them near the lower back muscle, and the fat that covers the liver. ⁵ Then one of the priests will burn those things on the altar, along with the other parts of the animal that he will completely burn as an offering to Yahweh. And the good odor will be pleasing to Yahweh.

⁶ If that offering to promise friendship with Yahweh is a sheep or a goat, it must also be an animal that has no defects. ⁷ If you offer a lamb, you must present it to Yahweh at the entrance to the sacred tent. You must lay your hands on the lamb's head and then slaughter it. You must catch some of its blood in a bowl. ⁸ Then one of the priests will sprinkle that blood against all sides of the altar. ⁹ From that offering you must separate these things to be a sacrifice to Yahweh that is burned: Its fat, the fat tail that you must cut off close to the backbone, and all the fat that covers the inner parts of the lamb or which is attached to them— ¹⁰ the kidneys with the fat that is on them near the lower back muscle, and the fat that covers the liver. ¹¹ One of the priests will burn those things

on the altar to be an offering to Yahweh. Those things will come from your food supplies.

¹² If your offering is a goat, you must take it to Yahweh. ¹³ You must lay your hands on its head. Then you must slaughter it in front of the sacred tent. Then one of Aaron's sons will sprinkle the blood against all sides of the altar. ¹⁴ From that offering you must separate these things to be a sacrifice to Yahweh that is burned: All the fat that covers the inner parts of the animal or which is attached to them. ¹⁵ Also separate the kidneys with the fat that is on them near the lower back muscle, and the fat that covers the liver. ¹⁶ The priest will burn those things on the altar to be an offering to Yahweh. Those things will come from your food supplies. And the good odor will be pleasing to Yahweh. All the fat of the animals that are sacrificed belongs to Yahweh.

¹⁷ This is a command that must be obeyed by you and your descendants forever, wherever you live. You must not eat the fat or the blood of any animal."

Chapter 4

¹ Then Yahweh told Moses ² to say this to the Israelite people, "This is what anyone must do if he sins without intending to sin, that is, if he does something that breaks any of Yahweh's commands.

³ If the high priest sins and that causes all the people to be guilty, he must bring to Yahweh a young bull that has no defects. That will be an offering for the sin that he has committed. ⁴ He must bring the bull to the entrance to the sacred tent. He must lay his hands on its head. Then he must slaughter it in front of Yahweh and catch some of the blood in a bowl. ⁵ Then the priest must take some of that blood into

the sacred tent. ⁶ He must dip one of his fingers into the blood and sprinkle it seven times in the presence of Yahweh, in front of the curtain that separates the holy place from the very holy place. ⁷ Then he must put some of the blood on the projections at the corners of the altar where fragrant incense is burned in the sacred tent in the presence of Yahweh. The remaining part of the bull's blood that is still in the bowl, he must pour out at the base of the altar, where sacrifices are burned, at the entrance to the sacred tent. ⁸ From that offering the high priest must separate these things from the bull that is to be burned: The fat that covers the inner parts of the bull or which is attached to them— ⁹ the kidneys and the fat that is attached to them near the lower back muscle, and the fat that covers the liver. ¹⁰ Then the high priest must completely burn those things on the altar. That will be just like when the fat is removed from an animal that is sacrificed to promised friendship with Yahweh. ¹¹ But all the other parts of the animal—its skin and all its other meat, its head and its legs, its inner parts and the intestines, ¹² he must take outside the camp and throw them in a place that is made acceptable to Yahweh, where the ashes are thrown, and he must burn them in a fire on the pile of ashes.

¹³ If all the Israelite people sin without intending to sin, doing something that is forbidden in any of Yahweh's commands, they will be guilty, even if they do not realize that they have sinned. ¹⁴ When they realize that they have committed a sin, together they must bring a young bull to be an offering for their sin, to the front of the sacred tent. ¹⁵ The elders must lay their hands on the bull's head in the presence of Yahweh and slaughter it and catch some of the blood in a bowl. ¹⁶ Then the high priest must take some of that blood into the sacred tent. ¹⁷ He must dip one

of his fingers into the blood and sprinkle it seven times in the presence of Yahweh, in front of the curtain that separates the holy place from the very holy place. ¹⁸ Then he must put some of the blood on the projections at the corners of the altar that is in the presence of Yahweh in the sacred tent. The remaining part of the bull's blood he must pour out at the base of the altar where sacrifices are burned, at the entrance of the sacred tent. ¹⁹ He must remove all the animal's fat and burn it on the altar. ²⁰ He must do with this bull the same things that he did with the bull that was an offering for his own sins, and they will be forgiven. ²¹ Then the priest must take the other parts of the bull outside the camp and burn them, like he does when he himself has sinned. That will be the offering for the sin that all the people have committed, and they will be forgiven.

²² When one of the leaders sins without intending to sin, doing something that is forbidden in any of the commands of Yahweh his God, he will be guilty. ²³ When he realizes that he has committed a sin, he must bring as his offering a male goat that has no defects. ²⁴ He must lay his hands on the goat's head in the presence of Yahweh and slaughter it at the place where they slaughter the animals that will be completely burned on the altar. That will be an offering for his sin. ²⁵ Then the priest must put some of the animal's blood into a bowl and dip one of his fingers in it and put some of the blood on the corners of the projections of the altar. Then he must pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. ²⁶ Then he must burn all the fat on the altar, like was done with the fat of the offering to promise friendship with Yahweh. As a result of the priest's doing that, the leader will no longer be guilty for his sin and he will be forgiven.

²⁷ If one of the Israelite people who is not

a priest sins without intending to sin, and does something that is forbidden in any of the commands of Yahweh his God, he will be guilty. ²⁸ When he realizes that he has committed a sin, he must bring as his offering a female goat that has no defects. ²⁹ He must lay his hands on the goat's head and slaughter it at the place where they slaughter the animals that they will burn completely on the altar, and catch some of the blood in a bowl. ³⁰ Then the priest must dip one of his fingers in it, and put some of the blood on the projections at the corners of the altar. Then he must pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. ³¹ Then he must remove all the goat's fat, and burn all the fat on the altar, like was done with the fat of the offering to maintain fellowship with Yahweh. And the good odor will be pleasing to Yahweh. As a result of the priest doing that, the person will no longer be guilty for his sin, and he will be forgiven.

³² If that person brings a lamb to be his offering for sin, he must bring a female lamb that has no defects. ³³ He must lay his hands on the lamb's head and slaughter it at the place where they slaughter the animals that will be completely burned on the altar, and catch some of the blood in a bowl. ³⁴ Then the priest must dip one of his fingers in it and put some of the blood on the projections at the corners of the altar. Then he must pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. ³⁵ Then he must remove all the lamb's fat, and burn all the fat on the altar, like was done with the fat of the offering to promise friendship with Yahweh. He must burn it on top of the other offerings to Yahweh that are being burned. As a result, the priest will request God to forgive that person for his sin, and he will be forgiven.

Chapter 5

¹ If a judge orders any of you to tell in court something that you have seen or something that you heard someone say, but if you refuse to say what you know to be true, you must pay a penalty for refusing to tell what you know.

² If you accidentally touch something which God considers impure such as the carcass of a wild animal or the carcass of your animals that has died, or of an animal that crawls along the ground, you must pay a penalty.

³ If you touch anything that has made anyone else unacceptable to God, even if you did not intend to touch it, when you realize what you have done, you must pay a penalty.

⁴ If you carelessly make a solemn promise to do something that is either good or that is bad, when you realize that you cannot do it, you must pay a penalty.

⁵ If you are guilty of committing any of those sins, you must confess what you have done. ⁶ And as a penalty, you must bring to Yahweh a female lamb or female goat as an offering for the sin that you have committed, and the priest will sacrifice it, and then you will no longer be guilty for your sin.

⁷ If you are poor and cannot afford to bring a lamb, you must bring to Yahweh two doves or two pigeons. One will be an offering for your sin, and the other will be an offering that will be completely burned on the altar. ⁸ You must bring them to the priest. First he will offer one of them to be an offering for your sin. He will wring its neck to kill it, but he must not pull off its head completely. ⁹ Then he must sprinkle some of the blood against the side of the altar. The remaining blood must be drained out at the base of the altar. That will be

an offering for your sin. ¹⁰ The priest will then do what I have commanded and offer the other bird to be completely burned on the altar. Then you will no longer be guilty for the sin you have committed, and Yahweh will forgive you.

¹¹ However, if you are very poor and cannot afford two doves or two pigeons, you must bring to be an offering for your sin two liters of fine flour. You must not put olive oil or incense on it, because it is an offering for sin. ¹² You must take it to the priest. He will take a handful of it to symbolize that the whole offering truly belongs to Yahweh, and burn it on the altar, on top of the other offerings. ¹³ When he does that, the priest will enable you to no longer be guilty for any of the sins that you have committed, and God will forgive you. The part of the offering that is not burned will belong to the priest, just as in the case of the offerings made from flour."

¹⁴ Yahweh also said to Moses to tell the people: ¹⁵ "When you sin, without intending to, by not giving to me, Yahweh, the things that you are required to give to him, you must pay a penalty by bringing to me a ram that has no defects. You must determine how much silver it is worth, by using the official standard in the sacred tent. It will be an offering to cause you to no longer be guilty. ¹⁶ But you must also make restitution for failing to pay him what has been set apart as only for him. Also, you must add one-fifth of its value. You must give that to the priest. He will offer the ram as a sacrifice for the sin that you have committed and cause you to no longer be guilty, and I will forgive you.

¹⁷ If you sin by doing something that is forbidden in any of my commands, even if you do not know that you have disobeyed one of my commands, you are still guilty; you must pay a penalty to me. ¹⁸ When you realize what you have done, you must

bring a ram to the priest as an offering in order that you will no longer be guilty. You must bring one that has no defects. The priest will offer the ram to be a sacrifice to me, and as a result you will no longer be guilty for the sin that you have committed, and I will forgive you. ¹⁹ It is an offering to cause you to no longer be guilty for sinning against me.”

Chapter 6

¹ Yahweh also said to Moses, ² “If you sin against me by deceiving someone—if you refuse to return what someone has lent you, or if you steal something of his, ³ or if you find something and swear that you do not have it, you are guilty. ⁴ You must return to its owner what you have stolen or what someone has lent to you and you have not returned, or what you found that someone else had lost, or whatever you lied about. ⁵ You must not only return anything like that to its owner, but you must also pay to the owner an additional one-fifth of its value. ⁶ You must also bring to the priest a ram to be an offering to me, in order that you will no longer be guilty. The ram that you bring must be one that has no defects, one that has the value that has been officially determined. ⁷ Then the priest will offer that ram to be a sacrifice that will cause you to no longer be guilty, and I will forgive you for the wrong things that you did.”

⁸ Yahweh also said to Moses, ⁹ “Tell this to Aaron and his sons: These are the regulations concerning the offerings that will be completely burned on the altar: The offering must remain on the altar all during the night, and the fire on the altar must always be kept burning. ¹⁰ The next morning the priest must put on his linen underclothes and linen outer clothes. Then

he must remove the ashes of the offering from the fire and put them beside the altar. ¹¹ Then he must take off those clothes and put on other clothes, and take the ashes outside the camp, to a place that has been made acceptable to me. ¹² The fire on the altar must always be kept burning. The priest must not allow it to go out. Each morning the priest must put more firewood on the fire. Then he must arrange more offerings on the fire, and burn on the altar the fat of the offerings to be burned to promise friendship with Yahweh. ¹³ The fire on the altar must be kept burning continually. The priest must not allow it to go out.”

¹⁴ “These are the regulations concerning the offerings made from flour. Aaron’s sons must bring them to Yahweh in front of the altar. ¹⁵ The priest must take a handful of fine flour mixed with olive oil and incense and burn that on the altar. That handful will signify that the whole offering truly belongs to me. And the good odor, while the offering burns, will be pleasing to me. ¹⁶ Aaron and his sons may eat the remaining part of the grain offering. But they must eat it in a place that is set apart for God, in the courtyard of the sacred tent. ¹⁷ It must not have yeast mixed with it. Like the offerings for sin and the offerings to cause people to no longer be guilty of sin, that offering is very special, reserved for me. ¹⁸ Any male descendants of Aaron are permitted to eat it, because it is their permanent regular share of the offerings given to me and burned in the fire on the altar. Whoever touches them will be considered to be set apart for the honor of Yahweh.”

¹⁹ Yahweh also said to Moses, ²⁰ “Tell Aaron and his sons that this is the offering that they must bring to me on the day that any of them is ordained: That person must bring two liters of fine flour as an

offering made from grain flour. He must bring half of it in the morning and half of it in the evening. ²¹ He must mix it well with olive oil and bake it in a shallow pan. He must then break it into small pieces to be burned on the altar. And the good odor, while it burns, will be pleasing to me. ²² I have commanded that the descendants of Aaron who are appointed to become the high priests after Aaron dies are the ones who must prepare those things. They must be completely burned on the altar to be sacrifices to me. ²³ Every offering that a priest gives that is made from flour must be completely burned. No one is to eat any of it."

²⁴ Yahweh also told Moses to ²⁵ tell Aaron and his sons, "These are the regulations concerning the offerings for the sins of the people. The priest will kill the sacrifice at the place where the offerings are burned; it is killed before Yahweh and the offering is dedicated to Yahweh. ²⁶ The priest who makes the offering for sin, may eat the offering given to Yahweh. The priest can only eat it in the place in the courtyard that has been set apart for eating sacrifices. ²⁷ Any other person who touches any of its meat will belong to me. And if its blood is splattered on your clothes, you must wash the clothes in a holy place. ²⁸ If the meat is cooked in a clay pot, the pot must be broken afterwards. But if it is cooked in a bronze pot, the pot must be scoured afterwards and rinsed with water. ²⁹ Any male in a priest's family may eat some of the cooked meat. That meat is very special. ³⁰ But if the blood of those offerings is brought into the sacred tent to enable the people to be forgiven for having sinned, the meat of those animals must not be eaten. The priest must burn that meat completely."

Chapter 7

¹ "These are the regulations concerning the offerings for when people are guilty of not giving to Yahweh the things that are required to be given to him. Those are very sacred offerings. ² A priest must slaughter each animal that people offer for this purpose in the same place where they slaughter the animals that they will completely burn. The priest must sprinkle the animal's blood on all sides of the altar. ³ All their fat, the fat tails that are cut close to the backbone, and all the fat that covers the inner parts of the animals or which is attached to them, must be burned on the altar. ⁴ This includes the kidneys with their fat near the lower back muscle, and the fat that covers the liver. The priest must remove all these fatty pieces. ⁵ The priest must burn these pieces on the altar to be offerings to me, Yahweh. They are an offering for the people, for me to forgive them when they have not done what I required them to do. ⁶ All the males in the priest's family are permitted to eat its meat, but it must be eaten in a place set apart for me, because it is very special to me.

⁷ The regulation is the same for the offerings to cause people to become acceptable to me again and the offerings for when they are guilty of not giving to me the things that I required from them. The meat of those offerings belongs to the priest who offers them. ⁸ When a priest slaughters an animal that he will completely burn on the altar, he may keep the animal's hide for himself. ⁹ Offerings of things made from flour that are baked in an oven or cooked in a pan or in a shallow pan belong to the priest who sacrifices those things for another person. ¹⁰ And offerings of things made from flour, whether they were mixed with olive oil

or not, also belong to the Aaron's descendants.

¹¹ These are the regulations concerning the offerings that people make to promise friendship with Yahweh.

¹² If you bring an offering to thank Yahweh, along with the animal that you slaughter you must offer loaves of bread made with olive oil mixed with the flour but without yeast, and wafers that are made without yeast but with olive oil smeared on them, and loaves made from fine flour with olive oil mixed well with the flour. ¹³ Along with that offering to thank Yahweh, you must bring an offering of loaves made with yeast. ¹⁴ You must bring one of each kind for an offering to Yahweh, but they belong to the priest who sprinkles against the altar the blood of the animal that is slaughtered as an offering to promise friendship with Yahweh. ¹⁵ The meat of that offering must be eaten on the day that it is offered. None of it may be left to be eaten on the next day.

¹⁶ However, if your offering is the result of a vow that you made to Yahweh, or if it is an offering that you make voluntarily, you may eat some of the meat on the day it is offered, and anything that is left may be eaten on the next day. ¹⁷ But any meat that is left until the third day must be completely burned. ¹⁸ If any meat from the offering to promise friendship with Yahweh is eaten on the third day, Yahweh will not accept that offering. It will be useless to offer it because Yahweh will consider that it is worthless. Anyone who eats some of it will have to pay a penalty to Yahweh.

¹⁹ Meat that touches something that God considers to be impure must not be eaten. It must be completely burned. But as for other meat, anyone who has performed the rituals to become acceptable to God is allowed to eat it. ²⁰ If anyone who has not performed those rituals eats some of

the meat of the offering to promise friendship with Yahweh, meat that belongs to Yahweh, he must no longer be allowed to associate with God's people. ²¹ If anyone touches something that God considers to be impure and very displeasing to him, whether it is from a human or from an animal, and then he eats any of the meat of the offering to promise friendship with Yahweh, meat that belongs to Yahweh, he must no longer be allowed to associate with God's people."

²² Yahweh also said to Moses: ²³ "Say this to the Israelite people: 'Do not eat any of the fat of cattle or sheep or goats. ²⁴ The fat of an animal that is found dead or that has been killed by a wild animal may be used for other purposes, but you must not eat it. ²⁵ Anyone who eats the fat of an animal from which an offering has been made to Yahweh must no longer be allowed to associate with God's people. ²⁶ And wherever you live, you must not eat the blood of any bird or animal. ²⁷ If anyone eats blood, he must no longer be allowed to associate with God's people."

²⁸ Yahweh also said to Moses, ²⁹ "Tell the Israelite people this: 'Anyone who brings an offering to promise friendship with Yahweh must bring part of it to be a sacrifice to Yahweh. ³⁰ He himself must bring the offering that will be burned in the fire. He must bring the fat along with the breast of the animal and lift it high in front of Yahweh to present it as an offering to him. ³¹ The priest must burn the fat on the altar, but the breast belongs to Aaron and all his descendants. ³² You must give to the priest the right thigh of the animal that you presented to promise friendship with Yahweh. ³³ The son of Aaron who offers the blood and the fat of that sacrifice will receive the right thigh of the animal as his share. ³⁴ From the offerings that the Israelite people give to promise friend-

ship with Yahweh, he has declared that he has given to Aaron and his descendants the breast that is lifted high and the right thigh that is offered. Those portions will always be their regular share from the Israelite people.

³⁵ Those are the portions of the offerings brought to Yahweh and burned in fire that are allotted to Aaron and his descendants on the day that you, Moses, will set apart to serve Yahweh as priests. ³⁶ Yahweh commands that on the day that the priests are appointed, that the Israelite people must always give those portions to the priests.”

³⁷ So those are the regulations for the offerings that are to be completely burned on the altar, the offerings made from flour, the offerings to cause people to become acceptable to God again, the offerings for when people are guilty of not giving to Yahweh the things that are required to be given to him, the offerings given when the priests are appointed, and the offerings to promise friendship with Yahweh. ³⁸ They are regulations that Yahweh gave to Moses on Mount Sinai, on the day that he commanded the Israelite people to start bringing their offerings to him, in the wilderness around Sinai.

Chapter 8

¹ Yahweh also said to Moses, ² ”Bring Aaron and his sons, and bring their special clothes, the oil for anointing them, the bull to be offered to cause them to become acceptable to God, the two rams to be slaughtered, and the basket containing bread made without yeast. ³ Then gather all the people at the entrance to the sacred tent.” ⁴ Moses did what Yahweh told him to do, and all the people gathered there.

⁵ Then Moses said to the people, “This is

what Yahweh has commanded us to do.”

⁶ Then he brought Aaron and his sons forward and washed them. ⁷ He put the special tunic on Aaron, tied the sash around him, put on him the special robe, and put on him the sacred vest. He fastened the sacred vest around him, using the finely woven waistband. ⁸ He put the sacred pouch on his chest and put into it the two stones for him to use to determine what God wants. ⁹ Then he wrapped the turban around Aaron’s head and fastened on the front of it the gold ornament the object that showed that he was dedicated to God, as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

¹⁰ Then Moses took the olive oil and anointed the sacred tent and everything in it, and dedicated it all to Yahweh. ¹¹ He sprinkled some of the oil on the altar seven times. He anointed the altar and all the things used with it, and its huge washbasin and its stand, to dedicate them to Yahweh. ¹² He poured some of the oil on Aaron’s head and anointed him, to dedicate him to Yahweh. ¹³ Then he brought forward Aaron’s sons. He put tunics on them, tied sashes around them, and wrapped turbans around their heads, as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

¹⁴ Then he brought the bull for the offering to cause people to become acceptable to God. Then Aaron and his sons put their hands on the bull’s head. ¹⁵ Then Moses slaughtered the bull, caught some of its blood in a bowl, and with his finger put some of it on the projections at the corners of the altar, to purify the altar. He poured the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. By doing that, he caused it to be a suitable place for burning sacrifices for sin. ¹⁶ Moses took all the fat that covers the inner parts of the animal, including the liver and kidneys, and burned them on the altar. ¹⁷ He took the rest of the bull, including the hide and intestines, and burned

them outside the camp, like Yahweh had commanded Moses.

¹⁸ Then he brought the ram for the offering that would be completely burned on the altar, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head. ¹⁹ Then Moses slaughtered the ram and sprinkled its blood on all sides of the altar. ²⁰⁻²¹ He cut the ram into pieces and washed the inner parts and hind legs. Then he put the head, the fat, and the other parts of the ram on the altar. As it burned, the aroma of the smoke was pleasing to Yahweh. It was an offering to Yahweh that was burned, as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

²² Then he brought the other ram, the one for consecrating the priests, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head. ²³⁻²⁴ Moses slaughtered that ram, caught some of its blood in a bowl, and put some of that blood on the lobes of the right ears, the thumbs of the right hands, and the big toes of the right feet of Aaron and his sons to indicate that what they listened to and what they did and where they went should be directed by Yahweh. ²⁵ He picked up all the fat of the ram, its fat tail, the fat that covered the inner parts, including the fat that covered the liver and kidneys, and the right thigh of the ram. ²⁶⁻²⁷ Then from the basket containing the bread that was made without yeast, the bread which had been dedicated to Yahweh, he picked up one loaf of bread made without olive oil, and one loaf that was made by mixing the flour with olive oil, and one wafer. He put those on top of the portions of fat, and put them into the hands of Aaron and his sons. Then they lifted them up in the presence of Yahweh to show that it was an offering that belonged to him. ²⁸ Then Moses took those things from their hands and burned them on the altar. That was the offering that was burned to appoint Aaron and his

sons as priests. And the aroma while it burned was pleasing to Yahweh. ²⁹ Moses also took the breast of the second ram and lifted it high before Yahweh to offer it to him, as Yahweh had commanded. The breast was Moses' share of the ram that was sacrificed to dedicate the priests.

³⁰ Then Moses took some of the olive oil for anointing Aaron and his sons, and some of the blood that was on the altar and sprinkled it on Aaron and his sons and on their clothes. By doing that, he set apart Aaron to be priest, together with his sons and their clothes.

³¹ Then Moses said to Aaron and his sons, "Boil the meat of the second ram at the entrance of the sacred tent, and eat it there with the bread that is in the basket, as I told you to do. ³² Burn up any of the meat and bread that remains. ³³ The time for you to be set apart as priests will be seven days, so do not leave the entrance of the sacred tent for seven days. ³⁴ What we have done today is what Yahweh commanded to cause you to be forgiven for your sins. ³⁵ You must stay at the entrance to the sacred tent for seven days and seven nights and do what Yahweh requires, in order that you will not die because of disobeying him. I am telling you that because that is what Yahweh has commanded me to tell you."

³⁶ So Aaron and his sons did everything that Yahweh told Moses to tell them.

Chapter 9

¹ Eight days later Moses summoned the elders of Israel. ² Then he said to Aaron, "Take a young bull so you can offer it for your sins, and a ram so that you can burn it whole on the altar, both of them without any defects, and offer them to Yahweh. ³ Then say to the Israelite people, 'Take a

male goat to offer it for your sins. Also take a calf and a lamb that have no defects, so that you can burn them whole on the altar. ⁴ Also take an ox and a ram to offer them, so you may promise friendship with Yahweh, along with an offering of flour mixed with olive oil. Do this because today Yahweh is going to appear to you.”

⁵ After Moses gave these instructions to the Israelites, some of them brought these things and went to the courtyard in front of the sacred tent. Then all the people came near and stood in front of Yahweh. ⁶ Then Moses said, “This is what Yahweh has commanded you to do, in order that his glory will appear to you.”

⁷ Then Moses said to Aaron, “Come to the altar and sacrifice the animal that is your offering to enable you to be forgiven for the sins you have committed. Also bring the animal that you will burn whole on the altar. Because of those offerings, God will forgive you and the people for the sins that you have committed. Do these things that Yahweh has commanded you to do.”

⁸ So Aaron came up to the altar and slaughtered the calf as an offering for his sins. ⁹ His sons brought its blood to him in a bowl. He dipped his finger into the blood and put some of it on the projections at the corners of the altar. He poured out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. ¹⁰ He burned the fat, including that which covered the kidneys and the liver, as Yahweh had commanded him. ¹¹ Then Aaron went outside the camp and there burned the rest of the meat and the hide.

¹² Then Aaron slaughtered the animal that he was going to burn whole on the altar. His sons handed him the bowl containing its blood, and he sprinkled the blood on all sides of the altar. ¹³ Then they handed him the head and the pieces of the animal that would be burned, and he burned them on the altar. ¹⁴ He washed the inner

parts and the legs of the animal, and he burned them on the altar, on top of the other pieces of the animal.

¹⁵ Then Aaron brought the animals that would be sacrifices for the Israelite people. He took a goat and slaughtered it for the people’s sins, as he had done with the goat for his own offering.

¹⁶ Then he brought the animal for the offering in order to burn it whole. He slaughtered it and offered it in the way that Yahweh had commanded him to do. ¹⁷ He also brought the offering made from flour. He took a handful of it and burned it on the altar, as he had done with the animal that he had sacrificed earlier that morning.

¹⁸ Then he slaughtered the ox and the ram to be an offering for the Israelite people to promise friendship with Yahweh. His sons handed him the bowl containing the blood, and he sprinkled the blood against all sides of the altar. ¹⁹ But he took the fat from the ox and the ram, including their fat tails that were cut close to the backbone, and all the fat that covered the livers and the kidneys. ²⁰ He put these parts on top of the breasts of those animals and carried them to the altar to burn them. ²¹ Then, doing what Moses had commanded, he lifted up in front of Yahweh the breast and the right thigh of those animals to show that those two animals completely belonged to Yahweh.

²² Then Aaron lifted his arms toward the people and asked Yahweh to bless them. Then having finished making all those offerings, he stepped down from the place where the altar was.

²³ Then Aaron and Moses entered the sacred tent. When they came out later, they asked Yahweh to bless the people. And suddenly the glory of Yahweh appeared to all the people. ²⁴ A fire from Yahweh

appeared and burned up the entire offering, together with the fat that was on the altar. When all the people saw this happen, they shouted joyfully and prostrated themselves on the ground to worship Yahweh.

Chapter 10

¹ Two of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, took the pans in which they burned incense. They put some burning coals in them and put incense on top of the coals, but this fire was not acceptable to Yahweh because it was not the kind that he had commanded them to burn. ² So suddenly a fire from Yahweh appeared and burned them up in his own presence. ³ Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what Yahweh was talking about when he said,

"Those priests who come near to me—

I will show them that they must honor me;

in the presence of all the people

I am the one whom they must honor."

But Aaron said nothing.

⁴ Then Moses summoned Mishael and Elzaphan, who were the sons of Aaron's uncle Uzziel, and said to them, "Take the corpses of your cousins outside the camp, away from being in front of the sacred tent." ⁵ So they carried the corpses, on which were still the special tunics, outside the camp, and buried them.

⁶ Then Moses said to Aaron and his other two sons Eleazar and Ithamar, "You are sad because Nadab and Abihu died, but you must act like you always do. Do not allow the hair on your heads to remain uncombed, and do not tear your clothes. If you do, Yahweh will be angry with all

the people. But you must let your relatives and all your fellow Israelites engage in mourning ceremonies for those whom Yahweh has destroyed by fire. ⁷ But you must not leave the entrance of the sacred tent to join those who are mourning, because if you do that, you also will die. Do not forget that Yahweh has set you apart to work for him here, and he does not want you to become defiled by touching a corpse." So they obeyed Moses; they did not join the rest of the people in mourning for their cousins' death.

⁸ Then Yahweh said to Aaron, ⁹ "You and your two sons who are still alive must not drink wine or other fermented drinks before you enter the sacred tent. If you do that, you will die. That is a command that you and your descendants must obey forever. ¹⁰ You must do that in order to learn what things are holy and what things are not holy; you must also learn what things I will accept what I will not accept. ¹¹ And you must teach the Israelite people all the laws that I gave to them by telling them to Moses."

¹² Moses said to Aaron and his two sons who were still alive, Eleazar and Ithamar, "Take the offering made from flour that is left after a portion of it has been offered to Yahweh to be burned, and eat it alongside the altar. It should not be eaten elsewhere because it is very holy. ¹³ Eat it in a holy place. It is the share for you and your sons from the meat that you have burned as offerings. Yahweh has commanded me to tell you this. ¹⁴ But you and your sons and daughters are permitted to eat the breast and the thigh that were lifted up in front of Yahweh. Eat them in any place that is holy. They have been given to you and your descendants as your share of the offerings when the Israelites promise friendship with Yahweh. ¹⁵ The thigh and the breast that were lifted up in front of

Yahweh must be brought with the portions of fat to be burned, to be lifted up and offered in his presence. They will be the regular share for you and your descendants, as Yahweh has commanded.”

¹⁶ When Moses inquired about the goat that the priests had sacrificed for the people’s sins, he found out that the priests had burned it all. So he was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar and asked them, ¹⁷ “Why did you not eat near the sacred tent the meat of the sin offering? It was very special for Yahweh; he gave it to you so he could forgive the sins of the people. ¹⁸ Since its blood was not taken into the holy place inside the sacred tent, you should have eaten the meat of the goat outside the sacred tent, as I commanded.”

¹⁹ Aaron replied to Moses, “Today the people brought to Yahweh their offering for him to forgive their sins, and also the offering we burned completely to please Yahweh. But think about the terrible thing that happened to my other two sons! Would Yahweh have been pleased if I had eaten some of the people’s sin offering today?” ²⁰ When Moses heard that, he was satisfied and said nothing more.

Chapter 11

¹ Yahweh said to Aaron and Moses, ² “Tell the people that this is what I say: ‘Of all the animals that live on the land, these are the ones that you are permitted to eat. ³ The ones that have hooves that are completely split and that chew their cuds—you may eat these animals.

⁴ There are some animals that chew their cuds but do not have split hooves, and some animals that have split hooves but do not chew their cuds. You must not eat any of those animals. For example, camels chew their cuds but do not have

split hooves, so they are unacceptable for you to eat. ⁵ Rock badgers chew their cuds but do not have split hooves, so they are unacceptable for you to eat. ⁶ Rabbits chew their cuds but do not have split hooves, so they are unacceptable for you to eat. ⁷ Pigs have completely split hooves but they do not chew their cuds, so they are not acceptable for you to eat. ⁸ All of those animals are unacceptable for you, so you must not eat their meat or even touch their carcasses.

⁹ Of all the creatures that live in the oceans and the streams, you are permitted to eat any that have fins and scales. ¹⁰ But you must detest and not eat those that do not have fins and scales. That include creatures that are very small. ¹¹ You must despise them, and you must not eat their meat, and you must detest their carcasses. ¹² You must detest everything that lives in the water that does not have fins and scales.

¹³ There are some birds that you must detest and not eat. They include eagles, vultures, ¹⁴ kites, any kind of falcon, ¹⁵ any kind of raven, ¹⁶ horned owls, screech owls, seagulls, and any kind of hawk. ¹⁷ Also small owls, large owls, cormorants, ¹⁸ white owls, barn owls, ospreys, ¹⁹ storks, any kind of heron, hoopoes, and bats.

²⁰ You must detest and not eat flying insects that also walk on the ground. ²¹ But you are permitted to eat creatures with wings that sometimes walk on the ground if they have jointed legs for hopping around. ²² They include locusts, katydids, crickets, and grasshoppers. ²³ But you must detest and not eat other insects with wings that have four legs.

²⁴ There are certain creatures that will make you unacceptable to me if you touch their carcasses. Anyone who touches their carcasses must not touch other people until that evening. ²⁵ Anyone who picks

up one of their carcasses must wash his clothes and not touch other people until that evening.

²⁶ The animals whose carcasses you must not touch are those that have hooves that are not completely divided or animals that do not chew their cud. Anyone who touches the carcasses of any of those animals becomes defiled. ²⁷ From all the animals that walk on the ground, you must not touch the carcasses of those that have paws to walk on. Anyone who touches one of their carcasses must not touch other people until that evening. ²⁸ Anyone who picks up one of their carcasses must wash his clothes and not touch other people until that evening, because touching their carcasses makes you unacceptable to me.

²⁹ Of all the animals that walk on the ground, these are the ones that make you unacceptable if you touch them: Weasels, rats, any kind of big lizard, ³⁰ geckos, monitor lizards and other lizards, skinks, and chameleons. ³¹ The creatures that crawl along the ground make you unacceptable to me. Anyone who touches one of their carcasses must not touch other people until the evening. ³² When one of those creatures dies and falls on something, the thing that it falls on, whatever it is used for, will become defiled, whether it is made of wood, cloth, the hide of some animal or from rough cloth. You must put the object into water. Then you must not use it until that evening. ³³ If one of those unclean creatures falls into a clay pot, everything in it becomes defiled, and you must break that pot. ³⁴ If you pour water from that pot onto any food, you must not eat that food. And you must not drink any water from that pot. ³⁵ Anything that one of the carcasses of those creatures falls on becomes defiled, even if the creature falls into an oven or a cooking pot. Anything that it falls on must be broken. It be-

comes unacceptable to me, and you must not use it again. ³⁶ If one of their carcasses falls into a spring or a pit for storing water, the water may still be drunk, but anyone who touches one of those carcasses becomes unacceptable to me. ³⁷ If one of those carcasses falls on seeds that are to be planted, those seeds are still acceptable to be planted. ³⁸ But if water has been put on the seeds and then a carcass falls on it, the seeds must be thrown away; you must regard them as unacceptable.

³⁹ If an animal whose meat you are permitted to eat dies, anyone who touches its carcass must not touch other people until that evening. ⁴⁰ Anyone who eats some meat from that carcass must wash his clothes, and then he must not touch anyone until that evening.

⁴¹⁻⁴² All creatures that crawl along the ground, including those that move on their bellies and those that crawl along, are detestable, and they must not be eaten. ⁴³ Do not defile yourselves by eating any of those creatures. Be very careful about this. ⁴⁴ I am Yahweh your God, and I am holy, so you must set yourselves apart for my honor, and you must be holy. You must avoid eating things that cause you to be unacceptable to me. Do not cause yourselves to become unacceptable to me by eating creatures that crawl along on the ground. ⁴⁵ I am Yahweh, the one who freed you from being slaves in Egypt, in order that you might worship me. Therefore, because I am holy, you must be holy.

⁴⁶ Those are the regulations concerning animals and birds, all the living creatures that live in water or creep along on the ground. ⁴⁷ You must learn what things I say are acceptable to me and what things are not, and learn what things you are permitted to eat and what things you are not permitted to eat.”

Chapter 12

¹ Yahweh also said to Moses, ² "Tell this to the Israelite people. If a woman gives birth to a boy, she must be avoided for seven days, as she must be avoided when she is menstruating each month. ³ The baby boy must be circumcised eight days after he is born. ⁴ Then the woman must wait thirty-three days to be purified from her bleeding during childbirth. She must not touch anything that is sacred, that belongs to me only, or enter the area of the sacred tent, until that time is ended. ⁵ If a woman gives birth to a baby girl, she must be avoided for two weeks, as she must be avoided when she is menstruating each month. Then she must wait sixty-six days to be purified from her bleeding when the baby was born.

⁶ When that time for her to be purified is ended, that woman must bring to the priest at the entrance of the sacred tent a one year old lamb. The priest will burn it whole on the altar. The woman must also bring a dove or a young pigeon for the priest to sacrifice it, so that Yahweh will accept her again. ⁷ The priest will offer these animals to Yahweh in order that she may be made acceptable to him again. Then she will be purified from her flow of blood when the baby was born.

Those are the regulations for women who give birth to a baby boy or girl. ⁸ If a woman who gives birth to a child cannot afford a lamb, she must bring two doves or two pigeons. One will be burned completely on the altar, and one will be an offering to enable her to become acceptable to God again. By doing that, the priest will cause her to be forgiven for any sins she has committed, and she no longer will need to be avoided."

Chapter 13

¹ Yahweh said this to Aaron and Moses: ² "When someone has on his skin a swelling, a scab, or a shiny spot that seems to be infected, then someone must bring him to Aaron or to one of his sons who are also priests. ³ The priest must examine that part of the person's skin. If the hair in that area has become white and it appears that the sore is deeper than just on the skin, then it is a skin disease that other people are in danger of receiving from him. If that is what the priest sees, he must declare that this sick person is not fit to be with other people. ⁴ If the spot on the person's skin is white but it does not appear that the sore is deeper than the surface of the skin, the priest must keep him away from all other people for seven days. ⁵ After seven days, the priest must examine the person again. If the priest sees that the sore has not changed and has not spread, he must keep the person away from people for yet another seven days. ⁶ Again, after those seven more days have passed, the priest must examine the person once more. If the sore has faded and has not spread, the priest will declare that the person is fit to be with other people again. His skin condition is only a rash; it is not contagious. After the person washes his clothes, the priest will allow him to be with other people again. ⁷ But if the sore spreads after the priest has examined him, the person must go to the priest again. ⁸ The priest will examine him; if the sore has spread to more of the skin, it is a contagious skin disease, and the priest will declare that the person is not fit to be with other people.

⁹ When anyone has a contagious skin disease, someone must bring him to the priest. ¹⁰ The priest must examine him. If there is a white swelling in the skin that

has caused the hair there to become white, and if the flesh in that area is painful, ¹¹ then it is a permanent skin disease; the priest will declare that the person is not fit to be with other people. The priest does not need to keep that person away from others for seven days in order to examine him again, because he already knows that the person is unfit to be with others.

¹² If the disease spreads all over someone's body, and the priest examines that person and sees that it is covering his skin from his head to his feet, ¹³ and it has caused all his skin to become white which will indicate that the disease has ended, the priest will declare that the person does not have to stay away from other people. ¹⁴ But if the person has open sores, he has a contagious skin disease. ¹⁵ When the priest sees that, he must declare that the person has a contagious skin disease and is unfit to be with other people. ¹⁶ But if the person's flesh changes and becomes white, he must go to the priest again. ¹⁷ The priest must examine him again, and if the sores have become white, the priest will declare that this person is now fit to be with other people again.

¹⁸ When someone had a boil on his skin and it has now healed, ¹⁹ but in the place where the boil was, there is now a white swelling or a bright spot, he must go to the priest. ²⁰ The priest must examine it. If it seems to be deeper than the surface of the skin, and if the hair in that spot has become white, it is a contagious skin disease that has appeared where the boil had been. And the priest must declare that the person is unfit to be with other people. ²¹ But when the priest examines it, if he finds no white hair in that spot, and if he finds that it is only on the surface of the skin and has become less bright, then the priest must keep him away from other people for seven days. ²² But if it is

spreading, it is contagious, and the priest must declare that the person is unfit to be with other people. ²³ But if that spot is unchanged and has not spread, it is only a scar from the boil, and the priest will declare that the person is fit to be with other people again.

²⁴ When someone has a burn on his skin and a bright or white spot appears, and the flesh in that area is painful, ²⁵ the priest must examine the spot. If the hair in that spot has turned white and it seems to be deeper than just the surface of the skin, it is a contagious skin disease that has appeared where the burn was, and the priest must declare that the person is unfit to be with other people. ²⁶ But if the priest examines it and sees that there is no white hair in that spot and it is only on the surface of the skin, and that the spot has faded, the priest must keep the person away from other people for seven days. ²⁷ After seven days, the priest will examine him again. If the sore is spreading, it is a contagious skin disease, and the priest will declare that the person is unfit to be with other people. ²⁸ However, if the spot is not changed and has not spread but has faded, then it is only a scar from the burn; the priest must declare that the person is fit to be with other people.

²⁹ If a man or a woman has a sore on the head or chin, ³⁰ the priest must examine that person. If the sore seems to be deeper than just on the surface of the skin, and if the hair in that spot has thinned out and has become yellowish, then it is a contagious skin disease that causes itching. In that case, the priest must declare that the person is unfit to be with other people. ³¹ But when the priest examines that kind of sore, if it seems to be only on the surface of the skin and there is no healthy hair in it, the priest will keep the person away from other people for seven days. ³² On

the seventh day, the priest must examine the sore again. If it has not spread and if there is no yellow hair in that spot, and if it appears to be only on the surface of the skin,³³ the person must shave the hair near the sore but not the hair on the sore. And the priest will keep the person away from other people for seven more days.³⁴ On the seventh day, the priest must examine that spot again. If it has not spread and it appears to be only on the surface of the skin, the priest will declare that the person is fit to be with people again. The person must wash his clothes, and then he join with other people.³⁵ But if the sore later spreads,³⁶ the priest must examine him again. If the itch has spread, the priest does not need to look for yellow hair, because it is clear that the person has a contagious skin disease.³⁷ However, if the priest thinks that the spot has not changed, and if healthy hair is growing in that area, it is clear that the itch has healed, and the priest will declare that the person is fit to be with other people again.

³⁸ When a man or a woman has white spots on the skin,³⁹ the priest should examine them. But if the spots are dull white, it is only a rash, and the priest will declare that the person is fit to be with other people.

⁴⁰ If a man loses all his hair and becomes bald, he does not need to stay away from other people.⁴¹ The same is true if he has lost his hair at the front of his scalp and his forehead has become bald.⁴² But if he gets a bright sore on his bald head or on his forehead, then he has a contagious skin disease.⁴³ The priest must examine him. If the swollen sore is a bright spot like a spot on someone who has a contagious skin disease,⁴⁴ the priest will declare that the man has a contagious skin disease and is not fit to be with other people.

⁴⁵ Anyone who has a contagious skin disease must wear torn clothes and not comb his hair. When he is near other people, he must cover the lower part of his face and call out, 'Do not come near me! I have a contagious skin disease!' ⁴⁶ He is not allowed to be with other people as long as he has the disease. He must live alone, outside the camp."

⁴⁷⁻⁴⁸ "Sometimes a person's clothing gets mildew on it. It may be clothing that is woven from wool or made from linen or from leather, or it may be another item that has leather in it. ⁴⁹ If the contaminated part is greenish or reddish, there is spreading mildew, and the owner must show it to a priest. ⁵⁰ The priest must examine it and then put it in a separate place by itself for seven days. ⁵¹ On the seventh day he must examine it again. If the mildew has spread, it is clear that it is mildew that destroys what it is on, and the clothing or item must not be used again. ⁵² The owner must completely burn the item that has the mildew in it, whatever kind of item it is.

⁵³ But when the priest examines it, if the mildew has not spread, ⁵⁴ he must tell the person who owns it to wash it. Then he must put it in a separate place for another seven days. ⁵⁵ After seven days, the priest must examine it again. If the color of the mildew has not changed, even though it has not spread, that item must not be used again. It does not matter if the mildew is on the inside of the item or on the outside. It must be burned. ⁵⁶ But when the priest examines it after it has been washed, if the mildew has faded, he must tear out the part that had the mildew in it. ⁵⁷ If the mildew reappears on that item, it is clear that it is spreading, and the owner must burn the entire item. ⁵⁸ But after the clothing is washed and the mildew disappears, the owner must wash it again, and then he

may use it again.

⁵⁹ These are the regulations concerning mildew on things made of wool or linen or leather, for deciding whether the owner may continue to use those things or not.”

Chapter 14

¹ Yahweh also said to Moses, ² ”These are the regulations for anyone who has been healed of a contagious skin disease. ³ Other people must tell the priest about that person. The priest will go outside the camp and examine him. If the skin disease has been healed, ⁴ the priest will say that someone must bring two live birds that are acceptable to Yahweh, along with some cedar wood, some scarlet yarn, and some hyssop. ⁵ Then the priest will command that one of the birds be killed while it is being held over a clay pot containing water from a spring, that is, fresh water. ⁶ Then the priest will dip the other bird, along with the cedar wood, the scarlet yarn and the hyssop, into that water, which now has blood from the bird that was killed. ⁷ Then he must sprinkle some of the water and blood on the person who was healed. He must sprinkle it on him seven times. Then he will declare that the person is permitted to be with other people again. And the priest will release the other bird and allow it to fly away.

⁸ Then the person who was healed must wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and bathe. After he does those things, he is allowed to return to the camp, but he must stay outside his tent for seven days. ⁹ On the seventh day, he must again shave off all his hair, including his beard and his eyebrows. Then he must again wash his clothes and bathe. After he does those things, he will be allowed to be with other people again.

¹⁰ The next day that person must bring two male lambs and one female lamb; the female lamb must be one year old, and the animals must have no defects. He must also bring about six and one-half liters of a fine flour offering, mixed with olive oil, to be an offering, and about one-third liter of olive oil. ¹¹ The priest who declared that the person’s skin disease has ended must bring that person and his offerings to Yahweh at the entrance to the sacred tent.

¹² Then the priest must take one of the male lambs and lift it high, along with the olive oil, to show that he is giving this to Yahweh as a guilt offering—because the sick person was not able to give to Yahweh the things that he was required to give him. ¹³ Then the priest must slaughter the lamb in the special place where the priests kill the other sacrifices as well. Like the offering to enable people to be forgiven, God considers this guilt offering to be very special, and so the meat from it belongs to the priest. ¹⁴ The priest must take some of that animal’s blood and put it on person’s right earlobe, on his right thumb, and on his right big toe. ¹⁵ Then the priest must take some of the olive oil and pour it into the palm of his own left hand. ¹⁶ Then he must dip his right forefinger into that oil and sprinkle it in front of Yahweh seven times. ¹⁷ Next, the priest must put some of that oil in his hand on the person’s right earlobe, on his right thumb, and on his right big toe. He must put the oil in those three places, exactly where he has already put the blood. ¹⁸ The priest must put what is left of the oil in his hand onto the person’s head; this will show that Yahweh has forgiven that person’s sins.

¹⁹ Then the priest must slaughter the female lamb that the person brought; this will be the offering for the person’s sins, so that Yahweh will forgive him. After that, the priest will slaughter the second male

lamb and burn it whole on the altar. ²⁰ He will also burn on the altar the offering made from flour, along with the whole burnt offering. Then the person will be acceptable in the camp; he will be allowed to be with the other people.

²¹ But if the person has gotten well is poor and cannot afford to bring all those animals, he must bring to the priest one male lamb for the priest to lift it up and offer it to Yahweh. This will be a sacrifice because the sick person was not able to give to Yahweh the things that he was required to give him. He must also bring about two liters of flour offering mixed with about one-third liter of olive oil; this will be an offering made from flour. He must also bring about one-third liter of olive oil. ²² He must also bring doves or two pigeons, one for Yahweh to as to offer for his sins, and one for the priest to burn completely on the altar.

²³ On that same day, the eighth day, that person must take those things to the priest at the entrance to the sacred tent, to offer them to Yahweh. ²⁴ Then the priest will take the lamb for the guilt offering and the olive oil, and he will raise them up as an offering to Yahweh and present them to him. ²⁵ Then the priest will slaughter that lamb and catch some of the blood in a bowl. He will take some of the blood and put it onto the person's right earlobe, his right thumb, and his right big toe. ²⁶ Then the priest must take some of the olive oil and pour it into the palm of his own left hand. ²⁷ Then he must dip his right forefinger into that oil and sprinkle it in front of Yahweh seven times. ²⁸ He must put some of the oil in his palm on exactly the same places where he put the blood. ²⁹ He must put the rest of the oil that is in his hand on the head of the person whose has gotten well. This will show that Yahweh has forgiven that person's sins. ³⁰

Then the priest must sacrifice the doves or young pigeons, whichever kind that person has brought. ³¹ One will be a sin offering and the other will be completely burned on the altar, along with the offering made from flour. By doing that, the priest will atone for that person's sins.

³² These are the regulations for anyone who has a contagious skin disease and who is poor and cannot afford the usual offerings, in order that he can be with people again."

³³ Yahweh also said to Aaron and Moses, ³⁴ "I am about to give you the land of Canaan to belong to your people permanently. When you enter that land, there will be times when I cause mildew to appear inside one of your houses. ³⁵ If that happens, the owner of that house must go to the priest and tell him, 'There is something in my house that looks like mildew.'

³⁶ Then the priest will say to him, 'Take everything out of the house before I enter it to examine the mildew. If you do not do that, I will declare that everything in the house is contaminated.' ³⁷ After the owner takes everything outside of his house, the priest will go in and inspect the house. If the mildew has caused greenish or reddish spots on the walls that seem to be deeper than only on the surface of the walls, ³⁸ the priest will go outside of the house and lock it up for seven days. ³⁹ On the seventh day, he must go into the house and inspect it again. If the mildew on the walls has spread, ⁴⁰ the priest will tell someone to tear out all the stones in the walls that have mildew on them and throw in the dump outside the town. ⁴¹ Then the owner must scrape all the walls inside the house, and everything that is scraped off must be thrown into a dump outside the town. ⁴² Then the owner must get new stones to replace the ones that had mildew on them, and take new clay

and plaster to cover the stones in the walls of the house.

⁴³ If the mildew appears again in the house after that is done, ⁴⁴ the priest must go and examine the house again. If the mildew has spread inside the house, it will be clear that the mildew is the kind that destroys houses, and no one will be allowed to live in it. ⁴⁵ It must be completely torn down—the stones, the timber and the plaster—and all those things must be thrown into a dump outside the town.

⁴⁶ Anyone who goes into that house while it is locked up will not be allowed to be with other people until sunset of that day.

⁴⁷ Anyone who sleeps in that house or eats in that house during that time must wash his clothes.

⁴⁸ But when the priest comes to examine the house after it has been plastered, if the mildew has not spread, he will declare that people may live in it, because the mildew is gone. ⁴⁹ But before people are allowed to live in it, the priest must take two birds, some cedar wood, some red yarn, and some hyssop. ⁵⁰ He must kill one of the birds while holding it over a clay pot containing water taken from a spring. ⁵¹ Then he must take the cedar wood, the hyssop, the red bird, and dip them into the blood of the dead bird, and sprinkle some of that blood and water on the house seven times. ⁵² By doing all those things he will enable the house to be fit for the owner to live in again. ⁵³ Then he must release the other bird and allow it to fly away. By doing that, he will finish the ritual for causing the house to be acceptable for people to live in it again.

⁵⁴ Those are the regulations for contagious diseases, for itching sores, ⁵⁵ for mildew on clothes or in a house, ⁵⁶ and for swellings, rashes, or bright spots on sores; ⁵⁷ these regulations will determine whether people will still be permitted to

touch those things or not.”

Chapter 15

¹ Yahweh also said to Moses and Aaron, ² “Tell this to the Israelites: When an unusual, infected fluid comes out of a man’s private parts, no one should touch that man. ³ Whether that fluid is blocked or continues to drip, no one should touch him.

⁴ No one should touch any bed that such a man lies on, nor anything he sits on. ⁵ Anyone who touches that person’s bed must wash his clothes and bathe, and allow no one to touch him until that evening. ⁶ Anyone who sits on something that man has sat on must wash his clothes and bathe, and allow no one to touch him until that evening.

⁷ Anyone who touches such a man must wash his clothes and bathe, and allow no one to touch him until that evening.

⁸ If such a man spits on someone else, that person must allow no one to touch him. He must wash his clothes, and he must allow no one to touch him until evening.

⁹ Everything that a man who has such a flow of fluid sits on while he is riding a horse or a donkey should not be touched.

¹⁰ Anyone who touches a seat or saddle that he was sitting on also should allow no one to touch him until that evening. And anyone who picks up those things must wash his clothes and bathe, and no one should touch him until that evening. ¹¹ If the person with the flow of fluid wishes to touch someone else, he must first rinse his hands in water; if he touches anyone without doing that first, the one he touched must wash his clothes and bathe, and allow no one to touch him until that evening.

¹² If such a man touches a clay pot, someone must break it. Anything made from wood that he touches—someone must rinse it in water.

¹³ If such a man gets well from his flow of fluid, he must wait for seven days. Then he must wash his clothes and bathe in water from a spring or stream. Then he will be able to be with others. ¹⁴ On the eighth day, he must take two doves or two pigeons and come in front of Yahweh at the entrance of the sacred tent, and give them to the priest. ¹⁵ The priest will sacrifice them. One bird will be an offering for the man's sin, and the priest will completely burn the other one on the altar. Then the man will be pure again and acceptable to Yahweh.

¹⁶ When semen accidentally flows from a man's private parts, he must bathe his whole body, and no one may touch him until that evening. ¹⁷ Any clothing or leather that has semen on it must be washed, and no one may touch it until that evening. ¹⁸ When a man has slept with a woman and gives her semen, both of them must bathe, and no one may touch them until that evening.

¹⁹ When a woman has her menstrual period, no one may touch her for seven days. If anyone touches her during that time, no one may touch the person who touched her until that evening. ²⁰ No one may touch anything that she lies on or sits on during that time. ²¹ Anyone who touches her bed must wash his clothes and bathe, and no one may touch that person until that evening. ²²⁻²³ Anyone who touches something that she has been sitting on, a bed or anything else, must wash his clothes, and no one may touch that person until that evening.

²⁴ If a man sleeps with a woman during that time and some of her menstrual blood touches him, no one may touch him

for seven days, and no one may touch the bed that he has lain on.

²⁵ If a woman has a flow of blood for many days, a flow that is not her normal menstrual flow of blood, or if her flow of blood continues after her menstrual flow ends, no one may touch her until it stops. ²⁶ And no one may touch the bed that she lies on or anything that she sits on while that flow of blood continues, just as during her normal menstrual period. ²⁷ Anyone who touches those things must not touch anyone else. He must wash his clothes and bathe, and he may not touch anyone else until that evening.

²⁸ If the woman is healed of her flow of blood, she must wait seven days before she touches anyone. ²⁹ On the eighth day, she must take doves or young pigeons to the priest at the entrance to the sacred tent. ³⁰ The priest must sacrifice one of them as an offering for her sins, and he must completely burn the other one on the altar. Then she will be pure again and acceptable to Yahweh.

³¹ You must do these things in order that the people, at the times when they are unacceptable to me, do not defile my sacred tent, where I live among them. For it they do defile it, they will die.

³² Those are the regulations for a man who has a discharge from his body, or who has an emission of semen, when that happens he is unclean; ³³ and for any woman during her menstrual period, and for any man who sleeps with a woman during her menstrual period.”

Chapter 16

¹ After the two sons of Aaron died because they burned incense to Yahweh in a manner that was contrary to what he had com-

manded, Yahweh spoke to Moses. ² He said to him, "Tell your brother Aaron not to go into the very holy place, which is inside the inmost curtain, where the sacred chest and its lid are, and where I am present in the cloud that is over it. If Aaron goes in that room when it is not the proper time, he will die!

³ When Aaron enters the very holy place in the sacred tent, he must bring a bull that will be killed to become an offering for sins, and a ram to be killed to be an offering that the priests will burn whole on the altar. ⁴ Then Aaron must bathe his whole body and put on the linen underwear and the linen tunic. He must tie the linen sash around his waist and wrap the turban around his head. These are his sacred garments. ⁵ The Israelite people must then bring to him two male goats to be killed as an offering for sin, and a ram to be killed and burned whole on the altar.

⁶ Aaron must offer the bull to me to be a sacrifice in order that I will forgive his sins and his family's sins. ⁷ Then he must bring the two male goats to me at the entrance to the sacred tent. ⁸ He must cast lots to determine which goat will be sacrificed to me and which will be the goat that he will set free. ⁹ Aaron must bring to me the goat that was chosen to be sacrificed. It will be an offering for the people's sins. ¹⁰ Aaron must also bring to me the other goat. But it is not to be killed. It will be freed while it is still alive. When Aaron sends it into the wilderness, I will forgive the people's sins.

¹¹ Then Aaron must bring the young bull to me, for it to be an offering for himself and for his family. He must slaughter that bull to be an offering for their sins, and he must drain the blood into a basin. ¹² Then he must take some burning coals from the bronze altar and put them into the incense burner. Then he must fill

his hands with fragrant, finely ground incense. Then he must take the incense and the incense burner inside the curtain into the very holy place, in the sacred tent. ¹³ In the presence of Yahweh, he must put the incense on the burning coals. And a cloud of burning incense will rise up over the lid of the sacred chest. If he obeys these instructions, he will not die when he presents these offerings to Yahweh. ¹⁴ Then Aaron must dip his finger into the basin and sprinkle some blood on the lid of the sacred chest, and also sprinkle some blood seven times against the front of the chest.

¹⁵ Aaron must then go outside the sacred tent and slaughter the goat, for it to be an offering for the sins of the people. Then he must bring its blood into the very holy place behind the curtain. There he must sprinkle some of that blood on the lid of the sacred chest and against the front of the chest, as he did with the bull's blood. ¹⁶ By doing that, he will purify the very holy place. And he must sprinkle more of the blood on the sacred tent, because I am present where the tent is, in the midst of the camp of the Israelite people, who have become unacceptable to me because of their sins. ¹⁷ When Aaron goes into the very holy place in the sacred tent to purify it, no one else is permitted to enter the other part of the sacred tent. Only after Aaron has performed rituals to enable me to forgive him and his family, and all the Israelite people, is any priest permitted to enter the sacred tent.

¹⁸ Then Aaron must go outside the tent to purify my altar. He must do this by smearing some of the blood from the bull and some of the blood from the goat on each of the projections at the corners of the altar. ¹⁹ Then Aaron must dip his finger into the basin of blood and sprinkle some of the blood over the altar seven times. By

doing that, he will separate the altar from the Israelites' deeds that are unacceptable to me. The altar will be set apart for me.

²⁰ When Aaron has finished purifying the very holy place inside the sacred tent and all of the sacred tent and the altar, he must bring the goat that was chosen to be set free. ²¹ He must put both of his hands on the goat's head and confess all the sins of the Israelite people. By doing that, he will put the guilt of their sins on the goat's head. Then he must give the goat to a man who is chosen, and that man will send the goat out into the wilderness. ²² I will view the goat as carrying away into the wilderness the guilt for all the sins that the people have committed.

²³ When Aaron leaves the very holy place and goes into the other part of the sacred tent, he must take off the linen clothes that he had put on; he must leave those special clothes there. ²⁴ Then he must bathe in a sacred place, put on his regular clothes, and sacrifice the animals that he will burn whole on the altar, for his own sins and for the sins of the Israelite people. Then Yahweh will forgive their sins. ²⁵ He must also burn on the altar all the fat of the two animals that were sacrificed.

²⁶ After the man who was to lead the goat into the wilderness has done that and set it free, then he must return, wash his clothes, and bathe himself. Then he may enter the camp again. ²⁷ The carcasses of the bull and the goat that were slaughtered as an offering for the people's sins, to make atonement for them, must be carried outside the camp and burned. The hides of these animals, their inner organs, and their dung must be burned. ²⁸ The man who burns those things must then wash his clothes and bathe before he comes back into the camp.

²⁹ On the tenth day of the seventh month, on the day that I have appointed, you all

must fast and not do any work. This is a rule that you must always obey—all you native born Israelites and all the foreigners living among you. ³⁰ On that day, Aaron will perform rituals to enable me to forgive you all, and then I will free you all from the guilt of all your sins. ³¹ That will be a day for you to rest and not do any work, like the Sabbath days, and you must fast all that day. That is a permanent command for you all to obey. ³² The priest who is anointed with olive oil and set apart from others to serve Yahweh, he will offer a sacrifice, put on linen clothes that are set apart for the honor of God, ³³ and offer sacrifices. He will do this to purify the very holy place, all of the sacred tent, the altar, the priests, and all the Israelites, as Aaron did. ³⁴ This will be a permanent command for you to obey once every year, to enable me to forgive you Israelite people for the sins that you have committed."

Moses obeyed all the instructions that Yahweh had given to him.

Chapter 17

¹ Yahweh also said to Moses, ² "Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the other Israelites. Tell them that I am giving them the following commands: ³ If you sacrifice an ox, a lamb, or a goat, you must bring it to the priest at the entrance to the area of the sacred tent, so that he may present it to me there. ⁴ If you slaughter it anywhere else as a sacrifice, whether in the camp or outside of it, you will be guilty of shedding its blood in an unacceptable place. If you do that, you will no longer be allowed to be with Yahweh's people. ⁵ Yahweh is telling you to do this so that you will no longer offer sacrifices in the open fields; instead, you must offer them

to him in the proper manner: By taking them to the priest at the entrance to the area of the sacred tent, to be offerings to promise friendship with him. ⁶ After the priest slaughters the animal, he must sprinkle some of its blood against the altar at the entrance to the sacred tent, and burn its fat for an aroma that is pleasing to Yahweh. ⁷ You people must no longer give sacrifices to the images that resemble goats. You people must obey this command for all time.”

⁸ Yahweh also said this to Moses: “Tell Aaron and his sons to tell the people that if any Israelite or any foreigner living among them brings an offering for a priest to burn whole on the altar, or if he brings any other sacrifice, ⁹ but if he does not bring it to the entrance of the sacred tent area as be a sacrifice to me, that person will no longer be allowed to be with my people.

¹⁰ I will reject any Israelite or any foreigner who is living among you who consumes the blood of any animal, and he will no longer be allowed to associate with my people. ¹¹ That is because the life of every animal is in its blood. I have declared that it is blood that is to be offered on the altar, so that I will forgive people their sins. ¹² That is why I say that neither you Israelites, nor any foreigner living among you, may consume any blood.

¹³ If any of you Israelites or any foreigner who is living among you goes hunting and kills an animal or bird that I allow you to eat, you must drain out its blood onto the ground and cover it with earth. ¹⁴ This is because the life of every creature is in its blood. That is why I have said to you Israelites that anyone who consumes blood from an animal must no longer be allowed to associate with my people.

¹⁵ If any of you Israelites or any foreigner who is living among you eats any meat

from an animal that died or that was killed by wild animals, you must wash your clothes and bathe. Then you must not touch anyone else until that evening. ¹⁶ If you do not obey this rule, I will certainly punish you.”

Chapter 18

¹ Yahweh also said to Moses, ² “Speak to the Israelite people and tell them that I, Yahweh, say this, ‘I am Yahweh, your God. ³ After seeing how the Egyptians behaved, among whom you also lived, you must not do what they did. And you must not behave as the Canaanites live, into whose land I am taking you. You must avoid their practices. ⁴ You must obey all of my laws; you must do everything that I, Yahweh your God, am commanding you. ⁵ If you obey all my decrees and laws, you will continue to remain alive for a long time. I, Yahweh, am promising you this. Here are some of my laws.

⁶ Do not sleep with any of your close relatives. It is I, Yahweh, who am commanding that.

⁷ Do not disgrace your father by sleeping with your mother. Do not disgrace your mother in this manner.

⁸ Do not sleep with any of your father’s other wives, because that would disgrace your father.

⁹ Do not sleep with either your full sister or half-sister. It does not matter whether she was born and raised in your house or somewhere else.

¹⁰ Do not sleep with your granddaughter, because that would disgrace you.

¹¹ Do not sleep with your half-sister, one whose father is also your father; she is your sister.

¹² Do not sleep with your father's sister, because she is your father's close relative.

¹³ Do not sleep with your mother's sister, because she is your mother's close relative.

¹⁴ Do not disgrace your father's brother by sleeping with his wife, because she is your aunt.

¹⁵ Do not sleep with your daughter-in-law, because she is your son's wife.

¹⁶ Do not sleep with your brother's wife, because that would disgrace your brother.

¹⁷ Do not sleep with the daughter or granddaughter of any woman with whom you have previously slept. They are her close relatives. Sleeping with any of them would be an evil thing to do.

¹⁸ While your wife is still living, do not marry your wife's sister and sleep with her.

¹⁹ Do not sleep with any woman while she is having her menstrual period.

²⁰ Do not defile yourself by sleeping with someone else's wife.

²¹ Do not give any of your children to be burned to be as a sacrifice to the god Molech, because that would dishonor me, Yahweh, your God.

²² No man should sleep with another man. That is detestable.

²³ No one, man or woman, should defile himself by sleeping with an animal. That is a perverse action.

²⁴ Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because doing these things is how the people of the nations became unacceptable to me, the people groups that I will drive out as you advance into the land that I am giving you. ²⁵ They even caused the land to become defiled, so I punished them for their sins, and it was as though

the land had vomited out the people who lived there. ²⁶ But you must all obey my laws and decrees. This includes both you people who were born here and the foreigners who live among you. ²⁷ As for all those detestable things, before you came, the people who lived in this land did them, and they defiled the land. ²⁸ So if you also defile the land, I will get rid of you as I got rid of the people of those nations that were here before you came.

²⁹ You must not allow people who do any of those detestable things to associate with you, who are my people. ³⁰ Obey all that I command you to do, and do not defile yourselves by following any of the disgusting habits of the people who were there before you came. I, Yahweh your God, am the one who is commanding these things.”

Chapter 19

¹ Yahweh also said to Moses, ² "Speak to all the people of Israel and tell them this: 'You must be holy, because Yahweh your God is holy, and he wants you to be like him.

³ Each of you must respect your father and your mother. And you must honor the Sabbath days. It is Yahweh, your God, who is commanding you to do these things.

⁴ Do not worship idols, which are worth nothing, or make metal statues of gods for yourselves. Yahweh is your God; it is he who is telling you this. He is the only one you must worship.

⁵ Yahweh also says this: 'When you bring an offering to promise friendship with me, offer it in a way that I will accept. ⁶ The meat should be eaten on the day that you sacrifice it, but you may eat some of it on the next day. However, you must burn

anything that remains until the third day.
⁷ For any of it to be eaten on the third day is very displeasing to me, and I will not accept that offering. ⁸ I will punish anyone who eats it after the second day, because he will have not respected what I say is holy. And that person must no longer be allowed to associate with my people.

⁹ When you harvest your grain, leave the grain standing at the edges of the field and in the corners. Do not pick up the sheaves that have fallen to the ground. ¹⁰ And when you harvest your grapes, do not go back a second time to try to harvest some more, and do not pick up the grapes that have fallen on the ground. Leave those things for the poor people and for foreigners who are living among you. I, Yahweh your God, am commanding you those things.

¹¹ Do not steal anything.

Do not tell lies.

Do not deceive each other.

¹² Do not call upon me to punish you if you say something that you know is false. If you do this, you will dishonor me. Do not forget that I am Yahweh, your God.

¹³ Do not cheat anyone or steal from anyone.

If you have agreed to pay your workers at the end of the day, do what you have promised. Do not keep those wages until the next day.

¹⁴ Do not curse deaf people, and do not put things in the path of blind people to cause them to stumble. I, Yahweh, am commanding this.

¹⁵ Always judge people fairly. Do not do special favors for either poor people or rich people.

¹⁶ Do not spread false rumors about other people.

Do not remain silent in court if your testimony would keep an innocent person being executed. I, Yahweh, am commanding this.

¹⁷ Do not hate anyone. Instead, honestly rebuke others who ought to be rebuked, in order that you also will not be guilty.

¹⁸ Do not try to get revenge against someone or be angry with someone for a long time. Instead, love other people like you love yourself. I, Yahweh your God, am commanding this.

¹⁹ Obey my laws.

Do not allow two different kinds of animals to mate with each other.

Do not plant two different kinds of seed in the same field.

Do not wear clothing made from two different kinds of material.

²⁰ If a man sleeps with a slave woman who has been promised to marry some other man, but if she has not been bought by that man and is still a slave, these two people must be punished. But because she was still a slave, she and the man who slept with her must not be executed. ²¹ However, that man must bring a ram to be slaughtered at the entrance of the sacred tent area, to be an offering in order that he no longer be guilty for his sin. ²² The priest will offer that ram to me. Then I will forgive that man for the sin which he committed.

²³ When you enter the land that I have promised to give to you, and when you plant various kinds of fruit trees, you must not eat any of their fruit for three years. ²⁴ In the fourth year you must set aside all of their fruit to belong to me; you must set it apart as holy, an offering to give me praise. ²⁵ But in the fifth year, you will be permitted to eat their fruit. If you do that, your trees will produce much

fruit. I, Yahweh your God, am promising that.

²⁶ Do not eat any meat that still has the animal's blood in it.

Do not consult spirits to find out what will happen in the future, and do not practice sorcery.

²⁷ Do not shave the hair at the sides of your heads as pagan people do.

²⁸ Do not cut your bodies when you are mourning for people who have died, and do not put tattoos on your bodies. I, Yahweh your God, am commanding this.

²⁹ Do not disgrace your daughters by forcing them to become prostitutes. If you cause them to become prostitutes, soon the land will be filled with prostitutes and all other kinds of people's wicked behavior.

³⁰ Honor my Sabbath days and revere my sacred tent, because I am Yahweh.

³¹ Do not seek advice from those who try to get the spirits of dead people give them advice. If you do that, I will no longer accept you. I am Yahweh your God.

³² Stand up when old people enter the room, and show that you respect them. You must also honor me, your God; that is who I am.

³³ When foreigners live among you in your land, do not mistreat them. ³⁴ You must treat them like you treat your fellow citizens. Love them as you love yourselves, and do not forget that once when you were foreigners in Egypt you were badly mistreated by the people of Egypt. I, Yahweh your God, am commanding you to do this.

³⁵ When you are measuring things, to see how long they are or how much they weigh or how many there are, ³⁶ use correct measuring sticks and scales and

weights on the scales and measuring baskets and other measuring containers. I am Yahweh, your God, who brought you out of Egypt.

³⁷ Obey carefully all my laws and decrees. It is I, Yahweh, who am commanding you these things."

Chapter 20

¹ Yahweh also said this to Moses: ² "Tell the Israelite people, 'Any Israelite or any foreigner who is living in Israel who sacrifices any of his children as an offering to the idol Molech must die. The people of the town must kill him by throwing stones at him. ³ I will reject such people and cause them to no longer be with my people. ⁴ If the people of that man's town ignore it when he kills any of his children to offer him to Molech, and if they do not execute that person, ⁵ I myself will punish that person and his clan. I will command that he must no longer be with my people. And I will do the same thing to any others who are unfaithful to me and who worship Molech.

⁶ I will reject those who go to those who consult the spirits of dead people, or who go to fortune tellers who ask spirits to advise them. I will reject such people; they will no longer be with my own people.

⁷ Set yourselves apart for my honor, so that you may belong to me, because I am Yahweh your God. ⁸ Carefully obey everything that I have commanded you. I am Yahweh, the one who sets you apart from the other peoples so that I am honored.

⁹ If anyone curses his father or his mother, you must execute him. He himself will be responsible for his own death.

¹⁰ If a man commits adultery with some other man's wife, then you must execute

both of them, the man and the woman.

¹¹ If a man sleeps with one of his father's wives, he has dishonored his father. So you must execute both that man and woman; they will be responsible for their own deaths.

¹² If a man sleeps with his daughter-in-law, you must execute them both. They have exchanged good for evil; they both deserve to die.

¹³ If two men have slept together, they have done something detestable. You must execute them both; they will be responsible for their own deaths.

¹⁴ If a man marries both a woman and her mother, that is a wicked thing. You must burn all three of them to death, in order that no one among you continues to commit such an evil deed.

¹⁵ If a man sleeps with an animal, you must execute both him and that animal.

¹⁶ Similarly, if a woman sleeps with an animal, you must execute both her and that animal. They will be responsible for their own deaths.

¹⁷ If a man sleeps with his sister, the daughter of either his mother or his father—if they have slept together, that is disgraceful. They will no longer be with my people. Because he has slept with his sister, he is guilty.

¹⁸ If a man sleeps with a woman during her menstrual period, they have both revealed her flowing blood, so neither of them must be with my people anymore.

¹⁹ No man must sleep with the sister of either his father or his mother, because he would be disgracing someone who is a close relative. You must punish such a man, as well as the woman.

²⁰ If a man sleeps with his uncle's wife, he has dishonored his uncle. What for they

have done, they must be responsible for their actions. And when they die, their children would be stripped of the rights to any inheritance they would have received from their parents.

²¹ If a man marries his brother's wife, it is a sin because he has dishonored his brother's marriage. The rights of inheritance would be stripped away from any children they would have received from their parents.

²² Obey all my decrees and laws carefully, in order that you will not have to leave the land to which I am bringing you. ²³ Do not imitate the customs of the people of the land from which I am going to drive them out, as you advance into it. I hate them because they have done all those things. ²⁴ But I said to you, "You will take their land from them. I will give it to you to be yours, a land that is very fertile. I am Yahweh your God, who has set you apart from the people of other nations."

²⁵ So you must distinguish between birds and animals that are unacceptable to me and those that are acceptable to me. Do not defile yourselves by eating birds or animals, or anything that crawls along on the ground, things that I have said are unacceptable for you. ²⁶ You must live as a people who are set apart for my honor, because I, Yahweh, am also set apart and I do everything for my honor. I have taken you out of the other nations, because you are mine.

²⁷ You must execute any man or woman among you who consults the spirits of dead people or other spirits. Kill them by throwing stones at them; they will be responsible for their own deaths."

Chapter 21

¹ Yahweh also said to Moses, "Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them,

² 'You priests must not cause yourselves to become unfit to do my work by touching any dead body. You are permitted to touch only the corpses of close relatives, such as your mother, father, son, daughter or your brother. ³ You may also touch the corpse of a sister if she is not married and has been living in your house, because she has no husband to bury her. ⁴ You priests must not cause yourselves to become unfit to do my work by touching the dead bodies of other relatives of yours.

⁵ You priests must not shave your heads or the edges of your beards; you must not cut your bodies to show that you are mourning for someone who has died. ⁶ You must act in ways that I, your God, consider to be suitable for you, my priests; you must not disgrace me. You are the ones who will present to me the offerings that you will burn. These offerings will be made to me from your food supplies. So you must act in ways that are suitable, because you honor me.

⁷ You priests must not marry women who have been prostitutes or who have been divorced from their husbands, because you priests are set apart for God. ⁸ You must remember that I have set you apart to worship me. It is as though you were offering food to me, your God. Regard yourselves as belonging to me, because I, Yahweh, am the one who made you to be priests, and I have nothing to do with any evil—I am holy.

⁹ If a priest's daughter becomes a prostitute, she disgraces her father, and you must burn her in a fire.

¹⁰ The high priest is the one among his relatives who has been appointed for that

work by having his head anointed with olive oil. He is also the one who has been appointed to wear the garments that are made and set apart for the honor of Yahweh. He must not allow the hair on his head to remain uncombed, and he must not tear his clothes when he is mourning for someone. ¹¹ He must not enter any place where there is a corpse. He must not do that and cause himself to become unfit for his work, even if it is his father or his mother who has died. ¹² He must not leave the sacred tent to join those who are mourning, because he would cause himself to become unfit for his work and would also defile the sacred tent. He must not leave the sacred tent at that time, because by being anointed with olive oil he has been appointed to serve his God in the sacred tent. I, Yahweh, am the one who am commanding this.

¹³ Women whom you priests marry must be virgins. ¹⁴⁻¹⁵ You priests must not marry widows or prostitutes or divorced women, because if you do that, and if you later have sons, they will not be acceptable to be priests among your people. You must marry only virgins from among your own people. I am Yahweh, who sets priests apart for my honor and for those who worship me."

¹⁶ Yahweh also said to Moses, ¹⁷ "Say this to Aaron: 'For all future time, none of your descendants who has any defects on his body will be allowed to come near the altar to offer sacrifices to me which will be like my food. ¹⁸ No one who is blind or lame or deformed, or whose face is disfigured, ¹⁹ no man with a crippled foot or a crippled hand, ²⁰ no man who has a hunchback or an abnormally short person, no man whose eyes are defective, no man who has a skin disease or whose private parts have been damaged. ²¹ No descendant of Aaron, the first high priest,

who has any defect is allowed to come to the altar to offer to me, his God, sacrifices that will be burned. ²² Priests who have defects are permitted to eat the various kinds of holy food offered to me. ²³ But because of their defects, they must not go near the curtain in the sacred tent or near the altar, because if they did that, they would desecrate my sacred tent. I am Yahweh, the one who sets those places apart for myself and for my honor.”

²⁴ So Moses told this to Aaron and to his sons and to all the Israelite people.

Chapter 22

¹ Yahweh also said to Moses, ² ”Explain to Aaron and his sons about when they should not touch or eat any food that the people have dedicated to me by giving it as a sacrifice. They must not dishonor me or my name. I am Yahweh.

³ Tell them that for all future time, if they or any of their descendants become unfit for any reason to do the work that priests must do, they must not go near anything the people of Israel have dedicated to me as an offering. Anyone who violates this rule will no longer be part of my people. I am Yahweh.

⁴ If any descendant of Aaron has a contagious skin disease or a discharge from his private parts, he is not allowed to eat any of the sacred offerings until he is cured. He will also be unfit for his work if he touches anything that has touched a corpse, or if he touches anyone who as an emission of semen, ⁵ or if he touches anything that crawls on the ground, or if he touches any person who causes him to be unfit for his work. ⁶ Any priest who touches anything unclean will be unclean until evening. He must not eat any of the holy things, unless he first washes his

body with water. ⁷ After the sun sets, he may eat food from the sacred offerings, because they are now his food that is to be eaten. ⁸ But he must not eat anything that has died a natural death or that has been killed by wild animals, because if he did that, he would be unfit to work for me. I, Yahweh, am commanding those things.

⁹ The priests must obey my commandments; they must not despise them, or they will become guilty and die. I am Yahweh, the one who sets them apart for my honor.

¹⁰ No one who does not belong to a priest’s family is permitted to eat from the sacred offering. No one who is visiting the priest, or one that has been hired by the priest, none of them is permitted to eat it. ¹¹ But if a priest buys a slave, or if a slave is born in his house, that slave is permitted to eat such food. ¹² If a priest’s daughter marries a man who is not a priest, she is no longer permitted to eat the sacred foods that were given to Yahweh as gifts or offerings. ¹³ But suppose that a priest’s daughter who has no children becomes a widow or becomes divorced, and suppose also that she returns to her father’s house to live there as she did when she was young. In that case, she may eat the same food that her father eats. But no other person is permitted to eat any of it.

¹⁴ If anyone who is not permitted to eat a sacred offering eats it without realizing that it is sacred, he must pay the priest for the food and add an extra one-fifth to it. ¹⁵ When the priests bring offerings to me, the sacred offerings that the Israelite people bring to them, they must not treat those offerings as though they were not special to me; ¹⁶ the people must not allow anyone who is not a priest to eat any of those offerings. If they did that, they would become guilty. I am Yahweh, the one who sets the Israelite people apart

from other people and makes them holy for my honor.”

¹⁷ Yahweh also said to Moses, ¹⁸ ”Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the Israelite people and tell them that I say this to them, ’If any of you Israelites or foreigners who live in Israel brings to me an animal that will be completely burned on the altar, either as a result of a solemn promise that you made to me or to be an offering that is given voluntarily, ¹⁹ you must bring from your cattle or sheep or goats an animal that has no defects, in order that I may accept it. ²⁰ Do not bring any animals that have defects, because I will not accept them for you. ²¹ Similarly, when someone brings from his cattle or sheep or goats an offering to promise friendship with me, either to fulfill a promise that he made to me or to be a voluntary offering—for me to accept it, it must have no defects or blemishes. ²² Do not offer to me animals that are blind or injured or maimed, or any animal that has warts or a festering sore. ²³ You may present to me to be a voluntary offering an ox or a sheep that is injured or stunted, but it will not be accepted to fulfill a promise made to me. ²⁴ You must not offer to me animals whose testicles are bruised, crushed, torn or cut. You must not present these kind of damaged animals as offerings to Yahweh anywhere in the land where you live, ²⁵ and you must not accept such animals that are sold to you by a foreigner. You must not offer them to me as food for me. Such animals will not be accepted by me, because they are deformed or have defects.”

²⁶ Yahweh also said to Moses, ²⁷ ”When a calf or lamb or goat is born, it must remain with its mother for seven days. After that, it can be accepted to be an offering to me that will be burned. ²⁸ Do not slaughter a cow or a sheep and its newborn young on the same day.

²⁹ When you sacrifice an animal to thank me for what I have done, sacrifice it in a way that I will accept. ³⁰ The meat must be eaten on that day. Do not leave any of it until the next morning. I, Yahweh, am the one who is commanding this.

³¹ Obey all my commands. I, Yahweh, am commanding them. ³² Do not dishonor me by disobeying them. You Israelite people must acknowledge that I, Yahweh, am holy, and I am the one who causes you to be holy. ³³ And I am the one who brought you out of Egypt in order that I, Yahweh, will be your God.”

Chapter 23

¹ Yahweh said to Moses, ² ”Tell the Israelites about the festivals for Yahweh, the days when you all must gather together in holy assemblies on set times each year, as festivals in which you worship me.

³ You may work for six days each week, but on the seventh day you must not do any work. You must rest. It is a sacred day when you must gather together to worship me. Wherever you live, you must rest on that day.

⁴ There are festivals that I am establishing for you. These will be sacred days when you must gather together to worship me. ⁵ The first festival is the Passover. That festival will begin at twilight on the appointed day each spring and end the following day.

⁶ The next day will begin the Festival of Bread with no Yeast. That festival will continue for seven days. During that time, the bread that you eat must be made without yeast. ⁷ On the first day of that festival, all of you must stop your regular work and gather together to worship me. ⁸ On each of the seven days, you must present to me

several animals as an offering to be completely burned on the altar. On the seventh day, all of you must again stop your regular work and gather to worship me.”

⁹ Yahweh also told Moses ¹⁰ to tell the Israelite people about other festivals. He said, “After you arrive in the land which I am giving to you, and when you harvest your crops for the first time there, bring to the priest some of the first grain that you harvest. ¹¹ On the day after the next Sabbath day, the priest will lift it up high to dedicate it to me, in order that I may accept it as your gift. ¹² On that same day you must sacrifice to me a one year old male lamb that has no defects. You must burn it on the altar. ¹³ You must also burn a flour offering. That offering must consist of four and one-half liters of good flour, ground grain, mixed with olive oil. The smell of those things burning will be very pleasing to me. Along with that, you must also offer one liter of wine, which will be a liquid offering. ¹⁴ Do not eat any bread or any roasted or unroasted grain on that day until after you have brought those offerings to me, your God. You and all your descendants must always obey these commands, wherever you live.

¹⁵ Count seven weeks and one day after the priest offers that bundle of grain to me. ¹⁶ Then on the day after the seventh Sabbath, each family must bring to me an offering from the new crop of grain. ¹⁷ From your homes, bring two loaves of bread to the priest. He will lift them up high to dedicate them as an offering to me. Those loaves must be baked from four and one-half liters of good flour that has yeast mixed with it. That bread will be an offering to me from the first wheat that you harvest each year. ¹⁸ Along with this bread, you must present to me seven one year old lambs with no defects, one young bull, and two rams. They must all be com-

pletely burned on the altar. All those offerings, with the flour offering and the wine offering, will be burned, and the smell of all those things burning will be very pleasing to me. ¹⁹ Then you must also kill one male goat as an offering for your sins, and two one year old male lambs to be an offering for you to promise friendship with me. ²⁰ The priest will lift up these offerings high to dedicate them to me. He will also offer the loaves of bread that were baked from the first wheat that you harvest. Those offerings are special to me; but they are for the priest. ²¹ On that day, you must stop your regular work and gather to worship me. You and all your descendants must always obey these commands, wherever you live.

²² When you harvest the grain in your fields, do not harvest what is along the edges of the fields, and do not pick up the grain that the harvesters drop. Leave it for the poor people and for the foreigners who are living among you. Do not forget that it is I, Yahweh your God, who am commanding those things!”

²³ Yahweh also told Moses ²⁴ to give these instructions to the Israelite people: “Each year in the seventh month, on the first day of that month, all of you must celebrate that day, on which you will completely rest. You must not do any work on that day. When the priests blow their trumpets loudly, you all must gather together as a holy assembly, to worship me. ²⁵ All of you must not do any regular work on that day. Instead, you must present offerings to me that will be burned on the altar.”

²⁶ Yahweh also said to Moses, ²⁷ “You must celebrate a day on which you request that I forgive you for the sins that you have committed. That day will be nine days after the festival when the priests blow the trumpets. On that day you must not eat. You must gather together to worship me

and present offerings to me that will be burned on the altar. ²⁸ You must not do any work on that day, because it is the Day of Atonement, when the priests will offer sacrifices to me to atone for your sins. ²⁹ You must drive out from the people anyone who does not go without eating on that day. ³⁰ I will get rid of anyone who does any kind of work on that day. ³¹ You must not work at all! You and all your descendants must always obey these commands, wherever you live. ³² That day will be a day of complete rest for all of you, and on that day you must fast to show that you are sorry for having sinned. That day of rest and going without food will begin on the evening before the day in which you ask me to forgive you for your sins, and it will end on the evening of the following day.”

³³ Yahweh also said to Moses, ³⁴ ”Tell the Israelite people that each year they must also celebrate the Festival of Shelters. That festival will begin five days after the Day of Atonement. This festival will last for seven days. ³⁵ On the first day of that festival, the people must gather together to worship me, and they must not do any regular work. ³⁶ On each of the seven days of this festival, they must present to me an offering of animals that will be burned on the altar. On the eighth day, they must gather again as a holy assembly to worship me and present to me another animal that will be burned on the altar. That also will be a sacred gathering, and they must not work on that day, either.

³⁷ To summarize, those are the festivals that I have appointed. Celebrate these festivals by gathering together to present to me all the various offerings that will be burned on the altar—animals that will be burned completely, and offerings of flour, offerings to promise friendship with me,

and offerings of wine. Each offering must be brought on the day that I have indicated. ³⁸ You must celebrate these festivals in addition to worshipping me on the Sabbath days. And you must give me all those offerings in addition to the offerings that people personally decide to give, and in addition to the offerings that people make to accompany the solemn promises that they have made.

³⁹ Returning to my instructions about the Festival of Shelters, you must celebrate this festival after you have harvested all the crops. On the first day and on the last day of that festival, you must rest completely. ⁴⁰ But on the first day, you are permitted to pick the best fruit from trees. You will also take branches from the palm trees, leafy branches from other trees, and willow trees near the stream, and make shelters to live in for that week. Then rejoice in my presence for those seven days. ⁴¹ You must celebrate this festival for seven days every year. You and all your descendants must always obey these commands, wherever you live. You must celebrate this festival in the seventh month. ⁴² During the seven days of that festival, all of you people who have been Israelites all of your lives must live in shelters. ⁴³ This festival will always remind your descendants that their ancestors lived in shelters for many years after I rescued them from Egypt. Do not forget that I, Yahweh your God, am the one who is commanding this.”

⁴⁴ So Moses gave to the Israelite people all these instructions concerning the festivals that Yahweh wanted them to celebrate each year.

Chapter 24

¹ Yahweh also said to Moses, ² ”Command

the Israelite people to constantly bring you clear oil made from pressed olives to burn in the lamps in the sacred tent, in order that those lamps will burn all the time. ³ Outside the curtain of the very holy place, Aaron must take care of the lamps in my presence continually, in order that they will burn all during the night. That regulation must be obeyed forever. ⁴ The priests must constantly take care of the lamps that burn in my presence.

⁵ Also, each week you must take some fine flour and bake twelve very big loaves of bread, using four and one-half liters of flour for each loaf. ⁶ Put the loaves in two rows, with six loaves in each row, on the table covered with pure gold, in my presence. ⁷ Along each row, place on the gold table some pure incense to be burned as an offering to me instead of the bread. ⁸ The priests must put new loaves of bread on the table each Sabbath day, to signify the covenant that will never end, which I have made with you Israelites. ⁹ When the loaves are removed from the table, they will belong to Aaron and his sons. They must eat them in a place set aside for this purpose, because they are part of the offerings—the offerings that belong only to me—that are given to me by being burned.”

¹⁰⁻¹¹ There was a man whose mother's name was Shelomith. She was an Israelite whose father was Dibri from the tribe of Dan. Her son's father was from Egypt. One day this man and another Israelite man started to fight inside the camp. And while they were fighting, that man cursed Yahweh. ¹² So the Israelite people seized him and guarded him until they could find out what Yahweh would reveal to them what they should do to that man.

¹³ Then Yahweh said to Moses, ¹⁴ "Tie up and take outside the camp the man who has cursed me. There all those who heard

what he said must put their hands on his head to indicate that he is guilty, and then all the people must kill him by throwing stones at him. ¹⁵ Tell the Israelites, 'If anyone curses me, he must endure the consequences. ¹⁶ So anyone who curses me must be executed. All the people must throw stones at him. It does not matter if he is a foreigner or an Israelite from birth. Anyone who curses me must be executed.

¹⁷ Also, if anyone murders another person, the people must execute him. ¹⁸ And anyone who kills another person's animal must give that person a live animal to replace the one that he killed. ¹⁹ And if one person injures another person, the injured person is allowed to injure the person who injured him in the same way. ²⁰ If someone breaks one of another person's bones, that person is allowed to break one of the bones of the person who injured him. If someone gouges out an eye of another person, that person is allowed to gouge out the eye of the person who injured him. If someone knocks out the tooth of another person, that person is allowed to knock out one of his teeth. What is done to the offender must be the same as what he did to the other person. ²¹ Whoever kills another person's animal must give that person a live animal to replace the one that he killed, but the people must execute anyone who murders another person. ²² You Israelites and foreigners who live among must all have that same law. I, Yahweh your God, am the one who has commanded it.”

²³ Then Moses told the Israelites what they must do to the man who cursed Yahweh, so they took the man outside the camp and killed him by throwing stones at him. They did what Yahweh commanded Moses to tell them to do.

Chapter 25

¹ Yahweh said to Moses on Mount Sinai, ² "Tell the Israelites that Yahweh is giving these commands to them: When you enter the land that he is about to give you, every seventh year you must honor him by not planting any crops. You must allow the ground to rest. ³ During six years, you are to plant crops in your fields, prune your grapevines, and harvest your crops. ⁴ But during the seventh year you must allow your fields to rest, in order to honor Yahweh. Do not plant seeds in your fields or prune your grapevines during the seventh year. ⁵ In the seventh year, you must not bring workers together to harvest whatever grain has grown in your fields; you must not bring workers together to harvest whatever grapes have grown on the vines that you did not cut back. You must allow the land to rest for that one year. ⁶ But you are permitted to eat whatever crops have grown by themselves during that year. You and your male and female servants, and workers whom you have hired, and any foreigners who are living among you—you may all eat those things. ⁷ And your livestock and the wild animals in your land are permitted to eat them during that year as well.

⁸⁻⁹ After every forty-nine years has ended, you must do this for the celebration of Jubilee. On the tenth day of the seventh month of the next year, blow trumpets throughout the country, to announce the Day of Atonement. ¹⁰ Set apart that year in order to honor Yahweh. You must proclaim everywhere, to all the people, that this year will be the time for giving the land back to the families that first owned it when Yahweh brought you into your land. It will also be the time for setting free any of Yahweh's people who are slaves. ¹¹ This year of Jubilee, the fifti-

eth year, will be a year in which you must rejoice and obey Yahweh's special instructions. During that year do not plant anything, and do not harvest in your usual manner the crops or grapes that have grown by themselves. ¹² It will be a year for you to rejoice in, the year of Jubilee. You will treat it as special, and eat only what has grown by itself.

¹³ In that year of celebration, the year of Jubilee, and everyone must return to their property to the original owner of it.

¹⁴ If you sell some of your land to a fellow Israelite or if you buy some land from one of them, you must treat that person fairly. ¹⁵ If you buy land, the price that you will pay will depend on the number of years until the next celebration of Jubilee. If someone sells land to you, he will charge a price that reflects the number of years remaining until the next year of celebration of Jubilee, when all property will be returned to their original owners. ¹⁶ If there will be many years before the next time for the celebration of Jubilee, the price will be higher. If there will be only a few years until the next year of celebration, the price will be lower. You could say that what he is really selling you is the number of crops you could harvest before the next year of the celebration of Jubilee. ¹⁷ Do not cheat each other. Instead, honor Yahweh. It is Yahweh, whom we Israelites worship, who is commanding us to do these things.

¹⁸ Obey all my laws carefully. If you do that, you will continue to live safely in your country. ¹⁹ The crops will grow well on the land, and you will have plenty to eat. ²⁰ But you may ask, "If we do not plant or harvest our crops during the seventh year, what will we have to eat?" ²¹ Yahweh answers you that he will bless you very much during the sixth year, with the result that during that year there will

be enough crops to provide food for you for three years. ²² Then, after you plant seed during the eighth year and wait for the crops to grow, you will eat the food grown in the sixth year; you will continue to eat it until you harvest your crops in the ninth year.

²³ You must not sell any of your land to belong to someone else permanently, because the land is not yours. It is really mine, and you are only living on it temporarily and farming it for me. ²⁴ Throughout the country that you will possess, you must remember that if someone sells some of his land to you, he is permitted to buy it back from you at any time.

²⁵ So if one of your fellow Israelites becomes poor and sells some of his property to you for money, the person who is most closely related to him is permitted to come and buy back that land for him. ²⁶ However, if a man has no one to buy the land for him, but if he himself prospers again and has saved enough money to buy that land back, ²⁷ he must calculate how many years there will be until the next year of celebration. Then he must pay to the man who bought the land the money that the other man would have earned by growing crops on that land for those years. ²⁸ But if the original owner does not have enough money to buy back the land that he sold, it will continue to belong to the man who bought it until the next year of the celebration of Jubilee. In that year he will take possession of it again, and he will be able to farm it again.

²⁹ If someone sells a house in a city that has a wall around it, during the next year he will be permitted to buy it back from the man who bought it. ³⁰ If he does not buy it during that year, it will belong permanently to the man who bought it, and to that man's descendants. He does not need to return it to the original owner in

the year of celebration of Jubilee. ³¹ But houses that are in villages without walls are considered to be as though they were in a field. So if someone sells one of those houses, he is permitted to buy it back at any time. And even if he does not buy it, he will take possession of it again at the year of the celebration of Jubilee.

³² The descendants of Levi are a special case, however. If they sell their houses in the cities that belong to them, they are permitted to buy them back at any time.

³³ But even if they do not buy back those houses, they will become theirs again in the year of the celebration of Jubilee, because those houses are in their cities, on land that the other Israelites had given to them. ³⁴ But the pastureland near their towns must not be sold. It must belong to the original owners permanently.

³⁵ If one of your fellow Israelites becomes poor and is unable to buy what he needs, others of you must help him as you would help a foreigner who is living among you temporarily. ³⁶ If you lend money to him, do not charge any kind of interest. Instead, show by what you do that you honor your God; you must help that man, in order that he will be able to continue to live among you. ³⁷ If you lend him money, do not charge interest; and if you sell food to him, charge him only what you paid for it. Do not try to make a profit from it. ³⁸ Do not forget that it is Yahweh your God who is giving you these commands; it is, after all, Yahweh who brought you out of Egypt to be your God and to give you the land of Canaan.

³⁹ If one of your fellow Israelites becomes poor and sells himself to you, do not force him to work like a slave. ⁴⁰ Treat him as you treat workers whom you hire or like someone who is living on your land temporarily. He must work for you only until the year of the celebration of Jubilee. ⁴¹

During that year, you must free him, and he may go back to his family and to the property that his ancestors owned. ⁴² It is as though we Israelites are all Yahweh's slaves, whom he freed from being slaves in Egypt. So none of you should buy each other and make each other into slaves. ⁴³ And do not treat the Israelites whom you buy cruelly. Instead, honor Yahweh, our God.

⁴⁴ If you want to have slaves, you are permitted to buy them from nearby people groups. ⁴⁵ You are also permitted to buy some of the foreigners who are living among you, and members of their clans that were born in your country. You may own them. ⁴⁶ They will be your slaves for the remaining years of your life, and after you die, it is permitted for your children to own them. But you must not act in brutal ways toward your fellow Israelites.

⁴⁷ Suppose a foreigner who is living among you becomes rich, and if a fellow Israelite becomes poor and sells himself to that foreigner or to a member of his clan, ⁴⁸ it is permitted for someone to pay for him to be freed. It is permitted for one of his relatives to pay for him to be released. ⁴⁹ An uncle or a cousin or another relative in his clan may pay for him to be released. Or, if he prospers and gets enough money, he is permitted to pay for his own release. ⁵⁰ The man who wants to pay for his own release must count the number of years until the next year of the celebration of Jubilee. The price he pays to the man who bought him will depend on the pay that would be given to a hired worker for that number of remaining years. ⁵¹ If there are a lot of years that remain until the year of celebration, he must pay for his release a larger amount of the money. ⁵² If there are only a few years that remain until the year of the celebration of Jubilee, he must pay a smaller amount to be released. ⁵³

During those years that he is working for the man who bought him, the man who bought him must treat him like he would treat a hired worker, and all of you must make sure that his owner does not treat him cruelly.

⁵⁴ And even if a fellow Israelite who has sold himself to a rich man is not able to pay for himself to be freed by any of these ways, he and his children must be freed in the year of the celebration of Jubilee, ⁵⁵ because it is as though you Israelites are my slaves, whom I, Yahweh your God, freed from being slaves in Egypt."

Chapter 26

¹ Yahweh also said this to Moses on Mount Sinai, "Do not make idols or set up carved figures or sacred stones to worship as if they were God. And do not put on your property a stone that you have carved so you can bow down to it. You must worship only me, Yahweh, your God.

² Honor the Sabbath days and revere my sacred tent, because I, Yahweh, live there.

³ If you carefully obey all my commands, ⁴ I will send rain for you at the proper times in order that crops will grow on your land and there will be plenty of fruit on your trees. ⁵ You will continue harvesting and threshing grain until it is time to harvest grapes, and you will continue to harvest grapes until it is time to start planting things in the following year. You will have all the food that you want to eat, and you will live safely in your land.

⁶ If you obey all my laws, there will be peace in your country, and when you lie down to sleep. Nothing will cause you to be afraid. I will get rid of the dangerous animals in your country, and there will be no wars in your country. ⁷ You will

pursue your enemies and kill them with your swords. ⁸ Five of you will pursue a hundred of them, and a hundred of you will pursue ten thousand of them and kill them.

⁹ If you obey all my laws, I will bless you and cause you to have many children. And I will do what I said that I would do in the covenant that I made with you. ¹⁰ When you are still eating food from the harvest from the previous year, it will be necessary for you to throw away some of it to make space to store the new harvest. ¹¹ I will live among you in my sacred tent, and I will never reject you. ¹² I will live among you and continue to be your God, and you will continue to be my people. ¹³ I am Yahweh your God, the one who brought you out of Egypt in order that you would no longer be slaves of the people of Egypt. When you were there, it was as though you were animals that were pulling plows for the people of Egypt, but I broke the bars of the yokes that they had put around your necks; I made you able to walk with your heads up.

¹⁴ But suppose you pay no attention to me; suppose you refuse to obey what I have told you to do. ¹⁵ Suppose that you reject my decrees and laws, and do not obey me, but that instead you reject the covenant that I made with you. ¹⁶ In that case, these are the things that I will do to you. I will suddenly send disasters that will ruin you. You will have diseases that cannot be cured, and fevers that will cause you to become blind and will slowly kill you. It will be useless for you to plant your fields, because your enemies will eat the crops that grow. ¹⁷ I will reject you, so your enemies will conquer you. Then they will rule over you, and you will be so terrified that you will run away even if they do not pursue you.

¹⁸ But after all these things happen to you,

if you still refuse to obey me, I will continue to punish you again and again for the sins that you have committed. ¹⁹ I will punish you so much that you will no longer be stubborn or proud. I will not let any rain fall in your land. It will be as though the sky were made of iron, and the ground were as hard as bronze. ²⁰ You will uselessly work very hard to plant seeds, because crops will not grow in the hard soil in your fields, and fruit will not grow on your trees.

²¹ If you continue to act against me and refuse to obey me, I will cause you to experience disasters again and again, as you deserve to experience because of your sins. ²² I will send wild animals to attack you, and they will kill your little children and destroy your cattle. There will be very few of you who will remain alive, with the result that there will be very few people traveling about on the roads in your country.

²³ When you experience those things that I do to punish you, if you still do not pay attention to me, and if you continue to act against me, ²⁴ I myself will act against you, and I will punish you for your sins again and again. ²⁵ I will send armies to you to punish you for not doing the things that I commanded you to do in the covenant that I made with you. If you try to escape from your enemies by hiding behind your city walls, I will send plagues to you, and I will allow your enemies to capture you. ²⁶ When I destroy your supplies of food, there will be very little flour with which to make bread. As a result, ten women will be able to bake all their bread in only one oven. When the bread is baked, each woman will divide it among the members of her family, but there will be very little for each one, and when they have eaten all of it, they will still be hungry.

²⁷ After all those things happen, if you still

do not obey me, if you still act against me, ²⁸ I will be very angry with you, and I will act against you; I myself will punish you for your sins again and again. ²⁹ You will be so hungry that you will kill your sons and daughters and eat their flesh. ³⁰ I will make sure that other people destroy the hills where you have worshiped idols. I will smash the altars where you burn incense to worship your gods, and I will cause your corpses to be piled on the lifeless figures of your idols. And I will hate you. ³¹ I will cause your cities to become heaps of ruins, and I will cause the buildings that you built for your idols to collapse. And I will not be pleased at all with the aroma of your offerings that are burned on the altar. ³² I will completely ruin your country, with the result that even your enemies who capture it will be shocked when they see this happen. ³³ I will enable your enemies to kill you with their swords, and I will cause them to scatter the rest of you among other people groups. I will make sure that they ruin your country and destroy your cities. ³⁴ After that happens, as long as you are living in your enemies' countries, I will allow your land to rest, as you should have done every seven years. ³⁵ During all the time that no one is in your land, it will be able to rest. This will be unlike you, who never allowed it to rest while you were there.

³⁶ As for you people who will remain alive in the countries to which your enemies will have taken you, I will make you very afraid, so when you hear the wind blowing leaves, you will run away. ³⁷ You will run as if a man with a sword were chasing you, and you will fall down, even though no one is coming behind you. You will stumble over each other trying to flee. You will not be able to stand and fight your enemies. ³⁸ Many of you will die in your enemies' countries. ³⁹ And those of you who remain alive will slowly die and rot there

because of your sins and the sins of your ancestors.

⁴⁰⁻⁴¹ But your descendants must confess their sins and the sins that their ancestors committed. Their ancestors acted unfaithfully toward me and were hostile to me, so I forced them to go to their enemies' countries. But when your descendants humble themselves and stop being very stubborn and accept being punished for their sins, ⁴² I will keep in mind the covenant that I made with your ancestors Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and what I promised to them about the land of Canaan. ⁴³ But before that happens, my people will be forced to leave their land, with the result that the land will be able to rest while no one is in it, and while I am punishing the people for rejecting my laws and hating my decrees. ⁴⁴ But I will still not reject them or hate them and destroy them completely. I will not cancel the covenant that I made with them. I will still be Yahweh, the God whom they should worship. ⁴⁵ I will keep in mind the covenant that I made with your ancestors when I brought them out of Egypt, something that the people of all nations heard about. I did this so that I, Yahweh, would be your God."

⁴⁶ Those are the commandments, the decrees, and the laws that Yahweh established on Mount Sinai between himself and the Israelite people by giving them to Moses to tell to them.

Chapter 27

¹ Yahweh also said to Moses, ² "Tell the Israelite people these things for me: 'If a man solemnly promises to set apart another person to belong only to Yahweh, Yahweh will be willing to set that person free from having to do that if the responsible man pays the priest an amount

of money. The priest must calculate the amount of money in terms of the silver pieces that they use in Yahweh's sacred tent. ³ These are the amounts that Yahweh has set for this kind of transaction:

fifty pieces of silver for men who are between twenty and sixty years old;

⁴ thirty pieces of silver for adult women who are between twenty and sixty years old.

⁵ Twenty pieces of silver would be paid for young men who are between five and twenty years old;

ten pieces of silver for young women who are between five and twenty years old;

⁶ five pieces of silver for boys who are between one month and five years old;

three pieces of silver for girls who are between one month and five years old.

⁷ Fifteen pieces of silver would be paid for men who are more than sixty years old;

ten pieces of silver for women who are more than sixty years old.

⁸ If anyone who has made such a solemn promise is very poor and unable to pay to set free the person whom he has given to Yahweh, he must take that person to the priest. The priest will set the price for freeing him to an amount that the person can pay.

⁹ If someone solemnly promises Yahweh to give him an animal that is acceptable to him, that animal becomes very special to Yahweh; it belongs to him alone. ¹⁰ The person who promised to give it must not give another animal instead of the one that he promised. He must not substitute a bad one for a good one or even a better one than the one offered. If he tries to do that, both animals will become dedicated

to Yahweh. ¹¹ If the animal that he wishes to give to Yahweh is a kind that is unacceptable to be an offering, he must take the animal to the priest. ¹² The priest then will decide what its value is, according to the animal's quality. Whatever value the priests sets will be the value, and that is the price of the animal. ¹³ If the man who gave the animal later decides that he wants to buy it back, he must pay to the priest that price plus an added one-fifth.

¹⁴ Similarly, if someone dedicates his house, and to set it apart for the honor of Yahweh, the priest will decide how much it is worth, which will depend on the house's condition. Whatever the priest says that it is worth, that will be its value. ¹⁵ If a man set apart his house for the honor of Yahweh, but later he wants to buy it back, he must pay that price plus an added one-fifth, and then the house will belong to him again.

¹⁶ If someone sets apart for the honor of Yahweh some of the property that belongs to him and his family, its value will be determined by the quantity of seed that would be needed to sow that entire tract of land. It will be ten pieces of silver for each 220 liters of seed. ¹⁷ If the man sets apart for the honor of Yahweh the land during the year of the celebration of Jubilee, its value will be the full amount. ¹⁸ But if he sets apart his field to Yahweh after the year of the celebration of Jubilee, the priest will count the number of years until the next year of the celebration of Jubilee, and if there are not many years that remain, the price will be much lower than the full price. ¹⁹ If the person who set apart the field for Yahweh later wants to buy it back, he must pay to the priest the price that the priest says it is worth, plus an added one-fifth, and then the field will belong to that man again. ²⁰ However, if he does not buy it back, or if it has been

sold to someone else, he will never be permitted to buy it back again. ²¹ In the year of the celebration of Jubilee, it will be permanently set apart as a holy gift for Yahweh, and it will be given to the priest.

²² If someone sets apart for the honor of Yahweh some land that he has bought, land which is not part of the land that his family has always owned, ²³ the priest must count the number of years until the next year of the celebration of Jubilee to determine how much it is worth, and the man must pay that amount to the priest on that day, and then that land will belong to him again, and his payment becomes a holy gift to Yahweh. ²⁴ However, in the year of the celebration of Jubilee, the land will again come into the possession of the person from whom he bought it, the person whose family had always owned that land. ²⁵ All the silver that is paid must be calculated in terms of the official pieces of silver in the sacred tent.

²⁶ No one is permitted to dedicate the firstborn of any cow or sheep for any purpose, because the firstborn already belongs to Yahweh. ²⁷ If someone gives to him an animal that is not acceptable to him, that person may later buy it back by paying what it is worth plus an added one-fifth of its value. If he does not buy it back, it must be sold for its standard price.

²⁸ However, no slave or animal or family land that someone owns can be sold or bought back after it has been dedicated to Yahweh. It becomes holy to Yahweh.

²⁹ No person who has done something that Yahweh considers to be very wicked is permitted to go free. The people must certainly execute such a person.

³⁰ One tenth of all the crops and grain or fruit that is produced on anyone's land is sacred and belongs to Yahweh. ³¹ If anyone wants to buy back any of that tenth,

he must pay to the priest what it is worth plus an added one-fifth. ³² And every ten domestic animals belongs to Yahweh. When a shepherd counts them as they pass under his walking stick, to decide which ones he will give to me, he must mark every tenth one as belonging to Yahweh. ³³ When he does that, he must not pick out the good ones or leave the bad ones, or substitute bad ones for good ones. If he substitutes one animal for another, both animals will belong to Yahweh, and the shepherd will not be permitted to buy them back."

³⁴ Those are the commands that Yahweh gave to Moses on Mount Sinai to tell to the people.

NUMBERS

Chapter 1

¹ In the second month of the year after the Israelite people had left Egypt, Yahweh spoke to Moses while he was in the sacred tent, in the wilderness of Sinai. Yahweh said to him, ² "Count how many Israelite men, from each family in Israel, and count them by name. ³ You and Aaron must count the men who are at least twenty years old, those who can serve as soldiers in the army. Write down the number of the men, along with the names of their clans and families. ⁴ I have chosen one man from each of the tribes to help you to do this. Each one must be a leader of his clan.

⁵⁻⁶ Their names are:

Elizur son of Shedeur, from the tribe of Reuben;

Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai, from the tribe of Simeon; ⁷⁻⁹ Nahshon son of Amminadab, from the tribe of Judah;

Nethanel son of Zuar, from the tribe of Issachar;

Eliab son of Helon, from the tribe of Zebulun; ¹⁰⁻¹¹ Elishama son of Ammihud, from the tribe of Joseph's son Ephraim;

Gamaliel son of Pedahzur, from the tribe of Joseph's son Manasseh;

Abidan son of Gideon, from the tribe of Benjamin;

¹²⁻¹⁵ Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai, from the tribe of Dan;

Pagiel son of Ocran, from the tribe of Asher;

Eliasaph son of Deuel, from the tribe of Gad;

Ahira son of Enan, from the tribe of Naphtali."

¹⁶ These were the men whom Yahweh chose from the people. They were leaders of their tribes. They were the chief men of the clans of the Israelite people.

¹⁷ Aaron and Moses summoned all these leaders, ¹⁸ and they gathered all of the people on that same day. They listed the names of all the men who were at least 20 years old, and with their names they wrote the names of their clans and their family groups ¹⁹ just as Moses had commanded. They wrote the names while the Israelites were there in the wilderness of Sinai.

²⁰⁻²¹ There were 46,500 men from the tribe of Reuben (who was Jacob's oldest son) who were at least twenty years old and were able to fight in battles. They were listed by their names, their clans, and their family groups.

²²⁻²³ There were 59,300 men from the tribe of Simeon who were at least twenty years old and were able to fight in battles. They were listed by their names, their clans, and their family groups.

²⁴⁻²⁵ There were 45,650 men from the tribe of Gad who were at least twenty years old and were able to fight in battles. They were listed by their names, their clans, and their family groups.

²⁶⁻²⁷ There were 74,600 men from the tribe of Judah who were at least twenty years old and were able to fight in battles. They were listed by their names, their clans, and their family groups.

²⁸⁻²⁹ There were 54,400 men from the tribe of Issachar who were at least twenty years old and were able to fight in battles. They were listed by their names, their clans, and their family groups.

³⁰⁻³¹ There were 57,400 men from the

tribe of Zebulun who were at least twenty years old and were able to fight in battles. They were listed by their names, their clans, and their family groups.

³²⁻³³ There were 40,500 men from the tribe of Ephraim who were at least twenty years old and were able to fight in battles. They were listed by their names, their clans, and their family groups.

³⁴⁻³⁵ There were 32,200 men from the tribe of Manasseh who were at least twenty years old and were able to fight in battles. They were listed by their names, their clans, and their family groups.

³⁶⁻³⁷ There were 35,400 men from the tribe of Benjamin who were at least twenty years old and were able to fight in battles. They were listed by their names, their clans, and their family groups.

³⁸⁻³⁹ There were 62,700 men from the tribe of Dan who were at least twenty years old and were able to fight in battles. They were listed by their names, their clans, and their family groups.

⁴⁰⁻⁴¹ There were 41,500 men from the tribe of Asher who were at least twenty years old and were able to fight in battles. They were listed by their names, their clans, and their family groups.

⁴²⁻⁴³ There were 53,400 men from the tribe of Naphtali who were at least twenty years old and were able to fight in battles. They were listed by their names, their clans, and their family groups.

⁴⁴⁻⁴⁵ That was the number of men from each tribe that Aaron and Moses and the twelve leaders of the tribes of Israel listed, along with the names of their clans. ⁴⁶ The total was 603,550 men.

⁴⁷ But this number did not include the names of the men of the tribe of Levi,

⁴⁸ because Yahweh had said to Moses, ⁴⁹ "When you count the men of the tribes

of Israel, do not count the men in the tribe of Levi. ⁵⁰ Appoint the male descendants of Levi to take care of the sacred tent and the chest inside it that contains the tablets on which are written the Ten Commandments. They must also take care of the other things that are inside the tent. When you travel, they are the ones who must carry the sacred tent and all the things that are inside it, and they must take care of it and set up their tents around it. ⁵¹ Whenever it is time for all of you to move to another location, the descendants of Levi are the ones who must dismantle the sacred tent. And when it is time to stop traveling, they are the ones who must set it up again. Any other person who goes near the sacred tent to do this work must be executed. ⁵² The people of each Israelite tribe must set up their tents in their own area, and they must set up a flag that represents their tribe. ⁵³ But the male descendants of Levi must set up their tents around the sacred tent in order to protect the other Israelite people from being punished by Yahweh for coming close to the sacred tent. The descendants of Levi are the ones who must stand around the sacred tent to guard it."

⁵⁴ So the Israelite people did everything just like Yahweh had commanded Moses.

Chapter 2

¹ Then Yahweh said this to Aaron and Moses, ² "When the Israelites set up their tents, they are to set them up in areas that surround the sacred tent, but not close to it. The people of each tribe must set up their tents in a different area. Each tribe must put up a flag in that area that identifies their tribe.

³⁻⁴ The people of the tribe of Judah must set up their tents on the east side of

the sacred tent, close to their tribal flag. Nahshon son of Amminadab, will be the leader of the 74,600 men of the tribe of Judah.

⁵⁻⁶ The people of the tribe of Issachar will set up their tents beside Judah. Nethanel son of Zuar will be the leader of the 54,400 men of the tribe of Issachar.

⁷⁻⁸ The people of the tribe of Zebulun will set up their tents beside Issachar. Eliab son of Helon, will be the leader of the 57,400 men of the tribe of Zebulun.

⁹ So there will be 186,400 troops on the east side of the sacred tent. Whenever the Israelites move to a new location, those three tribes must go in front of the others.

¹⁰⁻¹¹ The tribe of Reuben must set up their tents on the south side of the sacred tent, close to their tribal flag. Elizur son of Shedeur, will be the leader of the 46,500 men of the tribe of Reuben.

¹²⁻¹³ The people of the tribe of Simeon will set up their tents beside Reuben. Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai, will be the leader of the 59,300 men of the tribe of Simeon.

¹⁴⁻¹⁵ The people of the tribe of Gad will set up their tents beside Simeon. Eliasaph son of Deuel, will be the leader of the 45,650 men of the tribe of Gad.

¹⁶ So there will be 151,450 troops on the south side of the sacred tent. Those three tribes will follow the first group when the Israelites travel.

¹⁷ Behind that group will walk the descendants of Levi, who will carry the sacred tent. The Israelites will march in the same order that they always set up their tents. Each tribe will carry its own flag.

¹⁸⁻¹⁹ The tribe of Ephraim must set up their tents on the west side of the sacred tent, close to their tribal flag. Elishama son of Ammihud, will be the leader of the 40,500 men of the tribe of Ephraim.

²⁰⁻²¹ The people of the tribe of Manasseh will set up their tents beside Ephraim. Gamaliel son of Pedahzur, will be the leader of the 32,200 men of the tribe of Manasseh.

²²⁻²³ The people of the tribe of Benjamin will set up their tents beside Manasseh. Abidan son of Gideoni, will be the leader of the 35,400 men of the tribe of Benjamin.

²⁴ So there will be 108,100 troops on the west side of the sacred tent. Those three tribes will follow the second group, behind the descendants of Levi.

²⁵⁻²⁶ The tribe of Dan must set up their tents on the north side of the sacred tent, close to their tribal flag. Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai, will be the leader of the 62,700 men of the tribe of Dan.

²⁷⁻²⁸ The people of the tribe of Asher will set up their tents beside Dan. Pagiel son of Ocran, will be the leader of the 41,500 men of the tribe of Asher.

²⁹⁻³⁰ The people of the tribe of Naphtali will set up their tents beside Asher. Ahira son of Enan, will be the leader of the 53,400 men of the tribe of Naphtali.

³¹ So there will be 157,600 troops on the north side of the sacred tent. Those three tribes will be last. They must carry their own flags when the Israelites travel."

³² So there were 603,550 Israelite men who were able to fight who were listed according to their families' ancestors. ³³ But just as Yahweh had commanded, the names of the descendants of Levi were not included.

³⁴ The Israelites did everything that Yahweh had told Moses. They set up their tents close to their tribal flags, and when they traveled to a new location, they walked with their own clans and family groups.

Chapter 3

¹ These are some of the things that happened to Aaron and Moses when Yahweh spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai.

² Aaron had four sons. They were Nadab the oldest, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

³ These are the names of Aaron's sons who were anointed priests and set apart as priests and whom he ordained to serve as priests. ⁴ But, while Yahweh was watching, Nadab and Abihu died in the wilderness of Sinai because they burned incense in a manner that was disobedient to what Yahweh had commanded. They had no sons, so Eleazar and Ithamar were the only sons of Aaron who were left to be priests, along with their father Aaron.

⁵ Then Yahweh said to Moses, ⁶ "Bring the men of the tribe of Levi and present them to Aaron, in order that they may assist him. ⁷ They will serve Aaron and all the other Israelite people, while they do their work inside the sacred tent and outside it. ⁸ They must serve all the Israelite people by taking care of all the things that are inside the sacred tent. ⁹ Appoint them to help Aaron and his two sons. I have chosen them from all the Israelite people to do that. ¹⁰ Appoint Aaron and his two sons to do the work that priests do. But anyone else who comes close to the sacred tent to do that work must be executed."

¹¹ Yahweh also told Moses, ¹² "Note that from all the Israelites I have chosen the men of the tribe of Levi to take the places of all the firstborn sons of the Israelite people. The male descendants of Levi belong to me, ¹³ because truly all the firstborn males belong to me. That is because on the day that I killed all the firstborn sons of the people of Egypt, I spared all the firstborn sons of the Israelites and set them apart for myself. I also set apart the firstborn males of your domestic animals.

They belong to me, Yahweh."

¹⁴ Yahweh spoke to Moses again in the wilderness of Sinai. He said, ¹⁵ "Count the male members of the tribe of Levi. Write down their names and the names of their clans and family groups. Count all the males who are at least one month old." ¹⁶ So Moses counted them, just as Yahweh commanded.

¹⁷ Levi had three sons, whose names were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

¹⁸ Gershon had two sons, Libni and Shimei. The clans who were descended from them had the same names as those two sons.

¹⁹ Kohath had four sons, Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. The clans who were descended from them had the same names as those four sons.

²⁰ Merari had two sons, Mahli and Mushi. The clans who were descended from them had the same names as those two sons.

Those are the clans who were descended from Levi.

²¹ The two clans descended from Gershon are those that were descended from his sons Libni and Shimei. ²² In those two clans there were 7,500 males who were at least one month old. ²³ They were told to set up their tents on the west side of the sacred tent. ²⁴ The leader of those two clans was Eliasaph son of Lael. ²⁵ Their work was to take care of the sacred tent, including its curtains and coverings and the curtain at its entrance, ²⁶ the curtains that formed the walls around the courtyard that is around the tent and around the altar, the curtains that were at the entrance of the courtyard, and the ropes for fastening the tent. They also did all the work of taking care of the things outside the sacred tent.

²⁷ The clans that were descended from Kohath were those descended from his sons Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. ²⁸ In those four clans there were 8,600 males who were at least one month old. The work of the men of the clans was to take care of the things that are inside the sacred tent. ²⁹ They set up their tents on the south side of the sacred tent. ³⁰ The leader of those four clans was Elizaphan son of Uzziel. ³¹ The work of the men of those clans was to take care of the sacred chest, the table on which the priest put the sacred bread, the lampstand, the altars, all the items that the priest used in the sacred tent, and the curtain that is inside the tent. Their work was also to take care of the things inside the tent.

³² Aaron's son Eleazar was the leader of all the male descendants of Levi. He supervised all the work that was done at the sacred tent.

³³ The clans that were descended from Merari were those descended from his sons Mahli and Mushi. ³⁴ In those two clans there were 6,200 males who were at least one month old. ³⁵ They were told to set up their tents on the north side of the sacred tent. The leader of those two clans was Zuriel son of Abihail. ³⁶ The work of the men of those two clans was to take care of the frames that held up the tent, the crossbars, the pillars, and the bases. They also did all the work that was connected with those items. ³⁷ Their work was also to take care of the posts that held up the curtains that formed the walls of the courtyard, and all the bases, tent pegs, and ropes that fastened those curtains.

³⁸ Aaron and Moses and Aaron's sons were told to set up their tents in the area in front of the sacred tent, on the east side. Their work was to supervise the work that would be done in and around the sacred tent, for the benefit of the Israelite peo-

ple. Only the priests were permitted to do that. Yahweh declared that anyone else who went near the tent to do the work that the priests do must be executed.

³⁹ When Aaron and Moses counted all the males who were at least one month old, who belonged to the clans descended from Levi, the total was twenty-two thousand.

⁴⁰ Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Now count all the other firstborn males in Israel who are at least one month old, and write down their names. ⁴¹ Also, set apart for me the descendants of Levi to be substitutes for the firstborn males of the other Israelites. And set apart for me the livestock of the descendants of Levi to be substitutes for the firstborn livestock of the other Israelite people."

⁴² So Moses did that. He counted the firstborn males of all the Israelite people, as Yahweh had commanded. ⁴³ The total of those who were at least one month old was 22,273.

⁴⁴ Then Yahweh said to Moses, ⁴⁵ "Set apart the descendants of Levi to be substitutes for the firstborn males of the other Israelite people. The descendants of Levi belong to me, Yahweh. ⁴⁶ There are 273 more firstborn males of the other Israelite people than of the descendants of Levi. ⁴⁷⁻⁴⁸ To pay for these 273 males, collect five pieces of silver for each of them. Each of those pieces of silver must weigh the same as each of the silver pieces that are stored in the sacred tent. Give this silver to Aaron and his sons."

⁴⁹ So Moses did that. He collected the silver from those 273 males. ⁵⁰ The total was 1,365 pieces of silver. Each silver piece weighed the same as each of the silver pieces stored in the sacred tent. ⁵¹ Moses gave these silver pieces to Aaron and his sons, as Yahweh had commanded.

Chapter 4

¹ Then Yahweh said to Moses, ² "Write down the names of the men who belong to the clans descended from Kohath. ³ Write the names of the men who are between 30 and 50 years old. These will be men who will do work at the sacred tent.

⁴ The work of these descendants of Kohath will be to take care of the sacred items that are used when the people worship at the sacred tent. ⁵ When you Israelites move to another location, Aaron and his sons must enter the tent to take down the curtain that separates the very holy place from the holy place in the sacred tent. They must cover the sacred chest with that curtain. ⁶ Then they must cover that with a covering made from sea cow skins. Over that they must spread a blue cloth. Then they must insert into the rings on the chest the poles for carrying it.

⁷ Then they must put a blue cloth over the table on which the priests will put the bread to display before God. On top of the cloth they must put the bowls for incense, the pans, the other dishes, the jars for the wine that will be offered as a sacrifice, and the sacred bread. ⁸ Over all of this they must spread a scarlet cloth. Finally, they must put on top a covering made from sea cow skins. Then they must insert into the rings at the corners of the tables the poles for carrying it.

⁹ Then with another blue cloth they must cover the lampstand, the lamps, the lamp snuffers, the trays, and the special jars of olive oil to burn in the lamps. ¹⁰ They must cover the lampstand and all the other items with a covering made from sea cow skins. They must place all these things on a frame for carrying them.

¹¹ Then they must spread another blue

cloth over the gold altar which is used for burning incense. Over this they must spread a covering made from sea cow skins. Then they must insert into the rings of that altar the poles for carrying it.

¹² They must take all the other items that are inside the sacred tent and wrap them in a blue cloth, cover that with a covering made from sea cow skins, and place all that on a frame for carrying it.

¹³ Then they must remove the ashes from the altar on which they have burned sacrifices. Then they must cover the altar with a purple cloth. ¹⁴ Then they must spread on top of the cloth all the items used at the altar—the pans for carrying the hot coals, the meat forks, the shovels, the bowls that hold the blood to sprinkle on the people, and all the other containers. Then they must spread over all those things a covering made from sea cow skins. Then they must insert into the rings at the sides of the altar the poles for carrying it.

¹⁵ When Aaron and his sons have finished covering all these sacred things, the Israelite people will be ready to move to a new location. The descendants of Kohath must come and carry all the sacred things to the next place where the Israelites will set up their tents. But the descendants of Kohath must not touch any of these sacred items, because they will immediately die if they touch them. They are the ones who will carry these things, but they must not touch them.

¹⁶ Aaron's son Eleazar will have the work of taking care of the olive oil for the lamps, the sweet smelling incense, the flour that will be burned on the altar each day, and the olive oil for anointing the priests. Eleazar is the one who will supervise the work that is done at the sacred tent and the men who take care of everything that is in it."

¹⁷ Then Yahweh said to Aaron and Moses, ¹⁸⁻²⁰ "When the descendants of Kohath approach the sacred items in the sacred tent to take them to another location, Aaron and his sons must always go in with them and show each of them what work to do and what things to carry. But the descendants of Kohath must not enter the sacred tent at any other time and look at the things that are in it. If they do that, I will get rid of all the descendants of Kohath."

²¹ Yahweh also said to Moses, ²² "Write down the names of all the men who belong to the clans descended from Gershon. ²³ Write the names of the men who are between thirty and fifty years old. They will be men who will also do work at the sacred tent.

²⁴ This is the work that they must do and the things that they must carry when you move to a new location: ²⁵ They must carry the curtains of the sacred tent. They must carry the sacred tent and all the things that cover it, including the outer covering made from sea cow skins, and the curtain which is at the entrance of the sacred tent. ²⁶ They must also carry the curtains that form the wall that surrounds the courtyard that surrounds the sacred tent and the altar, the curtain that is at the entrance to the courtyard, and the ropes that fasten the curtains. They must also do the packing and loading of these things. ²⁷ Aaron and his sons will supervise the work of all the descendants of Gershon. That work includes carrying those things and doing other work that is necessary for moving them. They must tell each of the descendants of Gershon what things they must carry. ²⁸ Those are the tasks that you must give to the men who belong to the clans descended from Gershon. Aaron's son Ithamar is the one who will supervise their work.

²⁹ Count also the men who belong to the

clans descended from Merari. ³⁰ Write the names of the men who are between thirty and fifty years old. They will be men who will also work at the sacred tent. ³¹ Their work will be to carry the frames that hold up the sacred tent, the crossbars, the posts that hold up the curtains, and the bases. ³² They must also carry the posts for the curtains that form the walls of the courtyard and the bases for the posts, the tent pegs, and the ropes to fasten the curtains. Tell each man what things he must carry. ³³ Those are the tasks that the descendants of Merari must do at the sacred tent. Aaron's son Ithamar is the one who will supervise them."

³⁴ So Aaron and Moses and the Israelite leaders counted the descendants of Kohath, writing also the names of their clans and family groups. ³⁵ They counted all the men who were between thirty and fifty years old who were able to work at the sacred tent. ³⁶ The total was 2,750 men. ³⁷ They were the descendants of Kohath who were able to work at the sacred tent. Aaron and Moses counted them just as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

³⁸ They also counted the descendants of Gershon, writing also the names of their clans and family groups. ³⁹ They counted all the men who were between thirty and fifty years old who were able to work at the sacred tent. ⁴⁰ The total was 2,630 men. ⁴¹ They were the descendants of Gershon who were able to work at the sacred tent. Aaron and Moses counted them as Yahweh had commanded.

⁴² They also counted the descendants of Merari, writing also the names of their clans and family groups. ⁴³ They counted all the men who were between thirty and fifty years old who were able to work at the sacred tent. ⁴⁴ The total was 3,200 men.

⁴⁵ They were the descendants of Merari who were able to work. Aaron and Moses

counted them as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

⁴⁶ So Aaron and Moses and the Israelite leaders counted all the descendants of Levi, writing also the names of their clans and family groups. ⁴⁷ They counted all the men who were between thirty and fifty years old. They were ones who were able to work at the sacred tent and who carried the tent and everything that was connected with it. ⁴⁸ The total was 8,580 men. ⁴⁹ They completed the counting of all the descendants of Levi, as Yahweh had commanded Moses. And they told each man what work he was to do and what things he must carry when they moved to a new location.

Chapter 5

¹ Yahweh said to Moses, ² "Tell this to the Israelite people: 'You must send away from your camp where you have your tents any man or woman who has leprosy and anyone who has a discharge of some fluid from his body, and anyone who has become unacceptable to God because of having touched a corpse. ³ Send them away in order that they will not touch people in the camp area where I live among you and cause them to become unacceptable to me.'" ⁴ So the Israelite people obeyed what Yahweh commanded Moses.

⁵ Yahweh also told Moses, ⁶ "Tell this to the Israelite people: 'If someone commits a crime against another person, I consider that that person has done wrong to me. ⁷ That person must confess that he or she is guilty, and he or she must pay to the person to whom wrong was done what others consider to be a suitable payment for what he has done, and he must pay an extra 20 percent. ⁸ If the person against

whom the wrong was done has died and there is no relative to whom the money can be paid, then the money belongs to me, and it must be paid to the priest. In addition, the one who did the wrong must give a male sheep to the priest to sacrifice in order that that person's sin may be forgiven. ⁹ All the sacred offerings that the Israelites present to me by bringing them to the priest will belong to the priest. ¹⁰ The priest can keep those gifts."

¹¹ Yahweh also said this to Moses: ¹² "Tell this to the Israelite people: 'Suppose a man thinks that his wife has not always slept faithfully only with him. ¹³ Suppose he thinks that she has slept with another man, but he does not know if this is true or not, because he did not see her do it. She was not caught in the act and the fact that she broke her vow to her husband could not be proved because no one saw her doing that. ¹⁴ But if the woman's husband is jealous, and if he suspects that she has committed adultery, and he would want to know whether that is true or not, and so there is a test whether she had been impure. ¹⁵ To test whether she had committed adultery he should take his wife to the priest. He must take along as an offering two liters of barley flour. The priest must not pour olive oil or incense on it, because this is an offering that the man has brought because he is jealous. It is an offering to find out if she is guilty or not.

¹⁶ The priest must tell the woman to stand in front of the altar in my presence. ¹⁷ He must put some sacred water in a clay jar, and then he must put some dirt from the floor of the sacred tent into the water. ¹⁸ He must untie the woman's hair. Then he must put in her hands the flour offering that her jealous husband is offering to determine whether she has committed adultery or not. The priest must hold the bowl that contains bitter water that will cause

the woman to be cursed if she is guilty. ¹⁹ The priest must require her to solemnly declare that she will tell the truth. He must say to her, "Has another man slept with you? Have you faithfully slept only with your husband or not? If you have not slept with another man, nothing bad will happen to you if you drink the water. ²⁰ But if you have slept with another man, Yahweh will curse you. ²¹⁻²² Your womb will shrivel up and your stomach will swell up. You will never be able to give birth to children, and as a result, everyone will curse you and avoid you. If you have committed adultery, when you drink this water, that is what will happen to you." Then the woman must answer, "If I am guilty, I will not object if that happens."

²³ Then the priest must write with ink on a small scroll these curses and then wash the ink off into the bitter water. ²⁴⁻²⁵ The priest must take from her the offering of barley flour that she is holding; he must lift it up to dedicate it to me. Then he must put it on the altar ²⁶ and burn part of it as a sacrifice. Then the woman must drink the bitter water. ²⁷ If the woman has committed adultery instead of faithfully sleeping only with her husband, the water will cause her to suffer greatly. Her stomach will swell up and her womb will shrink, and she will be unable to give birth to children. And then her relatives will curse her. ²⁸ But if she is innocent, her body will not be harmed, and she will still be able to give birth to children.

²⁹ That is the ritual that must be performed when a woman who is married has sinned by committing adultery, ³⁰ or when a man is jealous and suspects that his wife has slept with another man. The priest must tell that woman to stand at the altar in my presence and obey these instructions. ³¹ Even if the woman has

not done what the husband suspected, he will not be punished for doing something wrong by bringing his wife to the priest. But if his wife is guilty, she will suffer as a result."

Chapter 6

¹ Yahweh also said this to Moses: ² "Tell this to the Israelite people: If any of you wants to make a solemn promise to dedicate himself to belong to me in a special way, after you obey these instructions, you will be called a Nazir, which means 'a dedicated person.' ³ You must not drink any wine or other alcoholic drink. You must not drink grape juice or eat grapes or raisins. ⁴ You must not eat anything that comes from grapevines, not even the skins or seeds of grapes, during the time that you are a Nazir.

⁵ Even your hair will be dedicated to me during the time that you are a Nazir, so you must never allow anyone to cut your hair. Until the time that your solemn promise to dedicate yourself to me is ended, you must allow your hair to grow long. ⁶ And you must not go near a corpse during the time that you are a Nazir. ⁷ Even if the person who died is your father or your mother or your brother or your sister, you must not cause yourself to become unacceptable to me by coming close to the corpse. Your long hair shows that you belong to me in a special way, so you must do what you have solemnly promised and not cut your hair. ⁸ You are required to keep doing this all the time that you are dedicated to me in this special way.

⁹ If anyone dies very suddenly when he is near you, then your hair that you have dedicated to me is no longer sacred. So you must wait seven days and then shave

it all off. Then you must perform a special ritual to cause yourself to become acceptable to me again. ¹⁰ The next day you must bring two doves or two pigeons to the priest at the entrance of the sacred tent. ¹¹ The priest must kill the birds and offer them as sacrifices. One of them will be an offering to take away the guilt of your sin, and the other will be an offering that is burned completely to please me. After the priests burn them on the altar, I will forgive you for having come close to a corpse, and when your hair grows again it will be dedicated to me again. ¹² The amount of time that you were set apart for me the previous time does not count, because you had become unacceptable to me by coming close to a corpse during the time that you were a Nazir. So you must again make a solemn promise to dedicate yourself to me for the entire amount of time that you indicated the previous time. And you must also sacrifice a one year old lamb to take away your guilt.

¹³ When the time that you promised to dedicate yourself to me is ended, go to the entrance of the sacred tent ¹⁴ and offer as sacrifices to me three animals that have no defects. Offer a one year old ram that will be burned completely, a one year old female lamb as a sacrifice to take away the guilt of your sin, and one full-grown ram as a sacrifice to restore fellowship with me.

¹⁵ When you bring those animals, you must also bring some wine to offer as a sacrifice. And you must also bring a basket of bread that you have made with very good flour and olive oil. But you must not put any yeast in the bread. Also brush some olive oil on some thin wafers and bring them to the priest.

¹⁶ The priest will put the young lamb and the young ram on the altar and completely burn them, in order that I will be pleased

and will forgive you. ¹⁷ Then he will kill the full-grown ram as an offering to restore fellowship with me, and he will also burn on the altar some of the bread and the flour and wine.

¹⁸ After that, you must stand at the entrance of the sacred tent and shave off your hair. Then you must put that hair in the fire that is under the animal that has been sacrificed on the altar to restore fellowship with me.

¹⁹ The meat from the ram's shoulder must be boiled. After it is cooked, the priest will take it along with one of the loaves of bread and one wafer which has been brushed with olive oil, and he will put them in your hands. ²⁰ Then the priest will take them back and lift them up high to dedicate them to me. They now belong to the priest, and he is permitted to eat some of the meat from the ram's shoulder and from its ribs and from one of its thighs, because that meat is his share of the sacrifice. After that, you will no longer be a Nazir, and you will again be permitted to drink wine.

²¹ Those are the regulations about the offerings that Nazir solemnly promise to bring to me to end their time of being dedicated to me. They must bring these offerings, but if they want to, they may bring additional offerings. And they must do everything that they solemnly promised to do when they dedicated themselves to me."

²² Yahweh also said to Moses, ²³ "Tell Aaron and his sons that when they ask me to bless the people, they must say,

²⁴ 'Yahweh bless you
and protect you.

²⁵ May he smile on you
and act kindly toward you.

²⁶ May he be good to you

and cause things to go well for you.”

²⁷ Then Yahweh said, “If Aaron and his sons ask me to bless the Israelite people, truly I will bless them.”

Chapter 7

¹ When Moses had finished setting up the sacred tent, he poured oil on it, and set it apart for the honor of Yahweh. He also dedicated the things that are inside the sacred tent, and the altar for burning sacrifices, and all the things that would be used at the altar. ² Then the leaders of the twelve Israelite tribes, the same men who had helped Aaron and Moses to count the men who could fight in battles, ³ came to the sacred tent, bringing gifts to Yahweh. They brought six sturdy carts and twelve oxen, one ox from each of the leaders and a cart from each of the two leaders.

⁴ Then Yahweh said to Moses, ⁵ “Accept these gifts, in order that the descendants of Levi can use them for carrying the sacred items that are here at the sacred tent.”

⁶ So Moses took the carts and oxen and gave them to the descendants of Levi. ⁷ He gave two carts and four oxen to the descendants of Gershon for their work, ⁸ and he gave four carts and eight oxen to the descendants of Merari for their work. Aaron’s son Ithamar was the supervisor of all their work. ⁹ But he did not give any carts or oxen to the descendants of Kohath, because they took care of the sacred items that were to be carried on their shoulders, not on carts.

¹⁰ On the day that the altar was dedicated, the twelve leaders brought other gifts to be dedicated and put them in front of the altar. ¹¹ Yahweh said to Moses, “On each of the next twelve days one leader should

bring his gifts for the dedication of the altar.”

¹²⁻¹³ On the first day, Nahshon son of Amminadab, from the tribe of Judah brought his gifts:

¹⁴ and a small gold dish that weighed 113 grams and was filled with incense.

¹⁵⁻¹⁷ They also brought the gifts of a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb, to be sacrificed completely by being burned on the altar,

a goat to be sacrificed to remove people’s guilt for their sins,

¹⁸⁻¹⁹ On the second day, Nethanel son of Zuar, the leader of Issachar, brought his gifts:

a silver dish that weighed one and one-half kilograms and a silver bowl that weighed four-fifths of a kilogram. Both of these were full of good flour and mixed with olive oil to be flour offerings. They were both weighed using the standard scales,

a small gold dish that weighed 110 grams, filled with incense.

²⁰⁻²³ Nethanel also brought the gifts of a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb, to be sacrificed completely by being burned on the altar,

a goat to be sacrificed to remove people’s guilt for their sins,

²⁴⁻²⁶ On the third day, Eliab son of Helon, leader of the tribe of Zebulun brought his gifts:

a silver dish that weighed one and one-half kilograms and a silver bowl that weighed four-fifths of a kilogram, both of which were full of good flour and mixed with olive oil to be flour offering. They both were weighed using the standard scales,

a small gold dish that weighed 110 grams, filled with incense.

²⁷⁻²⁹ Eliab also brought a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb, to be sacrificed completely by being burned on the altar,

a goat to be sacrificed to remove people's guilt for their sins,

³⁰⁻³² On the fourth day, Elizur son of Shedeur, leader of the tribe of Reuben brought his gifts:

a silver dish that weighed one and one-half kilograms and a silver bowl that weighed four-fifths of a kilogram, both of which were full of good flour and mixed with olive oil to be flour offerings. They both were weighed using the standard scales,

a small gold dish that weighed 110 grams, filled with incense.

³³⁻³⁵ Elizur also brought a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb, to be sacrificed completely by being burned on the altar,

a goat to be sacrificed to remove people's guilt for their sins,

³⁶⁻³⁸ On the fifth day, Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai, leader of the tribe of Simeon brought his gifts:

a silver dish that weighed one and one-half kilograms and a silver bowl that weighed four-fifths of a kilogram, both of which were full of good flour and mixed with olive oil to be flour offerings; they both were weighed using the standard scales,

a small gold dish that weighed 110 grams, filled with incense.

³⁹⁻⁴¹ Shelumiel also brought a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb, to be sacrificed completely by being burned on the altar,

a goat to be sacrificed to remove people's guilt for their sins,

⁴²⁻⁴⁴ On the sixth day, Eliasaph son of Deuel, leader of the tribe of Gad brought his gifts:

a silver dish that weighed one and one-half kilograms and a silver bowl that weighed four-fifths of a kilogram, both of which were full of good flour and mixed with olive oil to be flour offerings. They both were weighed using the standard scales,

a small gold dish that weighed about 110 grams, filled with incense.

⁴⁵⁻⁴⁷ Eliasaph also brought a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb, to be sacrificed completely by being burned on the altar,

a goat to be sacrificed to remove people's guilt for their sins,

⁴⁸⁻⁵⁰ On the seventh day, Elishama son of Ammihud, leader of the tribe of Ephraim brought his gifts:

a silver dish that weighed one and one-half kilograms and a silver bowl that weighed four-fifths of a kilogram, both of which were full of good flour and mixed with olive oil to be flour offerings. They both were weighed using the standard scales,

a small gold dish that weighed 110 grams, filled with incense.

⁵¹⁻⁵³ Elishama also brought a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb, to be sacrificed completely by being burned on the altar,

a goat to be sacrificed to remove people's guilt for their sins,

⁵⁴⁻⁵⁶ On the eighth day, Gamaliel son of Pedahzur, leader of the tribe of Manasseh brought his gifts:

a silver dish that weighed one and one-half kilograms and a silver bowl that weighed four-fifths of a kilogram, both of which were full of good flour and mixed with olive oil to be flour offerings. They both were weighed using the standard scales,

a small gold dish that weighed 110 grams, filled with incense.

⁵⁷⁻⁵⁹ Gamaliel also brought a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb, to be sacrificed completely by being burned on the altar,

a goat to be sacrificed to remove people's guilt for their sins,

⁶⁰⁻⁶² On the ninth day, Abidan son of Gideoni, leader of the tribe of Benjamin brought his gifts:

a silver dish that weighed one and one-half kilograms and a silver bowl that weighed four-fifths of a kilogram, both of which were full of good flour and mixed with olive oil to be flour offerings. They both were weighed using the standard scales,

a small gold dish that weighed 110 grams, filled with incense.

⁶³⁻⁶⁵ Adiban also brought a young bull, a ram, and a one year-old male lamb, to be sacrificed completely by being burned on the altar,

a goat to be sacrificed to remove people's guilt for their sins,

⁶⁶⁻⁶⁸ On the tenth day, Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai, leader of the tribe of Dan brought his gifts:

a silver dish that weighed one and one-half kilograms and a silver bowl that weighed four-fifths of a kilogram, both of which were full of good flour and mixed with olive oil to be flour offerings. They both were weighed using the standard scales,

a small gold dish that weighed 110 grams, filled with incense.

⁶⁹⁻⁷¹ Ahiezer also brought a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb, to be sacrificed completely by being burned on the altar,

a goat to be sacrificed to remove people's guilt for their sins,

⁷²⁻⁷⁴ On the eleventh day, Pagiel son of Okran, leader of the tribe of Asher brought his gifts:

a silver dish that weighed one and one-half kilograms and a silver bowl that weighed four-fifths of a kilogram, both of which were full of good flour and mixed with olive oil to be flour offerings. They both were weighed using the standard scales,

a small gold dish that weighed 110 grams, filled with incense.

⁷⁵⁻⁷⁷ Pagiel also brought a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb, to be sacrificed completely by being burned on the altar,

a goat to be sacrificed to remove people's guilt for their sins,

⁷⁸⁻⁸⁰ On the twelveth day, Ahira son of Enan, leader of the tribe of Naph-tali brought his gifts:

a silver dish that weighed one and one-half kilograms and a silver bowl that weighed four-fifths of a kilogram, both of which were full of good flour and mixed with olive oil to be flour offerings. They both were weighed using the standard scales,

a small gold dish that weighed 110 grams, filled with incense.

⁸¹⁻⁸³ Ahira also brought a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb, to be sacrificed completely by being burned on the altar,

a goat to be sacrificed to remove people's guilt for their sins,

⁸⁴⁻⁸⁶ When the altar was dedicated to Yahweh, those twelve leaders brought these gifts:

twelve silver plates and twelve silver bowls, weighing a total of twenty-six and one-half kilograms, each of them weighed on the scales kept in the sacred tent,

and twelve gold dishes filled with incense, weighing a total of one and two-fifths kilograms, each weighed on those same scales.

⁸⁷⁻⁸⁸ The twelve leaders also brought twelve bulls, twelve rams, and twelve one-year-old male lambs to be sacrificed completely by being burned along with the flour offerings,

twelve goats to be sacrificed to take away the guilt of the people's sins,

⁸⁹ Whenever Moses entered the sacred tent to talk with Yahweh, he heard Yahweh's voice speaking between the two images of creatures with wings that were above the lid of the sacred chest.

Chapter 8

¹ Yahweh said to Moses, ² "Tell Aaron to put the seven lamps on the lampstand and place them in such a way that they shine toward the front of the lampstand."

³ So Moses told him what Yahweh said, and he did that. ⁴ The lampstand had been made from gold that had been hammered from one large lump of gold, from its base to the decorations at the top that resembled flowers. The lampstand was made exactly as Yahweh had told Moses that it should be made.

⁵ Yahweh also said to Moses, ⁶ "You must cause the descendants of Levi to be accept-

able to me by setting them apart from the other Israelite people. ⁷ Do that by sprinkling them with water which will symbolize their being freed from the guilt of their sins. Then they must shave off all the hair of their bodies and wash their clothes. ⁸ Then they must bring one bull and some flour mixed with olive oil. Those things will be burned as sacrifices. They must also bring another bull that will be sacrificed to take away the guilt of their sins. ⁹ Then you must summon all the Israelite people to come together in front of the sacred tent, to gather around the descendants of Levi. ¹⁰ Then the Israelite people must lay their hands on the descendants of Levi. ¹¹ Aaron must then present them to me to be a gift from the Israelite people, as if he had lifted them up to me, in order that they can work for me at the sacred tent.

¹² After that, the descendants of Levi must place their hands on the heads of the two bulls. Then the bulls will be killed and burned on the altar. One will be an offering to take away the guilt of their sins, and the other will be completely burned to please me. ¹³ The descendants of Levi must stand at the altar in front of Aaron and his sons, and you must then dedicate them to me, as if you had lifted them up to me. ¹⁴ This ritual will show that the descendants of Levi are set apart from the other Israelites and that they belong to me.

¹⁵ After the descendants of Levi have been made acceptable to me, and presented to me like a special offering as if they had been lifted up to me, they may start to work at the sacred tent. ¹⁶ They will belong to me. They will work for me as substitutes for the firstborn males of all the Israelites, who also belong to me. ¹⁷ All the firstborn males in Israel, both the people and the animals, are mine. When I

caused all the firstborn sons of the people of Egypt to die, I set them apart for myself. But I spared the firstborn of all males of the Israelites, of people and animals, because they are mine. ¹⁸ But now I have chosen the descendants of Levi to take the places of the firstborn male sons of the other Israelites. ¹⁹ I have appointed the descendants of Levi to help Aaron and his sons at the sacred tent, as Aaron and his sons offer the sacrifices to take away the guilt of the Israelite people's sins, and to prevent the Israelites from coming close to the tent with the result that a plague would cause many of them to become sick and die."

²⁰ Aaron and Moses and the other Israelites helped the descendants of Levi to do everything that Yahweh had commanded. ²¹ The descendants of Levi sprinkled themselves with water to symbolize that they had been freed from the guilt of their sins, and they washed their clothes. Then Aaron brought them to the altar to present them to Yahweh, just as if he had lifted them up to him, and he offered sacrifices to take away the guilt of their sins and cause them to become acceptable to Yahweh. ²² After that, the descendants of Levi started to work at the sacred tent to assist Aaron and his sons. They did that just as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

²³ Yahweh also said this to Moses: ²⁴ "The descendants of Levi who are between twenty-five years and fifty years old will work at the sacred tent. ²⁵ But after they become fifty years old, they must retire. ²⁶ They may help their fellow descendants of Levi do their work at the sacred tent, but they must not do the work themselves. That is what you must tell them about the work they will do."

Chapter 9

¹ One year after the Israelites left Egypt, on the first month of the second year, while they were in the wilderness of Sinai, Yahweh said to Moses, ² "Tell the Israelite people that they must celebrate the Passover festival again. ³ They must do it on the fourteenth day of this month, early in the evening, and they must obey all the instructions about it that I gave you previously."

⁴ So Moses told the people what Yahweh had said about celebrating the Passover.

⁵ The people celebrated it there in the wilderness of Sinai, in the evening of the fourteenth day of the month, just as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

⁶ But some of the Israelite people had touched a corpse, and as a result they had become unfit to celebrate the Passover. So they asked Aaron and Moses, ⁷ "It is true that we have touched a corpse. But why should that prevent us from celebrating the Passover festival and offering sacrifices to Yahweh like everyone else?"

⁸ Moses replied, "Wait here until I go into the sacred tent and find out what Yahweh says about it."

⁹ So Moses went into the tent and asked Yahweh what he should tell the people, and this is what Yahweh said: ¹⁰ "Tell this to the Israelite people: 'If any of you or your descendants touch a corpse and as a result become unacceptable to me, or if you are away from home on a long trip at the time to celebrate the Passover, you will still be permitted to celebrate it. ¹¹ But you must celebrate it exactly one month later, early in the evening of the fourteenth day of that month. Eat the meat of the lamb for the Passover festival with bread that is baked without yeast, and eat bitter herbs. ¹² Do not leave

any of it until the next morning. And do not break any of the lamb's bones. Obey all the regulations about celebrating the Passover. ¹³ But if any of you has not done anything that would make you unfit to celebrate the Passover festival, and you are not away from home on a long trip, and you do not sacrifice to me at the proper time, you will no longer belong to my people. You will be punished.

¹⁴ Settled foreigners who live among you must also celebrate the Passover festival and obey all my commands concerning it.”

¹⁵⁻¹⁶ On the day that the sacred tent was set up, a cloud covered it. But from the time that the sun set until the time that the sun rose the next day, the cloud resembled a huge fire. And that is what happened every day that the Israelites were in the wilderness. ¹⁷ When the cloud rose up and started to move to a new location, the Israelites followed it. When the cloud stopped, the Israelites stopped there and set up their tents. ¹⁸ The Israelites moved when Yahweh told them to move and stopped when Yahweh told them to stop by causing the cloud to move or stop. When the cloud stayed over the sacred tent, the Israelites stayed at that place. ¹⁹ Sometimes the cloud stayed over the sacred tent for a long time, so when that happened, the Israelites did not move. ²⁰ Sometimes the cloud remained over the sacred tent for only a few days. The people stopped and set up their tents as Yahweh commanded them, and they moved to a new location when Yahweh commanded them to do that. ²¹ Sometimes the cloud stayed in one place for only one day. When that happened, when the cloud rose up into the sky the next morning, then the people moved. Whenever the cloud moved, during the day or during the night, the people moved. ²² If

the cloud stayed over the sacred tent for two days, or for a month, or for a year, during that time the people stayed where they were. But when the cloud rose up into the sky, they started to move. ²³ When Yahweh commanded them to stop and set up their tents, they did that. When he told them to move, they moved. They did whatever Yahweh told Moses they should do.

Chapter 10

¹ Yahweh also told Moses, ² ”Tell someone to make two trumpets by hammering each one from one lump of silver. Blow the trumpets to summon the people to come together and also to signal that they must move their tents to a new location. ³ If both trumpets are blown, it means that everyone must gather together at the entrance of the sacred tent. ⁴ If only one trumpet is blown, it means that only the twelve leaders of the tribes must gather together. ⁵ If the trumpets are blown loudly, the tribes that are to the east of the sacred tent should start to move. ⁶ When the trumpets are blown loudly the second time, the tribes that are to the south should start to move. The loud blasts on the trumpet will signal that they should start to move. ⁷ When you want only to gather the people together, blow the trumpets, but do not blow them as loudly.

⁸ The priests who are descended from Aaron are the ones who should blow the trumpets. That is a regulation that will never be changed. ⁹ When you fight against enemies who attack you in your own land, tell the priests to blow the trumpets loudly. I, Yahweh, your God, will hear that, and I will rescue you from your enemies. ¹⁰ Also tell the priests to blow the trumpets when the people are happy, and at the festivals each year, and at the

times when they celebrate the new moon each month. Tell them to blow the trumpets when the people bring offerings that will be completely burned, and when they bring offerings to restore fellowship with me. If they do that, it will help you to think about me. You must do that, because I am Yahweh your God.”

¹¹ In the second year after the Israelites left Egypt, on the twentieth day of the second month, the cloud rose up from above the sacred tent. ¹² So the Israelites moved from the wilderness of Sinai, and they continued traveling north until the cloud stopped in the wilderness of Paran. ¹³ That was the first time they moved, obeying the instructions that Yahweh had given to Moses to tell them.

¹⁴ The group that went first, carrying their flag, was the group from the tribe of Judah. Nahshon son of Amminadab, was their leader. ¹⁵ The group from the tribe of Issachar followed them. Nethanel son of Zuar, was their leader. ¹⁶ The group from the tribe of Zebulun went next. Eliab son of Helon, was their leader. ¹⁷ Then they dismantled the sacred tent, and the descendants of Gershon and Merari carried it, and they went next.

¹⁸ The group from the tribe of Reuben went next, carrying their flag. Elizur son of Shedeur was their leader. ¹⁹ The group from the tribe of Simeon was next. Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai was their leader. ²⁰ The group from the tribe of Gad was next. Eliasaph son of Deuel was their leader. ²¹ The group descended from Kohath was next. They carried the sacred items from the sacred tent. The sacred tent was set up at the new location before they arrived there.

²² The group from the tribe of Ephraim was next, carrying their flag. Elishama son of Ammihud, was their leader. ²³ The group from the tribe of Manasseh went

next. Gamaliel son of Pedahzur, was their leader. ²⁴ The group from the tribe of Benjamin was next. Abidan son of Gideoni, was their leader.

²⁵ The ones who went last were the groups from the tribe of Dan, carrying their flag. Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai, was their leader. ²⁶ The group from the tribe of Asher went next. Pagiel son of Ocran, was their leader. ²⁷ The group from the tribe of Naphtali went last. Ahira son of Enan, was their leader. ²⁸ That was the order in which the groups of Israelite tribes traveled.

²⁹ One day Moses said to his brother-in-law Hobab son of Reuel from the Midian people group, “We are on the way to the place that Yahweh promised to give to us. Come with us, and we will take good care of you, because Yahweh has promised to do good things for us Israelite people.”

³⁰ But Hobab replied, “No, I will not go with you. I want to return to my own land and to my own family.”

³¹ But Moses said, “Please do not leave us. You know the places where we can set up our tents in this desert, and you can guide us. ³² Come with us. We will share with you all the good things that Yahweh gives to us.”

³³ So Hobab agreed to go with them. The Israelites left Mount Sinai, which they called the Mountain of Yahweh, and they walked for three days. The men carrying the sacred chest went in front of the other people for those three days, and they kept looking for a place to set up their tents. ³⁴ The cloud sent by Yahweh was over them every day.

³⁵ Each morning when the men who were carrying the sacred chest started to walk, Moses said,

”Yahweh, arise!

Scatter your enemies!

Cause those who hate you to run away from you!"

³⁶ And each time the men stopped to set down the sacred chest, Moses said,

"Yahweh, stay close to the multiplied thousands of us Israelites!"

Chapter 11

¹ One day the people complained to Yahweh about their troubles. When Yahweh heard what they were saying, he became angry. So he sent a fire which burned among the people at the edge of their camp. ² Then the people cried out to Moses, and he prayed to Yahweh. Then the fire stopped burning. ³ So they called that place Taberah, which means 'Burning,' because the fire from Yahweh had burned among them.

⁴ Then some troublemakers from other people groups who were traveling with the Israelites began to want better food. And when they started complaining the Israelite people also started to complain. They said, "We wish we had some meat to eat!" ⁵ We remember the fish that we ate while we were in Egypt, fish that was given to us without cost. And we had all the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic we could eat. ⁶ But now we have lost our appetite, because all we have to eat is this manna!"

⁷ The manna resembled small white seeds.

⁸ Each morning the people would go out and gather some from the surface of the ground. Then they made flour by grinding it or pounding it with stones. Then they added water and boiled it in a pot, or they made flat cakes with it and baked them. The cakes tasted like bread that was baked with olive oil. ⁹ Each night the

manna came down on the ground where their tents were, like dew from the sky.

¹⁰ Moses heard all the Israelite people complaining as they were standing in the entrances of their tents. Yahweh became very angry, and Moses was also very perturbed. ¹¹ He went into the sacred tent and asked Yahweh, "Why have you brought this trouble on me, your servant? Act mercifully to me! What wrong have I done, with the result that you have appointed me to take care of all of these people?" ¹² I am not their father. Why have you told me to take care of them like a woman carries around her baby and nurses it? How can I take them to the land that you promised to give to our ancestors?" ¹³ Where can I get meat to feed to all these people? They keep complaining to me, saying, 'Give us some meat to eat!' ¹⁴ I cannot carry all these people's burdens by myself! They are like a heavy load to me, and I cannot carry this very heavy load anymore. ¹⁵ If you intend to act like this toward me, kill me now. If you are really concerned about me, be kind to me and kill me to end my misery of trying to take care of them!"

¹⁶ Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Summon seventy men whom you know are leaders among the Israelite people. Tell them to stand with you in front of the sacred tent. ¹⁷ I will come down and talk with you there. Then I will take some of the power of my Spirit that you have, and I will put that power on them also. They will help you to take care of some of the things that the people are concerned about, in order that you will not need to do it alone.

¹⁸ Furthermore, say to the people, 'Make yourselves acceptable to me, and tomorrow you will have meat to eat. You were complaining, and Yahweh heard you when you were saying, "We want some meat to eat. We had better food in Egypt!"

Now Yahweh will give you some meat, and you will eat it. ¹⁹ You will eat meat not only for one or two days, or only for five or ten or twenty days. ²⁰ You will eat meat every day for one month, and then you will loathe it, and it will cause you to want to vomit. This will happen because you have rejected Yahweh who is here among you, and you have wailed in his presence, saying "We would have had better food to eat if we had not left Egypt."'''

²¹ But Moses replied to Yahweh, "There are six hundred thousand men plus women and children here with me, so why do you say 'I will give them plenty of meat every day for a month!'" ²² Even if we killed all the sheep and cattle, that would not be enough to provide meat for all of them! Even if we caught all the fish in the sea and gave it to them, that would not be enough!" ²³ But Yahweh said to Moses, "Do you think that I have no power? You will now see if I can do what I say I will do."

²⁴ So Moses went out from the sacred tent and told the people what Yahweh had said. Then he gathered together the seventy leaders and told them to stand around the sacred tent.

²⁵ Then Yahweh came down in the cloud that was above the tent and spoke to Moses. He took some of the power of the Spirit that he had given to Moses and gave it to the seventy leaders. By means of the power of the Spirit within them, they prophesied, but they did that only once.

²⁶ Two of the leaders whom Moses appointed, Eldad and Medad, were not there when the rest of them gathered together. They had not left their tents to go and stand around the sacred tent. But Yahweh's Spirit came on them also, and they started to prophesy. ²⁷ So a young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying where all their tents are!"

²⁸ Joshua, who had helped Moses since he was a young man, said, "Sir, tell them to stop doing that!"

²⁹ But Moses replied, "Are you worried that they might injure my reputation? I wish that all Yahweh's people could prophesy. I wish that Yahweh would give the power of his Spirit to all of them!" ³⁰ Then Moses and all the leaders went back to their tents.

³¹ Then Yahweh sent a strong wind from the sea. It blew quail into the area all around the camp, and caused the quail to fall onto the ground. They were piled up on the ground a meter high! ³² So the people went out and gathered up the quail all that day, and all that night, and all of the following day. It seemed as though each person gathered two cubic meters! They spread the quail out on the ground all around the camp, so that the quail would lose their moisture. ³³ Then they cooked them and started to eat them. But while they were still eating the meat, Yahweh showed that he was very angry with them. He sent a severe plague on them, and many people died. ³⁴ The people who died and were buried were the ones who had said they wanted to eat meat like they had formerly eaten in Egypt. So they called that place Kibroth Hattaavah, which means 'graves of those who craved.'

³⁵ From there, the Israelites continued walking east until they arrived at Hazeroth, where they stopped and stayed for a long time.

Chapter 12

¹⁻² Moses' older sister Miriam and his older brother Aaron were jealous of Moses and said, "Is Moses the only one to whom Yahweh has spoken messages to

tell to us? Does Yahweh not speak messages through us two also?" They also criticized Moses because he had married a woman who was a descendant of the Cush people group. And Yahweh heard Miriam and Aaron complaining about Moses.

³ The truth was that Moses was a very humble person. He was more humble than anyone else on the earth.

⁴ So immediately Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron and Miriam. He said, "All three of you must go and stand at the sacred tent." So they did that. ⁵ Then Yahweh descended to the entrance of the tent in a cloud that resembled a huge white pillar. He told Aaron and Miriam to step forward, so they did. ⁶ Then he said to them,

"Listen to me!

When a prophet is among you,

I usually reveal myself to him by allowing him to see visions,

and I speak to him in dreams.

⁷ But that is not the way I speak to my servant Moses.

I trust that he will lead my people well.

⁸ So I talk to him face to face.

I speak to him clearly, not using parables.

He has even seen what I look like.

So you should be afraid to criticize my servant Moses!"

⁹ Yahweh was very angry with Miriam and Aaron, and he left.

¹⁰ When the cloud rose up from the sacred tent, Aaron looked at Miriam, and he saw that her skin was as white as snow, because she now had leprosy. ¹¹ Aaron said to Moses, "My master, please do not punish us for this sin that we have foolishly committed. ¹² Do not allow Miriam

to be like a baby that is already dead when it is born, whose flesh is already half decayed!"

¹³ So Moses cried out to Yahweh, saying, "God, I plead with you to heal her!"

¹⁴ But Yahweh replied, "If her father had rebuked her for doing something wrong by spitting in her face, she would have been ashamed for seven days. She should be ashamed because of what she has done. So send her outside the camp for seven days. Then she will not have leprosy anymore, and she may return to the camp."

¹⁵ So they sent her outside the camp for seven days. The people did not move to another location until she returned.

¹⁶ But after she returned, they left Hazeroth and moved north in the Paran Desert and set up their tents there.

Chapter 13

¹ Yahweh said to Moses, ² "Send some men to Canaan to explore it. That is the land that I will give to you Israelites. Send men who are leaders in their tribes."

³ So Moses did what Yahweh commanded him. He sent out twelve Israelite men who were all leaders of their tribes. He sent them from their camp at Paran in the desert. ⁴ These are the names of the men and the tribes they belonged to:

Shammua son of Zaccur, from the tribe of Reuben;

⁵ Shaphat son of Hori, from the tribe of Simeon;

⁶ Caleb son of Jephunneh, from the tribe of Judah;

⁷ Igal son of Joseph, from the tribe of Issachar;

⁸ Hoshea the son of Nun, from the tribe of Ephraim;

⁹ Palti son of Raphu, from the tribe of Benjamin;

¹⁰ Gaddiel son of Sodi, from the tribe of Zebulun;

¹¹ Gaddi son of Susi, from the tribe of Joseph's descendent Manasseh;

¹² Ammiel the son of Gemalli, from the tribe of Dan;

¹³ Sethur son of Michael, from the tribe of Asher;

¹⁴ Nahbi son of Vophsi, from the tribe of Naphtali;

¹⁵ and Geuel son of Maki, from the tribe of Gad.

¹⁶ Those are the names of the men whom Moses sent out to explore Canaan. Before they left, Moses gave Hoshea a new name, Joshua, which means 'Yahweh is the one who saves.'

¹⁷ Before Moses sent them to explore Canaan, he said to them, "Go through the southern Judean wilderness, and then go north into the hill country. ¹⁸ See what the land is like. See if the people who live there are strong or weak. See if there are many people or only a few people. ¹⁹ Find out what kind of land they live in. Is it good or bad? Find out about the towns in which they live. Do they have walls around them or not? ²⁰ Find out about the soil. Is it fertile or not? Find out if there are trees there. Try to bring back some of the fruit that grows in that land." He said that because it was the beginning of the time to harvest grapes.

²¹ So those men went to Canaan. They went through the entire land, from the wilderness of Zin in the south all the way to the city of Rehob near Lebo Hamath in the north. ²² In the southern Judean wilderness, they went to Hebron, where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, huge men descended from Anak, lived. Hebron was

a city that was built seven years before the city of Zoan was built in Egypt. ²³ In one valley, they cut from a grapevine one cluster of grapes. Because it was very large, they needed two men to carry it on a pole. They also picked some pomegranates and some figs to carry back to their camp. ²⁴ They called that place Eshcol which means 'cluster' because they had cut that huge cluster of grapes there. ²⁵ After they explored the land for forty days, they returned to their camp.

²⁶ They came to Aaron and Moses and the rest of the Israelite people in the wilderness at Paran. They reported to everyone what they had seen. They also showed them the fruit that they had brought back.

²⁷ But this is what they reported to Moses: "We arrived in the land that you sent us to explore. It is truly a beautiful land. It is a very fertile land. Here is some of the fruit. ²⁸ But the people who live there are very strong. Their cities are large and are surrounded by walls. We even saw some of the huge descendants of Anak there. ²⁹ The descendants of Amalek live in the southern part of the land, and the descendants of Heth, Jebus, and Amor live in the hill country to the north. The descendants of Canaan live along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and along the Jordan River."

³⁰ Caleb told the people who were standing near Moses to be quiet. Then he said, "We should go there and take the land, because we are certainly able to conquer it!"

³¹ But the men who had gone with him said, "No, we cannot attack and defeat those people. They are much stronger than we are!" ³² So those men gave

to the Israelite people a bad report about the land that they had explored. They said, "The land that we explored destroys the life those who try to attack it. And all the people living there are very tall.

³³ We also saw giants there. They are the descendants of Anak (who come from the Nephilim, those giant people). When we saw these giants we felt as small as grasshoppers and they thought that we looked like grasshoppers too.”

Chapter 14

¹ That night, all the Israelite people cried loudly. ² The next day they all complained against Aaron and Moses. All the men said, “We wish that we had died in Egypt, or in this wilderness! ³ Why is Yahweh bringing us to this land, where we men will be killed with swords? And they will take away our wives and children to be their slaves. Instead of going to Canaan, it would be better for us to return to Egypt!”

⁴ Then some of them said to each other, “We should choose a leader who will take us back to Egypt!”

⁵ Then Aaron and Moses bowed down to pray in front of all the Israelite people who had gathered there. ⁶ Joshua and Caleb, two of the men who had explored the land, tore their clothes because they were very dismayed. ⁷ They said to the Israelite people, “The land that we explored is very good. ⁸ If Yahweh is pleased with us, he will lead us into that very fertile land, and he will give it to us. ⁹ So do not rebel against Yahweh! And do not be afraid of the people in that land! We will gobble them up! They do not have anyone who will protect them, but Yahweh will be with us and help us. So do not be afraid of them!”

¹⁰ Then all the Israelite people talked about killing Caleb and Joshua by throwing stones at them. But suddenly Yahweh’s glory appeared to them at the sacred tent. ¹¹ Then Yahweh said to Moses, “How long will these people reject me? I

am tired of them not believing in what I can do, in spite of all the miracles I have performed among them. ¹² So I will send a plague among them and get rid of them. But I will cause your descendants to become a great nation. They will be a nation that is much greater and stronger than these people are.”

¹³ But Moses replied to Yahweh, “Please do not do that, because the people of Egypt will hear about it! You brought these Israelite people from Egypt by your great power, ¹⁴ and the people of Egypt will tell that to the descendants of Canaan who live in this land. Yahweh, they have already heard about you. They know that you have been with these people and that they have seen you face to face. They have heard that your cloud is like a huge pillar that stays over them, and by that cloud you lead them during the day, and that the cloud becomes like a fire at night to give them light. ¹⁵ If you kill these people all at one time, the people groups who have heard about your power will say, ¹⁶ ‘Yahweh was not able to bring them into the land that he promised to give to them, so he killed them in the wilderness.’

¹⁷ So Yahweh, now show that you are very powerful. You said, ¹⁸ ‘I do not quickly become angry. Instead, I love people greatly, and I forgive people for having sinned and having disobeyed my laws. But I will always punish people who are guilty of doing what is wrong. When parents sin, I will punish them, but I will also punish their children and their grandchildren and their great-grandchildren and their great-great-grandchildren.’ ¹⁹ So, because you love your people with a great covenant loyalty, forgive these people for the sins that they have committed, just like you have continued to forgive them ever since they left Egypt.”

²⁰ Then Yahweh replied, “I have forgiven

them, as you requested me to. ²¹ But, just as certainly as I live and that people all over the world can see my glory, I solemnly declare that ²² all these people saw my glory and all the miracles that I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, but they disobeyed me, and many times they tested whether they could continue to do evil things without my punishing them. ²³ Because of that, not one of them will see the land that I promised their ancestors that I would give to them. No one who rejected me will see that land. ²⁴ But Caleb, who serves me well, is different from the others. He obeys me completely. So I will bring him into that land that he has already seen, and his descendants will inherit some of it. ²⁵ So, since the descendants of Amalek and Canaan who are living in the valleys in Canaan are very strong, when you leave here tomorrow, instead of traveling toward Canaan, go back along the road through the wilderness toward the Sea of Reeds."

²⁶ Then Yahweh said to Aaron and Moses, ²⁷ "How long will the wicked people of this nation keep complaining about me? I have heard everything that they have grumbled against me. ²⁸ So now tell them this: 'Just as certainly as I, Yahweh, live, I will do exactly what you said would happen. ²⁹ I will cause all of you to die here in this wilderness! Because you grumbled against me, none of you who are more than twenty years old and who were counted when Moses counted everyone ³⁰ will enter the land that I solemnly promised to give to you. Only Caleb and Joshua will enter that land. ³¹ You said that your children would be taken from you to become slaves, but I will take them into the land, and they will enjoy living in the land that you rejected. ³² But as for you adults, you will die here in this wilderness. ³³ Your children will wander around in this wilderness as shepherds for forty

years. Because you adults were not loyal to me, your children will suffer until you all die in the wilderness. ³⁴ You will suffer for your sins for forty years. That will be one year for each of the forty days that the twelve men explored Canaan land. And I will be like an enemy to you. ³⁵ This will certainly happen because I, Yahweh, have said it! I will do these things to every one in this group that has plotted against me. They will all die right here in this wilderness!"

³⁶⁻³⁷ Then Yahweh attacked the ten men who had discouraged the people, so that they died. These were the men who had explored Canaan and then told the people that they would not be able to take over the land. It was because of the men that the people spoke against Moses. ³⁸ Of the twelve men who had explored Canaan, only Joshua and Caleb remained alive.

³⁹ When Moses reported to the Israelite people what Yahweh had said, many of them were very sad. ⁴⁰ So the people got up early the next morning and started to go toward the hill country in Canaan. They said, "We know that we have sinned, but now we are ready to enter the land that Yahweh promised to give to us."

⁴¹ But Moses said, "Yahweh commanded you to return to the desert, so why are you now disobeying him? It will not succeed. ⁴² Do not try to enter the land now! If you try, your enemies will defeat you, because Yahweh will not be with you. ⁴³ When you begin to fight the descendants of Amalek and Canaan, they will slaughter you! Yahweh will abandon you, because you have abandoned him."

⁴⁴ But even though Moses did not leave the camp, and the sacred chest that contained the Ten Commandments was not taken from the camp, the people began to go toward the hill country in Canaan. ⁴⁵ Then the descendants of Amalek and Canaan

who lived in those hills came down and attacked them; they chased them as far south as Hormah.

Chapter 15

¹ Then Yahweh told Moses, ² "Tell this to the Israelite people, 'When you arrive in the land that I am giving to you, ³ you must offer to me special sacrifices which will be pleasing to me when the priest burns them on the altar. Some of them may be offerings that will be completely burned on the altar. Some of them may be to indicate that you have made a solemn promise to me. Some of them may be offerings that you yourselves have decided to make. Some of them may be offerings at one of the festivals that you celebrate each year. These offerings may be taken from your herds of cattle or from your flocks of sheep and goats. ⁴ When you give these offerings, you must also bring to me a flour offering of about two liters of nice flour mixed with about a liter of olive oil. ⁵ When you offer a young ram or goat for the sacrifice that will be completely burned up, or when you offer as a sacrifice of every young lamb, you should prepare a liter of wine to be used as a drink offering.

⁶ When you offer a ram to be a sacrifice, you must also bring an offering of about three and four-fifths liters of finely ground flour mixed with about one and one-quarter liters of olive oil. ⁷ And also pour on the altar about one and one-fifth liters of wine. While they are being burned, the smell of it will be very pleasing to me.

⁸ Sometimes you will offer a young bull to be completely burned on the altar. Sometimes you will offer a sacrifice to indicate that you have made a solemn promise to

me. Sometimes you will offer a sacrifice to restore fellowship with me. ⁹ When you offer these sacrifices, you must also offer a flour offering of about six and one-half liters of finely ground flour mixed with about two liters of olive oil. ¹⁰ Also pour on the altar two quarts of wine to be an offering. While those special gifts are being burned, the smell from it will be very pleasing to me. ¹¹ Each time someone offers a bull or a ram or a male lamb or young goat to be a sacrifice, it must be done that way. ¹² You must obey these instructions for each animal that you bring to me for an offering.

¹³ All of you people who have been Israelites all of your lives must obey these regulations when you offer sacrifices that will be pleasing to me when they are burned on the altar. ¹⁴ If any foreigners visit you or live among you, if they also want to bring a sacrifice that will be pleasing to me when it is burned on the altar, they must obey these same instructions. ¹⁵ I consider that those who have always been Israelites and those who are foreigners are equal, and so they must all obey the same instructions. All of your descendants must also continue to obey these instructions of mine. ¹⁶ You Israelites and the foreigners who live among you must all obey the same instructions."

¹⁷ Yahweh also said to Moses, ¹⁸ "Tell these instructions to the Israelite people, 'When you arrive in the land to which I am taking you, ¹⁹ and you eat the crops that are growing there, you must set some of them aside to be a sacred offering to me, and present them to me. ²⁰ Each year set aside some of the first grain that you gather after you have threshed it. Bake a loaf of bread from the first flour that you grind and present it before me as a sacred offering. ²¹ Every year, you and your descendants must continue to make and present

to me a loaf of bread baked with flour from the first part of the grain that you harvest.

²² There may be times when you Israelites do not obey all these instructions that I have given to Moses to tell you, but not because you intended to disobey them. ²³ There may be times when some of your descendants do not obey all these instructions that I have given to Moses to tell to you. ²⁴ If you or they sin by forgetting to obey these instructions and none of the Israelite people realize that they were doing that, one young bull as an offering for all the people must be brought to the priest. That will be pleasing to me when it is burned on the altar. They must also bring to me a flour offering and an offering of wine, and a male goat, to be sacrificed to remove the guilt of their sin. ²⁵ By offering these sacrifices, the priest will make atonement for all of you Israelite people. Then, as a result of their bringing to me an offering to be burned on the altar, you will be forgiven, because you sinned without realizing that you were sinning. ²⁶ You Israelite people, and the foreigners who are living among you, will all be forgiven.

²⁷ If one person commits a sin without realizing that he was sinning, that person must bring to me a female goat to be an offering to take away that person's guilt for that sin. ²⁸ The priest will offer it to be a sacrifice to remove the guilt of that person's sin, and that person will be forgiven. ²⁹ You Israelites and all the foreigners who live among you must obey these same instructions.

³⁰ But those who disobey my commands deliberately, both Israelites and the foreigners who live among you, have sinned against me by doing that. So they must be expelled from your camp. ³¹ They have despised my commands and deliberately

disobeyed them, so they must be punished for their sin by never being allowed to live among you again."

³² One day, while the Israelites were in the wilderness, some of them saw a man who was gathering firewood on the Sabbath day. ³³ Those who saw him doing that brought him to Aaron and Moses and the rest of the Israelite people. ³⁴ They guarded him carefully, because they did not know what to do to punish him. ³⁵ Then Yahweh said to Moses, "The man must be executed. All of you must kill him by throwing stones at him outside the camp." ³⁶ So they all took the man outside the camp and killed him by throwing stones at him, as Yahweh had commanded Moses that they should do.

³⁷ Yahweh also said to Moses, ³⁸ "Tell this to the Israelite people: 'You and all your descendants must twist threads together to make tassels, and then attach them with blue cords to the bottom edges of your clothes. ³⁹ When you look at the tassels, you will remember all the instructions that I gave to you, and you will obey them. In that way, you will not be unfaithful to me. You will not be like an unfaithful prostitute who does the shameful things that she looks at and desires to do. ⁴⁰ Seeing those tassels will help you to remember that you must obey all my commands and that you must be my holy people. ⁴¹ Do not forget that I am Yahweh, your God. I am the one who brought you out of Egypt in order that you might belong to me. I am Yahweh, your God.'"

Chapter 16

¹ One day Korah son of Izhar and a descendant of Levi's son Kohath, conspired with Dathan and Abiram, who were the sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth. They

were all from the tribe of Reuben. ² Those four men incited 250 other people who were leaders among the Israelite people to join them in rebelling against Moses. ³ They came together to criticize Aaron and Moses. They said to them, "You two are using more authority than you should! Yahweh has set apart all of us Israelite people, and he is with all of us. So why do you act as though you were more important than the rest of us people who belong to Yahweh?"

⁴ When Moses heard what they were saying, he prostrated himself on the ground. ⁵ Then he said to Korah and those who were with Korah, "Tomorrow morning Yahweh will show to us whom he has chosen to be his priest, and who is holy and allowed to come near to him. Yahweh will permit only those whom he chooses to come into his presence. ⁶ So Korah, tomorrow you and those who are with you must prepare your pans to burn incense. ⁷ Then you must light a fire in them and burn the incense in the presence of Yahweh. Then we will see which one of us Yahweh has chosen to be his holy servant. It is you men who are descendants of Levi who are trying to use more authority than you should!"

⁸ Then Moses spoke again to Korah. He said, "You men who are descendants of Levi, listen to me! ⁹ You know that Yahweh, the God of Israel has chosen you Levites from the community of Israel so you can work for him at his sacred tent and serve the people. Does that seem to you like a small thing for you to do? ¹⁰ Yahweh has brought you, Korah, and your fellow descendants of Levi, near to himself. Now are you demanding to become priests also? ¹¹ It is really Yahweh against whom you and your fellow descendants of Levi are rebelling. Aaron is not the one about whom you are really complaining."

¹² Then Moses summoned Dathan and Abiram, but they refused to come. They sent a message saying, "We will not come to you!"

¹³ You brought us out of Egypt, which was a very fertile land, in order to cause us to die here in this desert. That was bad. But now you are also trying to boss us, and that is worse. ¹⁴ You have not given us a new land to live in, a land that has good fields and vineyards. You are only trying to blind these people. So we will not come to you."

¹⁵ Then Moses became very angry. He said to Yahweh, "Do not accept the grain offerings that they have brought. I have not taken anything from them, not even one donkey, and I have never done anything wrong to them, so they have no reason to complain against me."

¹⁶ Then Moses said to Korah, "You and all those who are with you must come here tomorrow and stand in front of Yahweh. Aaron will also be here. ¹⁷ You and all the 250 men who are with you must each take a pan in which to burn incense, and put incense in it, to burn it to be an offering to Yahweh. Aaron will do the same thing."

¹⁸ So each of those men got a pan to burn incense. They put in it incense and hot coals to light it, and then they all stood at the entrance of the sacred tent with Aaron and Moses. ¹⁹ Then Korah summoned all the people who supported him and who were against Moses, and they also gathered at the entrance of the tent. Then the glory of Yahweh appeared to all of them. ²⁰ Yahweh said to Aaron and Moses, ²¹ "Get away from all these people, in order that I can get rid of them immediately!"

²² But Aaron and Moses prostrated themselves on the ground. They pleaded with Yahweh, saying, "God, you are the one who caused all these people to live. Only one of these men has sinned. So, is it right for you to be angry with all the people?"

²³ Yahweh said to Moses, ²⁴ “Okay, but tell all the people to get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.”

²⁵ So Moses stood up and went to the tents of Dathan and Abiram. The Israelite leaders followed him. ²⁶ He told the people, “Get away from the tents of these wicked men, and do not touch anything that belongs to them! If you touch anything, you will die because of their sins!” ²⁷ So all the people moved away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Dathan and Abiram came out of their tents with their wives and children and babies, and stood at the entrance of their tents.

²⁸ Then Moses said, “I was not the one who decided to do all these things that I have done. It was Yahweh who chose me and sent me to do them. And now he will prove that to you. ²⁹ If these men die in a normal way, then it will be clear that Yahweh did not choose me. ³⁰ But if Yahweh does something that has never happened before, if he causes the ground that is under their feet to open up and swallow these men and their families and all their possessions, and they fall into the opening and are buried while they are still alive, then you will know that these men have insulted Yahweh.”

³¹ As soon as Moses said this, the ground split open beneath those men. ³² It swallowed those men and their families and all those who were standing there with Korah and all of their possessions. ³³ They fell into the opening in the ground while they were still alive, and all their possessions fell into the opening also. They disappeared, and the ground closed back up again. ³⁴ They screamed as they fell, and all the people who were standing nearby heard them scream. The people were terrified and cried out as they ran away, saying, “We do not want the ground to swallow us, also!”

³⁵ And then a fire from Yahweh came down from the sky and burned up the 250 men who were burning the incense!

³⁶ Then Yahweh said to Moses, ³⁷ “Tell Aaron’s son Eleazar to take the pans that had incense in them away from the fire and to scatter the burning coals. The pans that those men were carrying are holy because they burned incense to me in them. ³⁸ Those men have now died because of their sin. So Eleazar must take their pans and hammer the metal to make it become very thin. He must make a covering for the altar with that metal. Those pans were used to offer incense to me, so they are holy. What happened to those pans will now warn the Israelite people.”

³⁹⁻⁴⁰ So Eleazar the priest collected the 250 pans for burning incense that had been used by the men who died in the fire. He hammered the pans very thin to make a covering for the altar, as Yahweh told Moses should be done. That warned the Israelites that only those who were descendants of Aaron were permitted to burn incense as an offering to Yahweh. If anyone else did that, the same thing would happen to him as happened to Korah and those with him.

⁴¹ But the following morning, all the Israelite people started to complain against Aaron and Moses saying “You have killed many people who belonged to Yahweh!”

⁴² When all the people gathered together to protest about what Aaron and Moses had done, they looked at the sacred tent and saw that the sacred cloud had covered it, and the glory of Yahweh had appeared.

⁴³ Aaron and Moses went and stood in front of the sacred tent. ⁴⁴ Then Yahweh said to Moses, ⁴⁵ “Get away from these people, in order that I can get rid of them immediately without injuring you two!” But Aaron and Moses prostrated themselves on the ground and prayed.

⁴⁶ Moses said to Aaron, "Quickly take another pan and put in it some burning coals from the altar. Put incense in the pan, and carry it out among the people to atone for the sins of the people. Yahweh is very angry with them, and I know that a severe plague has already started among them."

⁴⁷ So Aaron did what Moses told him. He took the burning incense out among the people. The plague had already started to strike the people, but Aaron continued to burn the incense to make atonement for the sins of the people. ⁴⁸ He stood between the people who had already died and those who were still alive, and then the plague stopped. ⁴⁹ But 14,700 people had already died from that plague, in addition to the people who died with Korah. ⁵⁰ Then after the plague had ended, Aaron and Moses returned to the entrance of the sacred tent.

Chapter 17

¹ Then Yahweh said to Moses, ² "Tell the Israelite people to bring to you twelve walking sticks. They should bring one from each of the leaders of the twelve tribes. You should carve each leader's name on his stick. ³ There must be one stick for the leader of each tribe, so you must carve Aaron's name on the stick for the tribe of Levi. ⁴ Put those walking sticks inside the sacred tent, in front of the sacred chest that has in it the tablets on which the Ten Commandments are written. That is the place where I always talk with you. ⁵ Buds will sprout on the stick of the man whom I have chosen to be the priest. When the people see that, they will stop their constantly complaining about you because they will realize that he is the one whom I have chosen."

⁶ So Moses told the people what Yahweh had said. Then each of the twelve Is-

raelite leaders, including Aaron, brought his walking stick to Moses. ⁷ Moses placed the sticks inside the sacred tent in front of the sacred chest.

⁸ The following morning, when he went into the tent, he saw that Aaron's stick, which represented the tribe of Levi, had sprouted. It had produced leaves and blossoms, and it had also produced almonds that were ripe! ⁹ Moses brought all the sticks out of the sacred tent and showed them to the people. Each of the twelve leaders took back his own stick.

¹⁰ Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Put Aaron's stick in front of the sacred chest, and let it stay there permanently. That will be a warning to people who want to rebel against me. Then no more people will die because of complaining against me." ¹¹ So Moses did what Yahweh had commanded.

¹² Then the Israelite people said to Moses, "We are going to die! All of us are surely going to die! ¹³ Everyone who comes close to Yahweh's sacred tent dies. Are the rest of us going to die, also?"

Chapter 18

¹ Yahweh said to Aaron, "You and your sons and the other members of your father's family are the ones who will be punished if anything bad happens to the things inside the sacred tent. And you and your sons will be punished if any priest does something bad. ² Require that those who belong to your tribe, the tribe of Levi, must assist you and your sons while you perform your work at the sacred tent. ³ But while they do that work, they must not go near the sacred items inside the tent or near the altar. If they do that, they will die, and you will die, too! ⁴ They may assist you in doing all the work to take care

of the sacred tent, but no one else is permitted to come near the place where you are working.

⁵ You are the ones who will do the sacred work inside the sacred tent and at the altar. If you obey these instructions, I will not become very angry with the Israelite people again. ⁶ I myself have chosen the descendants of Levi from the other Israelites in order that they may be your special helpers. They are like a gift that I have given you to work at the sacred tent. ⁷ But it is you and your sons, who are the priests, who must perform all the details I have commanded concerning the altar and with what happens inside the Very Holy Place. I am giving to you this work of serving as priests. So anyone else who tries to do that work must be executed."

⁸ Yahweh also said to Aaron, "I myself have appointed you to take care of all the sacred offerings that the Israelite people bring to me. I have given all these sacred offerings to you and to your sons. You and your descendants will get a share of these offerings permanently. ⁹ The parts of the offerings that are not completely burned on the altar belong to you. Those parts of the sacred offerings, including the flour offerings, the offerings to make atonement for sins and to remove the guilt of sins, are set apart, and are to be given to you and your sons. ¹⁰ You are to eat it as a most holy offering. Every male in your clan may eat it. But you must have respect for those offerings because they are holy to you.

¹¹ The priests lift up high the sacred offerings while they are standing in front of the altar. All of those offerings that the Israelites present to me belong to you and your sons and daughters. They will always be your share. All the members of your family who have performed the rituals to cause them to be acceptable to me

are permitted to eat from these offerings.

¹² I am also giving to you the first food that people harvest each year and bring to me—the best olive oil and new wine and grain. ¹³ All of the first crops that people harvest and bring to me belong to you. Anyone in your family who has performed the ritual to become acceptable to me is permitted to eat that food.

¹⁴ Everything in Israel that is devoted to me, will be yours. ¹⁵ The firstborn males, both humans and domestic animals, that are offered to me, will be yours. But people must buy back their firstborn sons and the firstborn animals that may not be used for sacrifices. ¹⁶ They must buy them back when they are one month old. The price that they must pay for each one is five pieces of silver. They must weigh the silver on the scales that are in the sacred tent.

¹⁷ But they are not permitted to buy back the firstborn cattle or sheep or goats. They are holy and have been set apart for me. Slaughter them and sprinkle their blood on the altar. Then completely burn the fat of those animals on the altar to be an offering to me. The smell as they burn will be very pleasing to me. ¹⁸ The meat from those offerings will be yours, just like the breast and right thigh of animals that are presented to me to restore fellowship with me, as the priest lifts them up high in front of the altar, are yours. ¹⁹ Anything that the Israelite people present to me as holy gifts, I am giving to you. They are for you and your sons and daughters to eat. They will always be your share. This is an agreement that I am making with you, an agreement that will last forever. I am also making this agreement with your descendants."

²⁰ Yahweh also said to Aaron, "You priests will not receive any of the land or the property like the other Israelite people will re-

ceive. I am what you will receive.

²¹ When the Israelite people bring to me a tenth of all the crops and of their newborn animals, I will give that to you descendants of Levi. That will be your payment for the work you do at the sacred tent. ²² The other Israelites must not go near that tent. If they go near it, I will consider that their doing that is a sin, and they will die for committing that sin. ²³ Only the descendants of Levi are permitted to work at the sacred tent, and they will be punished if anything bad happens to it. That is a law that will never be changed. You descendants of Levi will not receive any land to own among all the other Israelite people. ²⁴ The Israelites must present one tenth of all their crops and animals as offerings to me, and that is what I give to the descendants of Levi so they can provide for themselves. This is why I said that I will not give the descendants of Levi any land to own.

²⁵ Yahweh said to Moses, ²⁶ "Tell this to the descendants of Levi, 'When you receive one tenth of all the crops and animals from the Israelite people, you must present one tenth of all that to me to be a sacred offering, ²⁷ just like the other Israelites present one tenth of the grain and wine that they produce. ²⁸ You must present to me one tenth of all that you receive from the Israelite people. That will be your sacred offering to me. You must present it to Aaron. ²⁹ Select the best parts of the things that are given to you to present them to me.'

³⁰ Also, tell this to the descendants of Levi, 'When you present those best portions of grain and wine as your offering to me, I will consider that those gifts are as though they came from your own grain and wine.

³¹ You descendants of Levi and your families are permitted to eat the rest of that food, and you may eat it wherever you

want to, because it is your payment for the work that you do at the sacred tent.

³² If you give to the priests the best portions of what you receive, you will not be punished by me for accepting one tenth of the gifts that the people bring to me. But you must consider those gifts to be sacred. If you sin by eating those things in ways that are contrary to these regulations that I have given to you, you will be executed."

Chapter 19

¹ Yahweh said to Aaron and Moses, ² "I am now giving to you another regulation. Tell the Israelite people to bring to you one reddish brown cow that has no defects. It must be an animal that has never been used for plowing ground. ³ Give it to Eleazar the priest. He must take it outside the camp and someone will slaughter it. ⁴ And Eleazar must dip one of his fingers in the blood and sprinkle some of it seven times on the ground near the sacred tent. ⁵ Then, while Eleazar watches, the cow must be burned completely—its hide, its meat, the rest of its blood, and even its dung. ⁶ Eliezer then must take a stick of cedar wood, a stalk of a plant named hyssop, and some scarlet yarn, and throw them into the fire where the cow is burning.

⁷ Then the priest must wash his clothes and bathe. After doing that, he may return to the camp. But he will be unfit for doing any sacred work until that evening. ⁸ The man who burns the cow must also wash his clothes and bathe, and he will also be unacceptable to me until that evening.

⁹ Then someone who has not become unacceptable to me must gather up the ashes of the cow and put them in a sacred place

outside the camp. The ashes must be kept there for the people of Israel to use when they mix it with water for the ritual to remove the guilt of sin. ¹⁰ The man who gathers up the ashes of the cow must also wash his clothes, and he also will be unfit to do anymore sacred work until that evening. That is a regulation that will never be changed. It must be obeyed by you Israelite people and by any foreigners who live among you.

¹¹ All those who touch a corpse will be unacceptable to me for seven days. ¹² On the third day and on the seventh day after touching a corpse, in order to become acceptable to me again, they must sprinkle on themselves some of that water for removing the guilt of their sin. If they do not do that on both of those days, they will continue to be unacceptable to me. ¹³ All those who touch a corpse, and do not perform in the correct way the ritual to become acceptable to me again, defile Yahweh's sacred tent. They will no longer be permitted to live among the Israelite people. The water to remove the guilt of sin was not sprinkled on them, so they continue to be unacceptable to me.

¹⁴ There is another practice that must be performed when someone dies inside a tent. All those who were inside that tent when that person died or who enter that tent will be unacceptable to me for seven days. ¹⁵ Any jars that are inside that tent that are not covered are not permitted to be used. ¹⁶ If someone who is out in a field touches the corpse of someone who was murdered, or who died from natural causes, or if someone touches a bone from some human or touches a grave, that person will be unacceptable to me for seven days.

¹⁷ For someone like that to become acceptable to me again, some of the ashes from the cow that was burned must be taken

and put in a jar. Then some fresh water must be poured over the ashes. ¹⁸ Then someone who has not become unacceptable to me must take a stalk of a plant named hyssop and dip it into the water. Then that person must sprinkle some of the water on the tent where that person died, on the things that are in the tent, and on the people who were in the tent. He must also sprinkle some of that water on any person who touched a human bone or who touched a person who had been killed, or who touched a person who died of natural causes, or who touched a grave. ¹⁹ On the third day and on the seventh day after that, the person who is acceptable to me must sprinkle some of that water on those who have become unacceptable to me. On the seventh day, the people who are performing that ritual to become acceptable to me again must wash their clothes and bathe. If they do that, on that evening they will become acceptable to me again.

²⁰ If those who have become unacceptable to me do not become acceptable to me again by doing this, they will no longer be permitted to live among to the Israelite people, because they have defiled my sacred tent. They did not sprinkle on themselves the water that removes the guilt of their sins, so they remain unacceptable to me. ²¹ That is a law for the Israelite people that will never be changed. Those who sprinkle that water on themselves must then wash their clothes. And anyone who touches that water which removes guilt for sins will remain unacceptable to God until that evening.

²² Anything and any person that someone who has become unacceptable to me has touched will remain unacceptable to me until that evening."

Chapter 20

¹ In the first month of the next year, the Israelite people traveled to the wilderness of Zin and camped near Kadesh. While they were there, Moses' sister Miriam died and was buried there.

² There was no water for the people to drink there, so they came to Aaron and Moses. ³ They complained and said, "We wish that we had died in front of Yahweh's sacred tent when our fellow Israelites died! ⁴ Did you bring us, who are Yahweh's people, into this desert to die along with our livestock? ⁵ Why did you bring us from Egypt to this miserable place? There is no grain, there are no figs, no grapes, and no pomegranates here. And there is no water for us to drink!"

⁶ Moses and Aaron turned away from the people and went to the entrance of the sacred tent and prostrated themselves on the ground. Just then Yahweh appeared to them with his bright glory. ⁷ When Yahweh appeared in glory, he said, ⁸ "You and Aaron must take Aaron's walking stick with you and gather all the people together. While the people are watching, command that large rock over there to pour out water. Water for the people will flow from it. All they and all their livestock will have enough water to drink."

⁹ So Moses did what Yahweh told him to do. He took Aaron's walking stick from the place in the sacred tent where it was kept. ¹⁰ Then Moses and Aaron summoned all the people to gather at the rock. Then Moses shouted to them, "All you rebellious people, listen! Is it necessary for us to bring to you water from this rock?"

¹¹ Then Moses raised his hand and instead of speaking to the rock, he struck the rock two times with the walking stick. And water gushed out. So all the people and their livestock drank all the water that

they wanted.

¹² But Yahweh said to Aaron and Moses, "You did not trust me or honor me before the people of Israel, and so you will not lead them into the land I have given to them!"

¹³ Later this place was called the Meribah, which means 'arguing', because there the Israelite people argued against Yahweh, and there he showed his honor and holiness to them by giving them water.

¹⁴ While the people were at Kadesh, Moses sent messengers to the king of Edom to tell him this,

"Your relatives, the Israelite people, are sending you this message. You know the many troubles that have happened to us. ¹⁵ You know that our ancestors went down to Egypt. You know that they stayed there for many years. They suffered because the rulers of Egypt caused them to become their slaves and to work very hard.

¹⁶ But when they called out to Yahweh, he heard them and sent an angel who brought them out of Egypt. Now we have set up our tents here at Kadesh, a town on the border of your land. ¹⁷ Please allow us to travel through your country. We will be careful to not walk through your fields and your vineyards. We will not even drink water from your wells. As we travel, we will stay on the king's highway, the main road that goes from the south to the north, and we will not leave that road until we have crossed the border of your country in the north."

¹⁸ But the king of Edom refused. He replied, "Stay out of my country! If you try to enter it, I will send my army to attack you!"

¹⁹ The Israelite messengers replied, "If we travel through your country, we will stay on the main road. If we and any of our

livestock drink any of your water, we will pay for it. We want only to travel through your country. We do not want anything else.”

²⁰ But the king replied, “No! Stay out of our country! We will not allow you to travel through our land!” Then he sent the strongest soldiers in his army to prevent the Israelites from entering his country.

²¹ So, because the king of Edom refused to allow the Israelites to travel through his country, the Israelites turned and traveled a different way.

²² The Israelite people left Kadesh. They went to Mount Hor, ²³ which is at the border of Edom. While they were there, Yahweh said to Aaron and Moses, ²⁴ “It is time for Aaron to die. He will not enter the land that I am giving to you Israelites, because the two of you disobeyed me when I told you to speak to the rock to cause the water to flow at Meribah. ²⁵ Now you, Moses, take Aaron and his son Eleazar up on Mount Hor. ²⁶ There you must remove Aaron’s clothes that he wears when he does the works of a priest, and put them on his son, Eleazar. Aaron will die up there.”

²⁷ So Moses did what Yahweh commanded. The three of them climbed up Mount Hor, while all the Israelite people watched. ²⁸ At the top of the mountain, Moses took off the clothes that Aaron wore while he did the work of a priest and put them on Eleazar. Then Aaron died there on the top of the mountain, and Eleazar and Moses went back down. ²⁹ When the Israelite people realized that Aaron had died, they all mourned for him for thirty days.

Chapter 21

¹ The king of the city of Arad lived in the

area where the Canaanites lived, in the southern Judean wilderness. He heard a report that the Israelites were approaching on the road to Atharim village. So his army attacked the Israelites and captured some of them. ² Then the Israelites declared this solemnly, “Yahweh, if you will help us to defeat these people, we will completely destroy all their towns.” ³ Yahweh heard what they requested, and he enabled them to defeat the army of this Canaan people group. The Israelite soldiers killed all the people and destroyed their towns. Ever since that time, that place has been called Hormah which means “destruction.”

⁴ Then the Israelites left Mount Hor and traveled on the road toward the Sea of Reeds, in order to go around the land of Edom. But the people became impatient along the way, ⁵ and they began to grumble against God and against Moses. They said, “Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die here in this desert? There is nothing to eat here, and nothing to drink. And we detest this lousy manna food!”

⁶ So Yahweh sent poisonous snakes among them. Many of the people were bitten by the snakes and died. ⁷ Then the people came to Moses and cried out, saying, “We now know that we have sinned against Yahweh and against you. Pray to Yahweh, asking that he will take away the snakes!” So Moses prayed for the people.

⁸ Then Yahweh told him, “Make a model of a poisonous snake, and attach it to the top of a pole. If those who are bitten by the snakes look at that model, they will recover.” ⁹ So Moses made a snake from bronze and attached it to the top of a pole. Then, when those who had been bitten by a snake looked at the bronze snake, they recovered!

¹⁰ Then the Israelites traveled to Oboth and camped there. ¹¹ Then they left Oboth

and went to Iye Abarim in the wilderness on the eastern border of Moab. ¹² From there they traveled to the valley where the Zered riverbed is, and camped there. ¹³ Then they traveled to the north side of the Arnon River. That area is in the wilderness next to the land where the Amorites live. The Arnon River is the boundary between Moab and where the Amorites live. ¹⁴ That is why it is written down in the book of the wars of Yahweh,

”Waheb in Suphah, and the ravines there,

and the Arnon River

¹⁵ and the ravines there,

which extend as far as Ar village on the border of Moab.”

¹⁶ From there the Israelites traveled to Beer. There was a well there where Yahweh previously had said to Moses, “Gather the people together, and I will give them water.” ¹⁷ There the Israelites sang this song:

”O well, give us water!

Sing about this well!

¹⁸ Sing about this well

which our leaders dug;

they dug out the dirt with their royal scepters and their walking sticks.”

Then the Israelites left that wilderness and went through Mattanah. ¹⁹ The Israelites also went through Nahaliel, and Bamoth village. ²⁰ Then they went to the valley in Moab where Mount Pisgah rises above the wilderness.

²¹ Then the Israelites sent messengers to Sihon, the king of the Amor people group. This was the message that they gave him,

²² “Allow us to travel through your country. We will stay on the king’s highway, the main road that goes from the

south to the north, until we have finished traveling through your land. We will not walk through any field or vineyard, or drink water from your wells.”

²³ But King Sihon refused. He would not allow them to walk through his land. Instead, he sent his whole army to attack the Israelites in the desert. They attacked the Israelites at Jahaz village. ²⁴ But the Israelites completely defeated them and occupied their land, from the Arnon River in the south to the Jabbok River in the north. They stopped at the border of the land where the Ammon people group lived, because the Ammon army was defending the border strongly. ²⁵ So the Israelites occupied all the cities and towns where the Amorites lived, and some of the Israelites began to live in them. They occupied the city of Heshbon and the nearby villages. ²⁶ Heshbon was the capital of the country. It was the city where King Sihon ruled. His army had previously defeated the army of the king of Moab, and then his people had begun to live in all of the land of Moab as far as the Arnon River in the south.

²⁷ For that reason, one of the poets wrote long ago,

”Come to Heshbon, the city where King Sihon ruled.

We want the city to be restored.

²⁸ A fire blazed from Heshbon.

It burned down the city of Ar in Moab.

It destroyed everything on the hills along the Arnon River.

²⁹ You people of Moab, terrible things have happened to you!

You people who worship your god Chemosh have been annihilated!

The men who worshiped Chemosh have run away and are now refugees,

and the women who worshiped him have been captured by the army of Sihon, the king of the Amor people group.

³⁰ But we have defeated those descendants of Amor,

all the way from Heshbon in the north to the city of Dibon in the south.

We have completely obliterated them as far as the cities of Nophah and Medeba.”

³¹ So the Israelite people began to live in the land where the Amorites lived.

³² After Moses sent some men to explore the area near the city of Jazer, Israelite people began to live in all the towns in that region and expelled the Amor people group who lived there. ³³ Then they turned north toward the region of Bashan, but King Og of Bashan and all his army attacked them at the city of Edrei.

³⁴ Yahweh said to Moses, “Do not be afraid of Og, because I am going to enable your men to defeat him and his army, and to take possession of all his land. You will do to him what you did to Sihon, the king of the Amor people group, who ruled in Heshbon.”

³⁵ And that is what happened. The Israelites defeated Og’s army, and killed King Og and his sons and all his people. Not a person survived! And then the Israelites began to live in their land.

Chapter 22

¹ Then the Israelites traveled west to the plain of Moab that was in the Valley of the Jordan River, across the river from Jericho.

² But King Balak son of Zippor, who ruled Moab, found out what the Israelites had done to the Amor people group. ³ When

he saw that the Israelites were very numerous, he and his people became terrified.

⁴ So the king of Moab went to the leaders of the Midian people group and said to them, “This huge group of Israelites will wipe out everything around them, like an ox devours grass!”

Balak was the king of Moab. ⁵ He sent messengers to a prophet named Balaam, who was living in his own area, in Pethor, near the Euphrates River. He sent this message to request that Balaam would come to help him,

”A huge group of people has arrived here from Egypt. It looks like they are covering the entire land! And they have begun to live close to us. ⁶ Because they are very powerful, we are afraid of them. So please come and curse them for me. Then my army may be able to defeat them and expel them from the land where they are now living. I know that good things will happen to the people whom you bless, and disasters will happen to the people whom you curse.”

⁷ Balak’s messengers, who were leaders of both the Moab and Midian people groups, took money with them to pay Balaam in order that he would come and curse the Israelites. They went to Balaam and told him what Balak had said.

⁸ Balaam said, “Stay here tonight. Tomorrow morning I will tell you whatever Yahweh tells me that I should say to you.”

So the leaders from Moab stayed there that night. ⁹ During the night, God appeared to Balaam and asked him, “Who are these men who are staying with you?”

¹⁰ Balaam replied, “Balak, the king of Moab, sent these men to tell me this message, ¹¹ ‘A huge group of people has come from Egypt, and they have spread all over this area. Please come immediately to

curse them. Then I may be able to defeat them and expel them from this area.”

¹² God replied to Balaam, “Do not go with them! I have blessed those people, so you must not curse them!”

¹³ The next morning, Balaam got up and told Balak’s men, “Go back home. But go by yourselves, because Yahweh is not allowing me to go with you.”

¹⁴ So the men from Moab returned to King Balak and they reported to him, “Balaam refused to come with us.”

¹⁵ But Balak sent another group of leaders to Balaam. It was a group that was larger and they were more important than the men in the first group. ¹⁶ They went to Balaam and told him this,

”This is what King Balak says, ‘Please do not allow anything to hinder you from coming here. ¹⁷ I will pay you a lot of money if you come, and I will do anything that you ask me to do. Just come and curse these Israelite people for me!’”

¹⁸ But Balaam answered them, “Even if Balak would give me a palace filled with silver and gold, I would not do anything to disobey Yahweh, my God. ¹⁹ But stay here one more night, like the other messengers did, and I will find out if Yahweh has anything more to say to me.”

²⁰ That night God appeared to Balaam again and said to him, “These men have come to request that you go back with them, so you may go with them, but do only what I tell you to do!”

²¹ So the next morning, Balaam put a saddle on his donkey and he departed with two of his servants along with the men from Moab. ²² Even though God had given Balaam permission to go, he was still angry. So he sent one of his servants to Balaam. This angel stood in the road to block Balaam’s path. As Balaam and the two ser-

vants were riding on their donkeys, ²³ Balaam’s donkey saw the angel. The angel was standing in the road and was holding a sword in his hand, but Balaam did not see him.

Balaam’s donkey turned off the road into a field. So Balaam struck the donkey and forced it to go back onto the road. ²⁴ Then the angel stood in a place where the road was very narrow, between two vineyards, with walls on each side of the road. ²⁵ When the donkey saw the angel standing there, it walked very close to the wall to try to get past the angel. As a result, it bashed Balaam’s foot against the wall. So Balaam struck the donkey again.

²⁶ Then the angel went further along the road and stood at a place that was extremely narrow, with the result that the donkey could not get past at all. ²⁷ This time, when the donkey saw the angel, it lay down on the ground with Balaam sitting on top of it. Balaam became extremely angry, and he struck the donkey again with his walking stick. ²⁸ Then Yahweh enabled the donkey to speak! It said to Balaam, “What bad thing have I done to you that caused you to strike me three times?”

²⁹ Balaam shouted, “I struck you because you have caused me to appear to be foolish! If I had a sword with me, I would kill you!”

³⁰ But the donkey answered, “I am your own donkey, the one that you have always ridden! Have I ever done anything like this previously?”

Balaam said, “No.”

³¹ Then Yahweh enabled Balaam to see the angel standing on the road, holding a sword in his hand. Balaam realized that it was an angel and prostrated himself on the ground in front of the angel.

³² The angel asked him, “Why did you

strike your donkey three times? I have come to block your path because what you are planning to do is wrong. ³³ Three times your donkey saw me and turned away from me. If it had not done that, I would certainly have killed you already, but I would have allowed the donkey to live.”

³⁴ Then Balaam said to the angel, “I have sinned. But I did not realize that you were standing there, trying to block my path. So if you do not want me to continue going, I will return home.”

³⁵ But the angel replied, “I will allow you to go with these men, but you must say only what I tell you to say!”

So Balaam went on with the leaders whom Balak had sent.

³⁶ When King Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went to meet him at a city in Moab that is located alongside the Arnon River, near the border of his own land. ³⁷ When he arrived where Balaam was, he said to him, “I sent you a message saying that you should come immediately! Why did you not come? Did you think that I was not able to pay you a lot of money for coming?”

³⁸ Balaam replied, “I have come here now, but I am not able to say anything that I want to. I will say only the words that God tells me to say.”

³⁹ Then Balaam went with Balak to Kiriath Huzoth. ⁴⁰ There Balak killed some cattle and sheep as sacrifices, and offered parts of the meat to Balaam and the leaders who were with him. ⁴¹ They slept there, and the next morning Balak took Balaam part way up the mountain to Bamoth Baal village. From there, they could see some of the Israelite people who were down below.

Chapter 23

¹ Balaam said to King Balak, “Build here seven altars for me. Then kill seven young bulls and seven rams for a sacrifice.” ² So Balak did that. And then he and Balaam each burned a young bull and a ram as a sacrifice on each altar.

³ Then Balaam said to Balak, “You stand here close to your burned offerings, and I will go and ask Yahweh if he has something else to tell me. Then I will tell you what he says to me.”

Then Balaam went by himself to the top of a hill. ⁴ While he was on the top of the hill, God appeared to him there. Balaam said to him, “We have built seven altars, and I have killed and burned a young bull and a ram as a sacrifice to you on each altar.”

⁵ Then Yahweh gave Balaam a message to give to King Balak. Then he said, “Go back and tell him what I told you.”

⁶ When Balaam returned to Balak, Balak was standing with the leaders from Moab beside the offerings he had burned on the altar. ⁷ This is the message that Balaam told them,

”Balak summoned me to come here from Aram;

the king of Moab brought me here from the hills at the eastern side of Aram.

He said, ‘Come and curse the descendants of Jacob for me!

Come and say that bad things will happen to these Israelite people!’

⁸ But how can I curse people whom God has not cursed?

How can I fight against people against whom Yahweh does not fight?

⁹ I have seen them from the tops of the rocky peaks,

I have seen them from the hills.

I see that they are a group of people who live by themselves.

They have separated themselves from other nations.

¹⁰ Who can count the descendants of Jacob, as numerous as particles of dust!

Who can count even a fourth of the number of the Israelite people?

I wish that I will die like righteous people die.

I hope that I will die peacefully like they will die."

¹¹ Then Balak said, "What have you done to me? I brought you here to curse my enemies, but instead you have blessed them!"

¹² But Balaam replied, "I can say only what Yahweh tells me to say. I cannot say anything else."

¹³ Then King Balak told Balaam, "Come with me to another place. There you will see only part of the Israelite people, and you will be able to curse those people for me." ¹⁴ So Balak took Balaam to a field on the top of Mount Pisgah. There, again he built seven altars and offered a young bull and a ram as a sacrifice on each altar.

¹⁵ Then Balaam said to the king, "Stand here close to your burned offerings, while I go and talk with Yahweh."

¹⁶ So Balaam did that, and Yahweh appeared to Balaam again and gave him another message. Then he said, "Go back to Balak and tell him that message."

¹⁷ So Balaam returned to where the king and the leaders from Moab were standing, next to the altar where Balak had burned the sacrifices. Balak asked him, "What did Yahweh say?"

¹⁸ Then Balaam told him this message,

"Balak, listen carefully,

hear what I have to say, you son of Zippor!

¹⁹ God is not a human being.

Humans lie, but God never lies.

He never changes his mind, as humans do.

Whatever he has said that he will do, he does.

Whatever he has promised to do, he has done it.

²⁰ He commanded me to request him to bless the Israelites,

So he has blessed them, and I cannot change that.

²¹ Yahweh their God is with them; the people shout that he is their true king.

So the descendants of Jacob will not be harmed,

they will not endure trouble without God.

²² God brought them out slavery in Egypt

and has led them through the wilderness with strength like a wild ox.

²³ When people curse the descendants of Jacob, they will not be harmed,

when people work sorcery on them, it will have no power.

So now people will say about the descendants of Jacob,

'God has done wonderful things for the Israelites!'

²⁴ They are very strong, like lionesses that are ready to attack other animals.

They stand firm like lions.

The lions refuse to rest until they have killed and eaten their prey

and drunk the blood of the animals they slaughtered.”

²⁵ Then Balak said to Balaam, “If you will not curse them, then I certainly do not want you to bless them!”

²⁶ But Balaam replied, “I told you that I must do only what Yahweh tells me to do!”

²⁷ Then King Balak said to Balaam, “Come with me; I will take you to another place. Perhaps it will please God to allow you to curse them from that place.” ²⁸ So Balak took Balaam to the top of Mount Peor where they could look down and see the Israelites in the desert.

²⁹ Balaam again told Balak, “Build me seven altars again and kill seven young bulls and seven rams for a sacrifice.” ³⁰ So Balak did what Balaam told him to do. He burned a young bull and a ram on each altar as sacrifices.

Chapter 24

¹ Balaam now realized that Yahweh wanted to bless the Israelite people, not curse them. So he did not use magic like a shaman would do to find out what Yahweh wanted, as he often did. Instead, he turned toward the desert. ² He saw the Israelite people camped there in their tents, with each tribe gathered in one group. Then the Spirit of God came upon him, ³ and this is the prophetic message that he gave to Balak:

”I, Balaam son of Beor, am giving this prophecy.

This prophecy that I speak is as a man who sees what will happen in the future clearly speaks.

⁴ I hear this message from God.

I see a vision from the one who is all-powerful.

My eyes are open as I prostrate myself in front of him.

⁵ You descendants of Jacob, your tents are very beautiful!

The places where you live are lovely!

⁶ Your tents are spread out in front of me like groves of palm trees in valleys, like gardens alongside a river.

They are like strong aloe trees that Yahweh has planted,

like strong cedar trees that grow along the rivers.

⁷ Your water buckets will always be full.

The seeds that you plant will always have plenty of water to make them grow.

The Israelites’ king will be greater than King Agag.

The kingdom that he rules will be honored.

⁸ God brought them out of Egypt,

leading them along with his great power that is like a wild ox.

God devastates all the nations that oppose him.

He breaks all those people’s bones into pieces,

and shoots them with his arrows.

⁹ The Israelites are like lions that crouch and lie down, ready to spring on their prey,

like lionesses that are resting.

No one would dare to arouse them!

God will bless everyone who blesses you Israelites,

and he will curse everyone who curses you.”

¹⁰ Then King Balak was extremely angry with Balaam. He showed with his hands that he was very angry, and he shouted,

saying, "I summoned you here to curse my enemies! Instead, you have blessed them three times! ¹¹ So now, get out of here! Go back home! I said that I would pay you a lot of money if you cursed them, but Yahweh has prevented you from getting any pay!"

¹² Balaam said to Balak, "Do you not remember what I told the messengers that you sent to me? I said, ¹³ 'Even if Balak would give me a palace filled with silver and gold, I would not disobey Yahweh. I cannot do anything bad or anything that is good that he does not approve of.' And I told you that I could say only what Yahweh says to me. ¹⁴ So yes, I will return to my people, but first, allow me to tell you what will happen to you Moab people in the future."

¹⁵ Then Balaam said this to Balak:

"I, Balaam, son of Beor, am again giving a prophecy.

This prophecy that I speak is again as a man who sees what will happen in the future clearly speaks.

¹⁶ I hear a message from God;

I know things that God, who lives in heaven, has revealed to me.

I see a vision from the one who is all-powerful.

My eyes are open as I prostrate myself in front of him.

¹⁷ The things that I see in the vision are not going to happen now.

I see things that God will cause to happen in the future.

A man who is a descendant of Jacob will appear like a star;

a king who holds a scepter will be one of the Israelite people.

He will crush the heads of you people of Moab;

he will wipe out the descendants of Seth.

¹⁸ The Israelites will occupy Edom,

and they will conquer their enemies who live near Mount Seir.

The Israelite people will be victorious.

¹⁹ A ruler will come who is a descendant of Jacob.

He will get rid of the people who still live in the city where Balaam first met Balak."

²⁰ Then Balaam looked out over where the Amalek people group lived, and he prophesied this,

"The Amalek people group were the greatest nation,

but they will be wiped out."

²¹ Then he looked out over the area where the Kenite people group lived, and he prophesied this,

"You think that the place where you live is secure

like a nest that is made in the cliffs,

²² but you will be wiped out

when the army of Assyria conquers you."

²³ Balaam ended his prophecies by saying,

"Also, who can survive when God does all these things?

²⁴ Ships will come from the Island of Cyprus ,

and the men in those ships will defeat the armies of Assyria and Eber.

But God will get rid of those men, too."

²⁵ Then Balaam and Balak returned to their homes.

Chapter 25

¹ While the Israelites were camped at a place called Acacia Grove, some of the men became unfaithful to God by sleeping with some of the women of the Moab people group who lived in that area. ² Then those women invited the men to come when the sacrifices were being offered to their gods. The Israelite men accepted. They went to the feasts with the women and worshiped the gods of the Moab people group. ³ By doing that, the Israelite people joined the women in worshipping the god Baal who the Moab people group thought lived on Mount Peor. That caused Yahweh to become very angry with his people, and he sent a severe plague on many of the Israelite people.

⁴ Yahweh said this to Moses: “Seize all the leaders of those who are doing this and execute them while I am watching. Do that in the daytime. After you do that, I will no longer be angry with the Israelite people.”

⁵ So Moses said to the other Israelite leaders, “Each of you must execute your men who have joined others in worshipping Baal.”

⁶ But later, while many people were crying at the entrance of the sacred tent, one of the Israelite men brought a woman from the Midian people group into his tent and started to sleep with her. Moses and all the people heard of it. ⁷ When Phinehas, who was a grandson of Aaron, heard this, he grabbed a spear. ⁸ Then he rushed into the man’s tent. He thrust the spear completely through the man’s body and into the woman’s belly and killed both of them. When he did that, the plague that had started to strike the Israelites stopped. ⁹ But twenty-four thousand people had already died from that plague.

¹⁰ Then Yahweh said to Moses, ¹¹ ”Phine-

has has caused me to stop being angry with the Israelite people, by being as eager as I am to stop this sinful behavior. I was ready to get rid of all the Israelite people because I was extremely angry, but Phinehas has prevented me from doing that. ¹² Now tell him that I am making a special peace agreement with him. ¹³ In this agreement, I am promising to give to him and to his descendants the right to be priests. I am doing this because he showed that he was very eager to honor me, his God, by stopping this sinful behavior. He has satisfied my holy righteousness against the sinfulness of Israel by causing me to forgive them for their sin.”

¹⁴ The Israelite man who was killed with the woman of the Moab people group was named Zimri son of Salu, who was the leader of a family from the tribe of Simeon. ¹⁵ The woman’s name was Kozbi. She was the daughter of Zur, who was the leader of one of the clans of the Midian people group.

¹⁶ Then Yahweh said to Moses, ¹⁷ ”Take your men and attack the Midian people group and kill them. ¹⁸ They have become your enemies, because they tricked you Israelite people and induced many of you to worship Baal, and because one of your men slept with Kozbi, who was the daughter of a leader of the Midian people group. She was killed at the time the plague started because of the people who sinned at Mount Peor.”

Chapter 26

¹ After the plague ended, Yahweh said to Eleazar and Moses, ² “Count all the people of Israel again. Write down the names of all the men who are at least 20 years old who are able to fight in battles, along with

their family names.” ³ So while the Israelites were on the plains of Moab, by the Jordan across from Jericho, Eleazar and Moses told this to the Israelite leaders, ⁴ “Write down the names of all the Israelite men who are at least 20 years old, as Yahweh has commanded us.”

So they did that, and this is a record of all the descendants of Jacob who came out of Egypt who were still alive.

⁵⁻⁷ These are the descendants of Reuben, Jacob’s oldest son:

the Hanokites descended from his son Hanok,

the Palluites descended from his son Pallu,

the Hezronites descended from his son Hezron,

The Israelite leaders counted 43,730 men from the tribe of Reuben. ⁸ Pallu’s son was Eliab ⁹ and his grandsons were Nemuel, Dathan and Abiram. Dathan and Abiram were the leaders who joined with Korah to conspire against Aaron and Moses and rebelled against Yahweh.

¹⁰ But the earth opened up and swallowed them and Korah. Yahweh also sent a fire that burned up 250 men who supported those three men. That was a warning to all the Israelite people that they should respect and obey the leaders whom Yahweh had appointed. ¹¹ But the descendants of Korah did not die on that day.

¹²⁻¹⁴ These are the descendants of Simeon:

the Nemuelites descended from his son Nemuel,

the Jaminites descended from his son Jamin,

the Jakinites descended from his son Jakin,

the Zerahites descended from his son Zerah,

The Israelite leaders counted 22,200 men from the tribe of Simeon.

¹⁵⁻¹⁸ These are the descendants of Gad: the Zephonites descended from his son Zephon,

the Haggites descended from his son Haggi,

the Shunites descended from his son Shuni,

the Oznites descended from his son Ozni, the Erites descended from his son Eri,

the Arodites descended from his son Arod,

The Israelite leaders counted 40,500 men from the tribe of Gad.

¹⁹⁻²² Judah’s sons, Er and Onan, died in Canaan before they had any children. These are the descendants of Judah:

the Shelanites descended from his son Shelah,

the Perezites descended from his son Perez,

Perez was the father of Hezron and Hamul.

The Hezronites descended from Hezron,

The Israelite leaders counted 76,500 men from the tribe of Judah.

²³⁻²⁵ These are the descendants of Issachar:

the Tolaites descended from his son Tola,

the Puites descended from his son Puah,

the Jashubites descended from his son Jashub,

The Israelite leaders counted 64,300 men from the tribe of Issachar.

²⁶⁻²⁷ These are the descendants of Zebulun:

the Seredites descended from his son Sered,

the Elonites descended from his son Elon,

The Israelite leaders counted 60,500 men from the tribe of Zebulun.

²⁸⁻²⁹ The sons of Joseph are Manasseh and Ephraim. These are the descendants of Manasseh:

Makir was the father of Gilead.

³⁰⁻³² These are the descendants of Gilead:

the Iezerites descended from his son Iezer,

the Helekites descended from his son Helek,

the Asrielites descended from his son Asriel,

the Shechemites descended from his son Shechem,

the Shemidaïtes descended from his son Shemida,

³³⁻³⁴ Hepher's son Zelophehad did not have any sons, but he had five daughters—Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milkah, and Tirzah.

The Israelite leaders counted 52,700 men from the tribe of Manasseh, who was one of the sons of Joseph.

³⁵⁻³⁷ These are the descendants of Ephraim:

the Shuthelahites descended from his son Shuthelah,

the Becherites descended from his son Becher,

These are the descendants of Shuthelah:

The Israelite leaders counted 32,500 men from the tribe of Ephraim, who was Joseph's other son.

³⁸⁻⁴¹ These are the descendants of Benjamin:

the Belaites descended from his son Bela,

the Ashbelites descended from his son Ashbel,

the Ahiramites descended from his son Ahiram,

the Shuphamites descended from his son Shephupham,

Bela was the father of Ard and Naaman.

The Ardites descended from his son Ard,

The Israelite leaders counted 45,600 men from the tribe of Benjamin.

⁴²⁻⁴³ These are the descendants of Dan:

The Israelite leaders counted 64,400 men from the tribe of Dan.

⁴⁴⁻⁴⁷ These are the descendants of Asher:

the Imnites descended from his son Imnah,

the Ishvites descended from his son Ishvi,

Beriah had two sons, Heber and Malkiel.

The Heberites descended from his son Heber

the Malkielites descended from his son Malkiel.

The Israelite leaders counted 53,400 men from the tribe of Asher.

⁴⁸⁻⁵⁰ These are the descendants of Naphtali:

the Jahzeelites descended from his son Jahzeel,

the Gunites descended from his son Guni,

the Jezerites descended from his son Jezer,

The Israelite leaders counted 45,400 men from the tribe of Naphtali.

⁵¹ The total of the Israelite men whom the leaders counted was 601,730.

⁵² Then Yahweh said to Moses, ⁵³ "Divide Canaan land among the tribes. Distribute the land according to the number of people in each tribe that are on your lists. ⁵⁴⁻⁵⁶ Decide by casting lots to determine which group will get which area, but give the largest areas to the groups with the most people."

⁵⁷ The leaders also counted the male descendants of Levi. They were in clans descended from Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. ⁵⁸ These also included people from the clans of Libni, Hebron, Mahli, Mushi, and Korah. All of them were descendants of Levi. Kohath was the ancestor of Amram, ⁵⁹ whose wife was Jochebed. She also was a descendant of Levi, but she was born in Egypt. She and Amram had two sons, Aaron and Moses, and their older sister Miriam. ⁶⁰ Aaron's sons were Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. ⁶¹ But Nadab and Abihu died when they burned incense for a sacrifice to Yahweh in a way that disobeyed what Yahweh had commanded.

⁶² The leaders counted twenty-three thousand men from the descendants of Levi who were at least one month old. But these men were not counted when the rest of the Israelite people were counted, because were not given any land at that time.

⁶³ Those were the men whom Eleazar and Moses said should be counted. They counted the Israelite people on the plains of Moab, on the east side of the Jordan River, across from Jericho. ⁶⁴ None of the men whom they counted were on the lists that were made by Aaron and Moses when the Israelites were in the wilderness of Sinai. ⁶⁵ They were told what Yahweh had said. He said, "They will all die in this desert," and that is what hap-

pened. The only ones who were still alive were Jephunneh's son Caleb and Nun's son Joshua.

Chapter 27

¹ One day the five daughters of Zelophehad came to Moses. They were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milkah, and Tirzah. ² They came to the entrance of the sacred tent and stood in front of Eleazar, Moses, the tribal leaders, and many other Israelite people. ³ They said, "Our father died during the time that we were in the desert, and he did not have any sons. But he was not among those who supported Korah, who rebelled against Yahweh, and he died because of his own sin. He did not have any sons. ⁴ Why should the name of his clan disappear because our father had no sons? So give us some land like our father's relatives will be getting!"

⁵ So Moses asked Yahweh what to do about their case. ⁶ And Yahweh replied, ⁷ "What the daughters of Zelophehad are requesting is right. You must give them some land, just as you are giving to their father's relatives. Give to each of them some of the land that would have been given to their brothers if they had any.

⁸ Also tell this to the Israelite people: 'If a man who has no sons dies, give the things that his sons would have inherited to his daughters. ⁹ If the man has no sons or daughters, give to his brothers the things that his sons and daughters would have inherited. ¹⁰ If the man had no brothers, give to his father's brothers the things that his sons or daughters or brothers would have inherited. ¹¹ If the man's father has no brothers, give to his closest relative the things that the others would have inherited.' That will be a rule for the Israelite

people, because I am giving this as a command to you, Moses, to tell them.”

¹² One day, Yahweh said to Moses, “Climb to the top of the Abarim mountains east of the Jordan River. Then look out over the land that I am giving to the Israelite people. ¹³ After you have seen it, you will die just like your older brother Aaron did. ¹⁴ The reason that you will die and not enter that land is that you both disobeyed my instructions in the wilderness of Zin. When the Israelite people rebelled against me there at Meribah, near Kadesh, I told you to speak to the rock to cause water to flow out of it. But because you struck the rock instead of speaking to it, you did not show the people my holy power.”

¹⁵ Then Moses said this to Yahweh, ¹⁶ “Yahweh, you are the God who directs the spirits of all people. So please appoint a new leader for the Israelite people. ¹⁷ Appoint someone who will lead your people when they go to fight a battle, so that they will not just wander around like sheep that do not have a shepherd.”

¹⁸ Yahweh replied, “Get Joshua son of Nun, who has my Spirit within him. Lay your hands on him to appoint him. ¹⁹ Cause him to stand in front of Eleazar the priest, as all the people are watching, and commission him to be the new leader of the Israelite people. ²⁰ Give to him some of the authority that you now have, in order that all the Israelite people will know that they must obey him. ²¹ When you all need me to guide you, Joshua will stand in front of Eleazar. Then by casting lots Eleazar will determine what they should do. At Joshua’s command all people of Israel will mobilize themselves together.”

²² So Moses did what Yahweh commanded. He presented Joshua to Eleazar and to all the Israelite people. ²³ Moses laid his hands on him and commissioned him to do the work that Yahweh told Moses to tell

him to do.

Chapter 28

¹ Yahweh said this to Moses, ² “Tell this to the Israelite people, ‘Bring to me the offerings that will be burned on the altar. When they are burned, the smell will be very pleasing to me. And tell them that they must bring them at the proper time. ³ Tell them that what they must bring to me each day are two male lambs that are one year old. They must have no defects. They must be completely burned on the altar. ⁴ They should bring one in the morning and the other early in the evening. ⁵ They must also bring a flour offering of two liters of finely-ground flour, mixed with a liter of olive oil. ⁶ That is the offering that they must bring every day. They started to bring those offerings while you were at Mount Sinai. When those offerings are burned on the altar, the smell will be very pleasing to me. ⁷ When they burn each lamb, they must also pour on the sacred altar in the holy place one liter of wine. ⁸ In the evening, when they offer the second lamb, they must also bring the same offerings of flour and wine as they burned in the morning. When they are burned, the smell will also be very pleasing to me.

⁹ On each Sabbath, you must bring two male lambs that have no defects. Also bring a flour offering of four and one-half liters of finely ground flour mixed with olive oil and a wine offering of four and one-half liters of wine. ¹⁰ Those are the offerings that are to be burned on the altar each Sabbath. Those are in addition to the offerings of two lambs and wine that you must bring each day.

¹¹ On the first day of each month you must bring to me an offering of two young bulls,

one male sheep, and seven male lambs that are one year old. All of these must be without defects. They must all be burned completely on the altar. ¹² Also bring with each bull an offering of six liters of finely-ground flour mixed with olive oil. With each male sheep make an offering of four liters of nice flour mixed with olive oil. ¹³ Also bring an offering of two liters of finely-ground flour mixed with olive oil with each lamb. When all of these are burned on the altar, the smell will be very pleasing to me. ¹⁴ With each bull also bring two liters of wine. With each male sheep, bring one and one-fifth liters of wine. With each lamb bring one liter of wine. These offerings must be brought on the first day of each month and burned completely on the altar. ¹⁵ In addition to these offerings that you burn, you must bring to me one goat for an offering to remove the guilt of your sins.

¹⁶ The Passover festival must be celebrated to honor me each year on the fourteenth day of your first month. ¹⁷ The Festival of Unleavened Bread will start on the next day. For the following seven days, the bread that you eat must be made without yeast. ¹⁸ On the first day of that festival, you must gather together to worship me, and you must not do any regular work that you would normally do. ¹⁹ On that day, you must bring to me for an offering that will be completely burned on the altar two young bulls, one male sheep, and seven male lambs that are one year old. They must all have no defects. ²⁰ With each of these bulls, bring a grain offering of six liters of finely-ground flour mixed with olive oil. With the male sheep, bring a grain offering of four liters of finely ground flour mixed with olive oil. ²¹ With each of the seven lambs, bring an offering of two liters of finely-ground flour mixed with olive oil. ²² Also bring one goat for a sacrifice to make atonement for your sin.

²³ Bring these offerings in addition to the offerings that you bring each morning. ²⁴ The smell of the grain that is burned on the altar each day for seven days will be very pleasing to me. Bring the grain in addition to the animals and the wine that you burn on the altar. ²⁵ On the seventh day of that festival, you must again gather together to worship me, and you must not do any regular work that you would normally do.

²⁶ On the day of the Harvest festival, when you bring to me the first grain that you have harvested, you must gather together to worship me. Do not do any regular work that you would normally do on that day. ²⁷ Bring to me two young bulls, one male sheep, and seven male lambs that are one year old. When they are completely burned on the altar, the smell will be very pleasing to me. ²⁸ Also bring a flour offering of finely ground flour mixed with olive oil. For each bull bring five and three-quarters of a liter, and with each male sheep bring three and four-fifths liters. ²⁹ For each of the lambs bring two liters. ³⁰ Also sacrifice one male goat to make atonement for your sins. ³¹ Bring these offerings and the offering of wine in addition to the animals and flour that you burn on the altar each day. And remember that the animals that you sacrifice must have no defects.”

Chapter 29

¹ ”Each year, gather together to worship me on the first day of your seventh month, and do not do any regular work that you would normally do on that day. On that day the priests must blow their trumpets.

² When the offerings on the altar on that day are being completely burned, the smell will be very pleasing to me. The ani-

mals that you must bring are one young bull, one male sheep, and seven male lambs that are one year old. They must have no defects. ³ With these animals bring a grain offering of finely ground flour mixed with olive oil. With the bull, bring five and three-quarters liters. With the male sheep, bring three and four-fifths liters, ⁴ and with each of the seven lambs bring two liters. ⁵ Also offer one male goat to atone for your sins. ⁶ All of those animals will be in addition to the animals that are completely burned on the altar each morning and on the first day of each month. The offerings of flour and wine must be made exactly as I have decreed that you are to do. When these offerings are burned, the smell will be very pleasing to me.

⁷ "Each year, on the tenth day of your seventh month, you must gather together to worship me. Do not eat any food or do any work on that day. ⁸ When you burn offerings on the altar on that day, the smell will be very pleasing to me. The animals that you must bring are one young bull, one male sheep, and seven male lambs that are one year old. They must have no defects. ⁹ With the bull, bring a flour offering of five and three-quarters liters of finely ground flour mixed with olive oil. With the male sheep, bring three and four-fifths liters. ¹⁰ With each of the lambs, bring two liters. ¹¹ Also bring one male goat to remove the guilt of your sins, and the animals and flour and wine that you burn on the altar each day to atone for your sins. Those offerings will be in addition to the animals and flour and wine that are completely burned on the altar each day.

¹² On the fifteenth day of your seventh month, you must all gather together to worship me. You must not do any regular work that you would normally do on

that day. You must continue to celebrate for seven days. ¹³ When the offerings are burned on the altar, the smell will be very pleasing to me. The animals that you must bring are thirteen young bulls, two male sheep, and fourteen male lambs that are one year old. These animals must have no defects. ¹⁴ With each of the thirteen bulls, bring a flour offering of five and three-quarters liters of finely-ground flour mixed with olive oil. With each of the male sheep, bring three and four-fifths liters. ¹⁵ With each of the fourteen lambs, bring two liters. ¹⁶ Also bring one male goat to be sacrificed to remove the guilt of your sins, in addition to the offerings of animals and flour and wine that are completely burned on the altar each day.

¹⁷ On the second day of the festival, you must bring to the altar twelve young bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs that are one year old. These animals must have no defects. ¹⁸ Bring also with the animals the offerings of flour and wine that are required. ¹⁹ Also offer one male goat; sacrifice it to remove the guilt of your sins. These animals will be in addition to the offerings of animals and flour and wine that are completely burned on the altar each day.

²⁰ On the third day of the festival, you must bring to the altar eleven young bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs that are one year old. These animals must have no defects. They must all be burned on the altar, and their smell will please me. ²¹ Bring also with the animals the offerings of flour and wine that are required. ²² Also offer one male goat to be sacrificed to remove the guilt of your sins. These animals will be in addition to the offerings of animals and flour and wine that are completely burned on the altar each day.

²³ On the fourth day of the festival, you must bring to the altar ten young bulls,

two rams, and fourteen lambs that are one year old. These animals must have no defects. They must all be burned on the altar, and their smell will please me. ²⁴ Bring also with the animals the offerings of flour and wine that are required. ²⁵ Also offer one male goat to be sacrificed to remove the guilt of your sins. These animals will be in addition to the offerings of animals and flour and wine that are completely burned on the altar each day.

²⁶ On the fifth day of the festival, you must bring to the altar nine young bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs that are one year old. These animals must have no defects. They must all be burned on the altar, and their smell will please me. ²⁷ Bring also with the animals the offerings of flour and wine that are required. ²⁸ Also offer one male goat to be sacrificed to remove the guilt of your sins. These animals will be in addition to the offerings of animals and flour and wine that are completely burned on the altar each day.

²⁹ On the sixth day of the festival, you must bring to the altar eight young bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs that are one year old. These animals must have no defects. They must all be burned on the altar, and their smell will please me. ³⁰ Bring also with the animals the offerings of flour and wine that are required. ³¹ Also offer one male goat to be sacrificed to remove the guilt of your sins. These animals will be in addition to the offerings of animals and flour and wine that are completely burned on the altar each day.

³² On the seventh day of the festival, you must bring to the altar seven young bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs that are one year old. These animals must have no defects. They must all be burned on the altar, and their smell will please me. ³³ Bring also with the animals the offerings of flour and wine that are required. ³⁴ Also offer

one male goat to be sacrificed to remove the guilt of your sins. These animals will be in addition to the offerings of animals and flour and wine that are completely burned on the altar each day.

³⁵ Eight days after the start of that festival, you must again gather together to worship me; you must not do any regular work that you would normally do on that day. ³⁶ On that day, you must bring to the altar one bull, one full-grown ram, and seven lambs that are one year old. These animals must have no defects. They must all be burned on the altar, and their smell will please me. ³⁷ Bring also with the bull and the male sheep and each of the lambs the offerings of flour and wine that are required. ³⁸ Also offer one male goat to be sacrificed to remove the guilt of your sins. These animals will be in addition to the offerings of animals and flour and wine that are completely burned on the altar each day.

³⁹ At your festivals, these are the offerings that you must bring to me: The offerings that will be completely burned on the altar, the grain offerings, the wine offerings, and the offerings to restore fellowship with me. Those are in addition to the offerings that you give to me because you promised to do something, and other special offerings that you want to give to me."

⁴⁰ Then Moses told to the Israelite people all the things that Yahweh had commanded him.

Chapter 30

¹ Moses spoke with the leaders of the Israelite tribes. He told them these commands that Yahweh had given to him:

² "If a man solemnly promises Yahweh that he will do something, he must do

what he promised.

³ If a young woman who is still living with her parents solemnly promises to Yahweh to do something, ⁴ and if her father hears about what she promised, and if he does not say anything to her, she must do what she promised. ⁵ And if her father hears about all she promised to do, but he says nothing to her, then she must keep all the promises she made.

⁶ If her father overrules her on the day he hears all the vows she made and her solemn promises with which she has bound herself, then they will stand. Yahweh will forgive her because her father had overruled her. ⁷ If she marries a husband while under the vows, or she makes rash utterances by which she obligates herself, they will stand. ⁸ But if her husband stops her on the day that he hears about it, then he cancels the vow that she has made, the rash talk of her lips with which she has bound herself. Yahweh will release her.

⁹ If a widow or a woman who has been divorced makes a promise, she must do what she promised.

¹⁰ If a woman who is married promises to do something, ¹¹ and if her husband hears about it but does not object, she must do what she promised. ¹² But if he hears about it and does not allow her to do that, she does not need to do what she promised, and Yahweh will forgive her for not doing it. ¹³ A woman's husband may require her to do what she has promised, or he may not allow her to do what she has promised. ¹⁴ If he does not object for several days after he hears about it, she must do what she promised. ¹⁵ But if he waits a long time after she has promised to do something and then he tells her that he will not permit her to do it, if she does not do what she promised, she will not be punished. Her husband is the one whom

Yahweh will punish."

¹⁶ Those are the rules that Yahweh gave to Moses for husbands and wives, and for young women who are still living with their parents.

Chapter 31

¹ Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, ² "Tell the Israelite people that they should pay back the Midian people group for what they did to you. After that happens, you will die."

³ So Moses said to the people, "Get some men prepared for battle. Yahweh will enable them to pay back the Midian people group for what they did to us. ⁴ Select a thousand men from each tribe to fight."

⁵ So twelve thousand men prepared for fighting in the battle, one thousand from each tribe. ⁶ When Moses sent them to the battle, Phinehas son of Eleazar the priest, went with them. He took with him some of the things from the sacred tent and the trumpets that would be blown to give the signal to start the battle.

⁷ The Israelite men fought the soldiers from the Midian people group, as Yahweh had told Moses to tell them to do, and they killed every man from the Midian people group. ⁸ Among those whom they killed were the five kings of the Midian people group—Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba. They also killed Balaam with a sword son of Beor. ⁹ They captured all the women and children of the Midian people group and took away their cattle, their flocks of sheep, and herds of goats, and all their other possessions. ¹⁰ Then they burned down all the houses in the towns and villages where the people of the Midian people group lived. ¹¹ But they took home with them all the women and children and animals and possessions. ¹² They

brought all these to Eleazar and Moses, and to the rest of the Israelite people who were at their camp on the plains of Moab, near the Jordan River, across from Jericho. ¹³ Eleazar and all the leaders of the people and Moses went outside the camp to greet them.

¹⁴ But Moses was angry with some of the men who had returned from the battle. He was angry with the army officers, those men who were commanders over thousands of men and those who were commanders over hundreds of men. ¹⁵ He asked them, "Why did you allow the women to live?" ¹⁶ They are the ones who did what Balaam suggested and urged our people to worship Baal instead of Yahweh. As a result, Yahweh caused a plague to strike his people while they were at Peor. ¹⁷ So, now you must kill all the boys of the Midian people group, and also kill all the women who have slept with any man. ¹⁸ Spare only the girls who are virgins. You can keep them to be your wives or your slaves.

¹⁹ All of you who have killed someone or touched the corpse of someone who was killed in the battle must stay outside the camp for seven days. On the third day and on the seventh day, you must perform the ritual to enable you to become acceptable to God again. ²⁰ You must also wash your clothes and anything that you took to the battle that is made of leather or goat's hair or wood."

²¹ Then Eleazar said to the soldiers who had returned from the battle, "This is what Yahweh has instructed Moses. ²² You must put into a fire any gold or silver or bronze or iron or tin or lead things that you brought back from the battle. ²³ Put everything that will not burn into the fire, and then they will be acceptable for you to use. But also sprinkle those things with the water that causes things and people

to become acceptable to God. The things that would burn if you put them in a fire, sprinkle them with that water. ²⁴ On the seventh day, wash your clothes, and then you will become acceptable to God again. After you do that, you may return to the camp."

²⁵ Yahweh also said to Moses, ²⁶ "Write down a list of all the goods, the women, and the animals that were captured in the battle. ²⁷ Then tell Eleazar and the leaders of the family groups that they must divide all those things between the men who fought in the battle and the rest of the people. ²⁸ From the men who fought in the battle, take one from every five hundred people and from every five hundred cattle and donkeys and sheep, to be a tax for me. ²⁹ Take these things to Eleazar to be my share as the offering presented to me. ³⁰ And from the other things, take one item from every fifty. That includes people, cattle, donkeys, sheep, goats, and other animals. Give those things to the descendants of Levi who take care of my sacred tent." ³¹ So Eleazar and Moses did what Yahweh commanded.

³²⁻³⁵ There were 675,000 sheep, seventy-two thousand cattle, sixty-one thousand donkeys, and thirty- virgins that they had captured from the Midian people group.

³⁶ The men who fought in the battle took 337,000 sheep from the battle, ³⁷ and they gave 675 of them to Yahweh. ³⁸ They took thirty-six thousand cattle and gave 72 of them to Yahweh. ³⁹ They took 30,500 donkeys, and they gave 61 of them to Yahweh. ⁴⁰ They took sixteen thousand virgins, and they gave 32 of them to Yahweh.

⁴¹ Moses gave to Eleazar all the animals that had been presented to Yahweh, as Yahweh had commanded.

⁴²⁻⁴⁶ Moses separated what those who had

fought in the battle received from what the other people received. The people received 337,500 sheep, thirty-six thousand cattle, 30,500 donkeys, and sixteen thousand virgins. ⁴⁷ From what the people received, Moses took one from every fifty items and gave them to Yahweh. That included animals and people. As Yahweh commanded, Moses gave them all to the descendants of Levi who took care of the sacred tent.

⁴⁸ Then the army officers, those who were commanders over thousands of men and those who were commanders over hundreds of men, they came to Moses. ⁴⁹ They said, "We, who are your servants, have counted the soldiers whom we command, and we found that none of them is missing. ⁵⁰ So to thank Yahweh for that, we have brought to him a gift of the gold items that we found after the battle, gold arm bands and bracelets and rings, earrings and necklaces. We hope that this will atone for our sins."

⁵¹ So Eleazar and Moses accepted the gold items that they brought. ⁵² The total of the offering they presented weighed about one hundred and ninety one kilograms. ⁵³ Each soldier had taken these things for himself. ⁵⁴ Eleazar and Moses accepted these gold items from these commanders and put them in the sacred tent to remind the Israelite people about how Yahweh had helped them defeat the Midian people group.

Chapter 32

¹ The people of the tribes of Reuben and Gad had a lot of livestock. They saw that the land near the city of Jazer and the region of Gilead east of the Jordan River had good grass for the animals to graze on. ² So their leaders came to Eleazar and the lead-

ers of the people and Moses. They said, ³ "We have a great amount of livestock. ⁴ Yahweh has enabled us Israelites to capture some land that is very good for animals to graze on—the land near the towns of Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam, Nebo, and Beon. ⁵ If it pleases you, we would like this land to be ours, instead of land on the other side of the Jordan River."

⁶ Moses replied to the leaders of the tribes of Gad and Reuben, "It is not right for your fellow Israelites to go to fight in wars and you stay here! ⁷ If you do that, you will cause the other Israelites to be discouraged, with the result that they will not cross the Jordan River to the land that Yahweh is giving to them. ⁸ Our ancestors did the same kind of thing. I sent them from Kadesh Barnea to see what the land of Canaan was like. ⁹ They went as far as Eshcol Valley, but when they saw the huge people in the land, they returned and caused the Israelite people to be discouraged saying, 'We should not try to enter the land that Yahweh said that he is giving to us.' ¹⁰ So Yahweh became very angry with them, and he solemnly declared this, ¹¹⁻¹² 'From all the people who came out of Egypt, the only ones who are at least twenty years old who will see the land that I promised to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are Jephunneh's son Caleb and Nun's son Joshua, because they trusted me completely. None of the other people who came out of Egypt will even see that land, because they have not completely believed in my power.' ¹³ So Yahweh was angry with the Israelite people, and as a result he has caused us to wander in this desert for forty years. Finally, all the people who had sinned against Yahweh by refusing to trust him died, one by one. ¹⁴ And you are acting like your ancestors did! You sinful Israelite people are going to cause Yahweh to be more angry with

you than he was with our ancestors! ¹⁵ If you stop trusting him, he will cause you and all your fellow Israelites to stay longer in the desert, and he will get rid of all of you!”

¹⁶ Then the leaders of the tribes of Reuben and Gad said to Moses, “First we will build pens for our animals and build cities for our families here. ¹⁷ Then our families will live in strong cities with walls around them, and they will be safe from the people who live in this land. Then we will get ready to fight battles. We will help the other Israelites to get land on the other side of the river. ¹⁸ We will not return to our homes until every Israelite has received some land. ¹⁹ We will not take any land on the west side of the Jordan River, because our land will be here on the east side.”

²⁰ So Moses told them, “I will tell you what you must do. You must get ready to fight battles for Yahweh. ²¹ You must cross the Jordan River carrying your weapons. ²² After Yahweh helps us to take that land from the people who live there, you will be permitted to return to your homes. You will have done what you have promised Yahweh and the Israelite people that you would do, and you may keep this land to be your own, given to you by Yahweh.

²³ But if you do not do these things, you will be sinning against Yahweh, and he will punish you for that sin. ²⁴ Now you can build cities for your families and pens for your animals, but after doing that, you must do what you have promised.”

²⁵ The leaders of the tribes of Gad and Reuben replied, “We will do what you have asked us to do, because you are our leader. ²⁶ Our wives and children and our cattle and sheep and goats will stay here in the cities of the Gilead area, ²⁷ but we will prepare to go to battle. We will take our weapons and go across the Jor-

dan River and fight for Yahweh, just as you, our leader, have said.”

²⁸ So Moses gave instructions about them to Eleazar, Joshua, and the leaders of the Israelite tribes. ²⁹ Moses said to them, “If the men from the tribes of Gad and Reuben prepare for battle and cross the Jordan River with you, in order to do what Yahweh desires and help you to take that land, give them the Gilead area to belong to them. ³⁰ But if they do not take their weapons and go with you prepared to fight, they will not receive this land. They will need to accept some land in Canaan, like the rest of you will do.”

³¹ The leaders of the tribes of Gad and Reuben replied, “We will do what you have said and what Yahweh has said. ³² We will cross the river into Canaan land, and we will do what Yahweh desires and be prepared for battle. But our land will be here on the east side of the Jordan River.”

³³ So Moses agreed to give that land to the tribes of Gad and Reuben and to half of the tribe of Joseph’s son Manasseh. That land was previously the land where Sihon, the king of the Amor people group, ruled, and the land where Og, the king of Bashan region, ruled, including its cities and surrounding land.

³⁴ The people of the tribe of Gad rebuilt Dibon, Ataroth, Aroer, ³⁵ Atroth Shophan, Jazer, Jogbehah, ³⁶ Beth Nimrah, and Beth Haran cities. Those were cities with strong walls around them. And they also built pens for their sheep.

³⁷ The people of the tribe of Reuben rebuilt Heshbon, Elealeh, Kiriathaim, ³⁸ Nebo, Baal Meon, and Sibmah cities. When they rebuilt Nebo and Baal Meon, they gave new names to those cities.

³⁹ The descendants of Manasseh’s son Makir went to the region of Gilead and

took it away from the Amor people group.
⁴⁰ So Moses gave Gilead to the family of Makir, and they started to live there. ⁴¹ Jair, who was also a descendant of Manasseh, went and captured the small towns in that region, and he named them the Towns of Jair. ⁴² A man named Nobah went and captured the city of Kenath and the nearby towns, and then he used his own name to be the new name of that area.

Chapter 33

¹ Here is a list of the places where the Israelites went as Aaron and Moses led them after they left Egypt. ² Yahweh commanded Moses to write down the names of the places where they went.

³ On the fifteenth day of the first month of the year, the day after they celebrated the Passover, they left the city of Rameses in Egypt and marched boldly while the Egyptian army was coming behind them. ⁴ As they left, the people of Egypt were still burying the bodies of their firstborn sons. By killing them, Yahweh showed that the gods that the people of Egypt worshiped were false gods.

⁵ After leaving Rameses, they first went to Succoth and set up their tents there.

⁶ Then they left Succoth and went to Etham, at the edge of the desert, and set up their tents there.

⁷ Then they left Etham and returned to Pi Hahiroth, to the east of Baal Zephon, and set up their tents near Migdol.

⁸ Then they left Pi Hahiroth and walked through the Sea of Reeds and continued three days into the Etham Desert, and set their tents at Marah.

⁹ Then they left Marah and went to Elim. There were twelve springs and seventy palm trees there. They set up their tents there.

¹⁰ Then they left Elim and went to the area near the Sea of Reeds and set up their tents there.

¹¹ Then they left the Sea of Reeds and went near the wilderness of Sinai and set up their tents there.

¹² Then they left the wilderness of Sinai and went to Dophkah and set up their tents there.

¹³ Then they left Dophkah and went to Alush and set up their tents there.

¹⁴ Then they left Alush and went and set up their tents at Rephidim, where they had no water to drink.

¹⁵ Then they left Rephidim and went to the wilderness of the Sinai and set up their tents there.

¹⁶ Then they left the wilderness of the Sinai and went to Kibroth Hattaavah and set up their tents there.

¹⁷ Then they left Kibroth Hattaavah and went to Hazeroth and set up their tents there.

¹⁸ Then they left Hazeroth and went to Rithmah and set up their tents there.

¹⁹ Then they left Rithmah and went to Rimmon Perez and set up their tents there.

²⁰ Then they left Rimmon Perez and went to Libnah and set up their tents there.

²¹ Then they left Libnah and went to Rissah and set up their tents there.

²² Then they left Rissah and set up their tents at Kehelathah.

²³ Then they left Kehelathah; they went to Mount Shepher and set up their

tents there.

²⁴ Then they left Mount Shepher and went to Haradah and set up their tents there.

²⁵ Then they left Haradah and went to Makheloth and set up their tents there.

²⁶ Then they left Makheloth and went to Tahath and set up their tents there.

²⁷ Then they left Tahath and went to Terah and set up their tents there.

²⁸ Then they left Terah and went to Mithcah and set up their tents there.

²⁹ Then they left Mithcah and went to Hashmonah and set up their tents there.

³⁰ Then they left Hashmonah and went to Moseroth and set up their tents there.

³¹ Then they left Moseroth and went to Bene Jaakan and set up their tents there.

³² Then they left Bene Jaakan and went to Hor Haggidgad and set up their tents there.

³³ Then they left Hor Haggidgad and went to Jotbathah and set up their tents there.

³⁴ Then they left Jotbathah and went to Abronah and set up their tents there.

³⁵ Then they left Abronah and went to Ezion Geber and set up their tents there.

³⁶ Then they left Ezion Geber and went to the wilderness of Zin and set up their tents at Kadesh there.

³⁷ Then they left Kadesh and went to Mount Hor, at the border of Edom, and set up their tents there. ³⁸ Aaron the priest obeyed Yahweh and climbed up the mountain. There he died, on the first day of their fifth month, forty years after the Israelites left Egypt. ³⁹ Aaron was 123 years old when he died.

⁴⁰ That was when the king of the city of Arad heard that the Israelites were coming. Arad was in the southern wilderness in the land of Canaan, where the Canaan people group lived.

⁴¹ The Israelites left Mount Hor and went to Zalmonah and set up their tents there.

⁴² Then they left Zalmonah and went to Punon and set up tents there.

⁴³ Then they left Punon and went to Oboth and set up their tents there.

⁴⁴ Then they left Oboth and went to Iye Abarim, which was on the border of the region of Moab, and set up their tents there.

⁴⁵ Then they left Iye Abarim and went to Dibon Gad and set up their tents there.

⁴⁶ Then they left Dibon Gad and set up their tents at Almon Diblathaim.

⁴⁷ Then they left Almon Diblathaim and went to the Abarim Mountains, near Nebo and set up their tents there.

⁴⁸ Then they left the Abarim mountains and went to the plains of Moab, near the Jordan River, across from Jericho. ⁴⁹ They set up their tents there on the plains of Moab. Their tents stretched for several kilometers from Beth Jeshimoth to Abel Shittim.

⁵⁰ While we were there on the plains of Moab near the Jordan River, across from Jericho, Yahweh spoke to Moses. He said, ⁵¹ "Tell this to the Israelite people, 'When you cross the Jordan River and enter the region of Canaan, ⁵² you must force all the people who live there to leave. Destroy all their carved figures and all cast figures made of metal. Wreck all the places where they worship their idols. ⁵³ Take their land from them and start to live there, because I have given their land to you for you to own.

⁵⁴ Divide up the land by casting lots to decide which group will get which area. Give the larger areas to the groups that have more people, and give the smaller areas to the groups that have fewer people. Each tribe will receive its own land. ⁵⁵ If you do not force the people who live there to leave, they will cause you to have much trouble. They will be like sharp hooks in your eyes, and like thorns in your sides. And they will bring trouble to you, in that land where you will be living. ⁵⁶ And then I will punish you, as I had planned to punish them.”

Chapter 34

¹ Yahweh said to Moses, ² ”Tell this to the Israelite people, ’You will soon enter Canaan land, and it will become yours. The following will be the borders of the land. ³ On the south you will receive part of the wilderness of Zin, near the border of the region of Edom. On the east side, the border will start at the south end of the Dead Sea.

⁴ It will extend to a little south of the Scorpion Pass, and extend west through the wilderness of Sin and south of Kadesh Barnea. From there it will extend to Hazar Addar and from there to Azmon. ⁵ From Azmon it will extend west to the dry riverbed at the border of Egypt and then to the Mediterranean Sea.

⁶ The border on the west will be the Mediterranean Sea.

⁷ The border on the north will start from the Mediterranean Sea and extend west to Mount Hor. ⁸ From there it will extend to Lebo Hamath and then to Zedad. ⁹ From there the border will extend to Ziphron, and it will end at Hazar Enan.

¹⁰ The border on the east will start at

Hazar Enan and extend south to Shepham. ¹¹ From there it will extend east of Ain to Riblah and then along the hills that are east of Galilee Lake. ¹² Then the border will extend south along the Jordan River and end at the Dead Sea.

Those will be the borders around your country.”

¹³ So Moses told all that to the Israelite people. Then he said to them, ”That is the land that you will receive. You must cast lots to decide which area will go to each of the nine and a half tribes, because Yahweh has commanded that it should be divided among them. ¹⁴ The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh have already received the land in which they will live. ¹⁵ They have received land on the east side of the Jordan River, across from Jericho.”

¹⁶ Then Yahweh said to Moses,

¹⁷ ”These are the men who will divide the land. First, Eleazar and Joshua, ¹⁸ but other leaders from each of the twelve tribes will help them divide the land.

¹⁹ From the tribe of Judah, appoint Jephunneh’s son Caleb.

²⁰ From the tribe of Simeon appoint Amihud’s son Shemuel.

²¹ From the tribe of Benjamin appoint Kishon’s son Elidad.

²² From the tribe of Dan appoint Jogli’s son Bukki.

²³ From the tribe of Manasseh appoint Ephod’s son Hanniel.

²⁴ From the tribe of Ephraim appoint Shiphthan’s son Kemuel.

²⁵ From the tribe of Zebulun appoint Parnak’s son Elizaphan.

²⁶ From the tribe of Issachar appoint Azzan’s son Paltiel.

²⁷ From the tribe of Asher appoint Sh-elomi's son Ahihud.

²⁸ From the tribe of Naphtali appoint Ammihud's son Pedahel."

²⁹ Yahweh commanded that all those were the men who should divide the region of Canaan among the Israelite people.

Chapter 35

¹ Yahweh told this to Moses while the Israelites were on the plain in Moab near the Jordan River, across from Jericho, ² "Tell the Israelite people that from the land that they will receive, they must give to the descendants of Levi some cities in which they can live. They must also give them some land around these cities. ³ These cities will be for the descendants of Levi to live in, and around the cities will be land for their cattle and flocks of sheep and goats and other animals.

⁴ The land that you give them for their animals must extend out for 457 meters from the walls of the cities. ⁵ Also measure 920 meters in each direction out from the walls of each city. That additional land will be land for their animals outside the walls of the cities.

⁶ Six of the cities that you give to the descendants of Levi will be cities to which people can run to be safe. If someone accidentally kills someone else, the one who killed that person may run to one of those cities to be safe. ⁷ You must also give to the descendants of Levi forty-two other cities and the land around those cities for their animals. ⁸ The Israelite tribes who have the most people must give them more cities than the tribes who have fewer people give. Each tribe must give some of its cities to the descendants of Levi, but the tribes that have more land must give more

cities, and the tribes that have fewer cities will give fewer cities."

⁹ Yahweh also said to Moses, ¹⁰ "Tell this to the Israelite people, 'When you cross the Jordan River and enter the region of Canaan, ¹¹ you must choose some cities to which people can run to be safe. If someone kills another person, the one who killed that person may run to one of those cities and be safe. ¹² One of the relatives of the person who was killed may think he must avenge his relative's death by killing the murderer. But in that city, the killer will be safe because the people in that city would kill those relatives if they tried to get revenge there. The man who killed someone accidentally must be put on trial in a court. ¹³ You must set apart six cities to be cities to which someone who killed another person accidentally may run and be safe. ¹⁴ There must be three of these cities on the east side of the Jordan River and three on the west side, in the region of Canaan. ¹⁵ Those six cities will be cities where Israelite people may run and be safe, and where foreigners and other people who are living among you can also run and be safe. Any of those people who accidentally kills someone may run to one of these cities and be safe there.

¹⁶⁻¹⁸ But you must consider that anyone who kills another person with an iron weapon or with a big rock or with a piece of wood, is a murderer, and the one who killed the other person must be executed. ¹⁹ A relative of the person who was murdered must be the one who executes the murderer as soon as he finds him. ²⁰ If someone shoves another person over a cliff or throws something at another person ²¹ or hits that person with his hand and causes that person to die, if he did it because he hated that person, then you must consider that he is a murderer, and must be executed. A relative of the per-

son who was killed must be the one who executes the murderer as soon as he finds him.

²² But someone might accidentally shove someone else, or he might accidentally throw something at another person and hit him, but not because he hates that person. ²³ Or he might drop a rock on someone that he could not see. There is a law for the one who does that did not plan to hurt anyone and did not hate the person who was killed. ²⁴ That law is that the people of that city must decide whether the relative of the dead person has the right to get revenge, or whether the one who killed the other person truly did it accidentally. ²⁵ If they decide that the killer planned to kill the other person, they must not allow him to stay in their city. But if they decide that it was done accidentally, they must protect the killer from being killed by the dead person's relative. They must send the killer to one of the cities where he will be safe, and allow him to stay there until the high priest dies. After that, the killer may go back to his home, because the dead person's relative no longer has the right to get revenge.

²⁶ But while the high priest is still living, the person who is in that safe city must not leave that city. ²⁷ If he goes outside the city, and if a relative of the dead person finds him, that relative is permitted to kill that person, and people will not consider that the relative is guilty of murder. ²⁸ The killer must stay in that city where he will be safe until the high priest dies. He will be safe from revenge after that, because the death of the high priest will be considered to be a sacrifice to atone for that murder. After that, the killer may return to his home.

²⁹ You must always obey these legal proceedings, wherever you live.

³⁰ If someone is accused of killing another

person, the one who is accused may be executed only if there are people who saw him do it. There must be more than one witness. No one is permitted to be executed if there was only one witness.

³¹ If there is a murderer who truly should be executed, do not spare his life by accepting a ransom. He must be executed.

³² If someone has run to a city where he will be safe, do not allow him to give you money in order that you will permit him to return to his home before the high priest dies.

³³ You must execute people who truly murder others. If you did not do that, you would be causing the people who live in the land to become unacceptable to me. Anyone who deliberately kills an innocent person must be executed. ³⁴ I am Yahweh, and I live among you Israelites, so do not spoil the land by allowing people to murder others without being punished.”

Chapter 36

¹ The family leaders of the clan of Gilead of the tribe of Manasseh went to Moses and the other family leaders of the Israelite people. ² They said to Moses, "Yahweh commanded you, our leader, to apportion the land to the Israelite tribes by casting lots to decide which group would get which area. Yahweh also commanded you to give the land that belonged to our fellow Israelite Zelophehad to his daughters. ³ But if his daughters marry men from the other Israelite tribes, that land will no longer belong to our tribe. People of other tribes will get it. So some of our land will no longer belong to us.

⁴ When the year of the celebration of Jubilee comes, when all the land that has been bought by someone is returned to its original owners, the land that belonged to

Zelophehad will belong to the tribes of the men that his daughters marry. So some of our land, the land that we received from our fathers, will be taken from us, and we will never own it again.”

⁵ Yahweh told Moses what to reply to them, so Moses said this to them, “These men from the tribe of Manasseh are right.

⁶ This is what Yahweh is saying to the daughters of Zelophehad, ‘Each of you may marry anyone you want to, but you must marry only someone from your own tribe.’ ⁷ In that way, the land that belongs to Israelites will not be passed from one tribe to another tribe. Each Israelite will keep the land in the tribe that belonged to his ancestors. ⁸ A woman who inherits her father’s land may get married, but she must marry someone from her own tribe. In that way, every Israelite will keep the land that belonged to his ancestors. ⁹ The land must not be passed from one tribe to another tribe. Each Israelite tribe must keep the land that it received from its ancestors.”

¹⁰ Zelophehad’s daughters obeyed what Yahweh told Moses. ¹¹ The five daughters—Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milkah and Noah—married their cousins, their father’s relatives. ¹² The men whom they married were from the tribe of Manasseh, so their land continued to belong to their father’s family and tribe.

¹³ Those were the commands and decrees that Yahweh gave to Moses to tell to the Israelites, while they were on the plains of Moab, close to the Jordan River, across from Jericho.

DEUTERONOMY

Chapter 1

¹ In this book is written what Moses had said to all the Israelites, after they had set up their tents east of the Jordan—in the desert plain along the Jordan—near a place named Suph, between Paran on one side of the Jordan River and the towns of Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab on the other side of the river. ² To walk from Mount Sinai to Kadesh Barnea, people usually travel for only eleven days, going by way of the hill country called Edom.

³ Forty years after the Israelites had left Egypt, Moses told the Israelite people everything that Yahweh had commanded him. ⁴ This was after they had defeated Sihon, the king of the Amor people group, who lived in the city of Heshbon, and Og, the king of the region of Bashan, who lived in towns of Ashtaroth and Edrei.

⁵ Moses told them these things while the people were in Moab, on the east side of the Jordan River. He explained to them God's instructions. This is what he said to them:

⁶ "Yahweh our God said to us when we were at Mount Sinai, 'You have stayed for a very long time at the foot of this mountain. ⁷ So now continue traveling. Go to the hill country where the Amorites live and to the nearby areas—to the plain along the Jordan, to the hill country, to the western foothills, to the southern Judean wilderness, to the Mediterranean seacoast, to all the land of Canaan, to the Lebanon mountains, and northeast to the great Euphrates River. ⁸ I will give that land to you. I, Yahweh, promised to your ancestors Abraham and Isaac and Jacob

that I would give it to them and to their descendants. So now go and occupy it.'"

⁹ Moses also said to the people, "When we were still at Mount Sinai, I said to your ancestors, 'It is a very big task for me to govern all of you. I cannot do it by myself. ¹⁰ Yahweh our God has caused us Israelites to become as numerous as the stars in the sky. ¹¹ And I hope that Yahweh, the God whom our ancestors worshiped, will cause us to become a thousand times as numerous as we are now and that he will bless us just like he promised to do. ¹² But I certainly cannot deal with all of your complaints and disputes. ¹³ So choose some men from your tribes who are wise and who have good sense and who are respected. Then I will appoint them to be your leaders.'

¹⁴ Your ancestors replied, 'What you have suggested is good for us to do.'

¹⁵ So I took the wise and respected men that your ancestors chose from your tribes, and I appointed them to be your leaders. I appointed some to rule over one thousand people, some to have authority over one hundred people, some to have authority over fifty people, and some to have authority over ten people. I also appointed other officers from throughout your tribes. ¹⁶ I instructed your leaders, 'Listen to the disputes that occur among your people. Judge each dispute, including disputes between close relatives and quarrels between your people and people from other countries who live among you.

¹⁷ You must not play favorites. You must treat poor people and important people equally. You must not worry about what anyone will think, because you will decide matters as God wants you to. If any dispute is very difficult and you are unable to decide it, bring it to me, and I will decide.'

¹⁸ At that time I also told to you many other things."

¹⁹ "Then, just like Yahweh our God commanded us, we left Mount Sinai and went through that huge desert that is very dangerous, on the road to the hill country where the Amor people group live. We arrived at Kadesh Barnea. ²⁰ I said to your ancestors, 'We have now come to the hill country where the Amor people group live. This is part of the area that Yahweh our God, the one whom our ancestors worshiped, is giving to us. ²¹ Note that Yahweh our God is giving this land to us. So go and occupy it as he commanded. Do not be at all afraid.'

²² But your ancestors all came to me and said, 'Before we go, we should first send some men there to explore the land, in order that they can return and tell us which will be the best road to go there and what kind of towns are there.'

²³ I thought that it would be good to do that, so I chose twelve men, one man from each tribe. ²⁴ They went up into the hill country as far as Eshcol Valley, and they explored all that area. ²⁵ They picked some of the fruit that they found there and brought it to us. They reported that the land that Yahweh our God was giving to us is very good."

²⁶ "But your ancestors refused to go and conquer that land. They rebelled against what Yahweh our God had commanded them to do, and they would not go into that land. ²⁷ Your ancestors stayed in their tents and complained. They said, 'Yahweh hates us. So he has brought us here from Egypt just to allow the Amor people group to destroy us. ²⁸ We do not want to go there. The men whom we sent there have made us very discouraged. They have told us that the people there are much stronger and taller than we are, and that there are very high walls around their towns. Also they reported that they had seen giants there that are descendants of Anak.'

²⁹ Then I said to your ancestors, 'Do not be afraid at all of those people! ³⁰ Yahweh our God will go ahead of you, and he will fight for you, just like you saw him do for you in Egypt ³¹ and in the desert. You saw how he brought you safely here, like a man would carry his son. '

³²⁻³³ I reminded them that he always went ahead of them while they traveled in the desert. He directed them by a pillar of fire during the night and a pillar of cloud during the day. He showed them places to set up their tents. But in spite of what I said, your ancestors would not trust Yahweh our God.

³⁴ Yahweh heard what they said, and he became angry. He solemnly declared, ³⁵⁻³⁶ 'Caleb son of Jephunneh, will enter the land. He has obeyed me completely. So I will give to him and to his descendants some of the land that he explored. He is the only one of all you people who will enter that land. None of these evil people will ever see that good land which I solemnly promised to give to your ancestors.'

³⁷ But because of what your ancestors did, Yahweh was also angry with me. He said to me, 'You also will not go enter that land. ³⁸ Joshua son of Nun, who is your helper, will enter it. Encourage him, because he is the one who will enable you Israelite people to occupy that land.'

³⁹ Then Yahweh said to all of us, 'You said that your children would be captured by your enemies. Because they are very young, they do not yet know what is good and what is evil. But they are the ones to whom I will give that land, and they will enter it and occupy it. ⁴⁰ But as for you, turn around and go back into the desert, toward the Sea of Reeds.'

⁴¹ Then your ancestors replied, 'We have sinned; we have disobeyed Yahweh. So

we will go and attack the people who live in that land, just as Yahweh our God has commanded us to do.' And each of their men put on his weapons, and they thought that it would be easy to invade the hill country.

⁴² But Yahweh said to me, 'Tell them, "Do not go there and attack those people, because I will not go with you, and if you go, you can be sure that your enemy will defeat you."'

⁴³ So I said that to your ancestors, but they did not want to listen to what I said. They again rebelled against what Yahweh commanded them to do. Their soldiers proudly marched up into that hill country. ⁴⁴ Then the men of the Amor people group who lived in that region came out of their towns and attacked those soldiers. They chased your ancestors' soldiers like a swarm of bees would chase a person, and they pursued their men south from Edom and defeated them at the city of Hormah.

⁴⁵ So your ancestors went back to Kadesh Barnea and cried out to request Yahweh to help them, but he did not listen to them. He did not pay any attention to them. ⁴⁶ So we stayed there at Kadesh Barnea for a long time."

Chapter 2

¹ "Then we turned around and went through the desert toward the Sea of Reeds as Yahweh told us to do, and we wandered in Edom for many years.

² Then Yahweh said to me, ³ 'You have been wandering around this hill country for a long enough time. Now turn and travel toward the north. ⁴ And tell the people that they are about to travel near the land that belongs to the descendants of Esau, who are also descendants of Isaac. They live in the hill country of Edom. They

will be afraid of you, ⁵ but do not start to fight against them, because I am not going to give you even a tiny bit of their land. I have given that land to the descendants of Esau. ⁶ When you travel near their land, buy food and water from them.'

⁷ Do not forget that Yahweh our God has blessed you in everything that you have done. He knows what has happened to you while you have wandered in this huge desert. But he has been with you during those forty years, and as a result you have had everything that you needed.

⁸ So we continued to travel. We avoided going through the hill country where the descendants of Esau live. We turned from the road that goes along the plain of the Jordan valley, and comes up from Ezion Geber and Elath, and we traveled along the desert road of Moab.

⁹ Yahweh said to me, 'Do not bother the people of Moab, and do not start to fight against them, because I am not going to give you any of their land. Do not forget that they are descendants of Abraham's nephew Lot, and I have given to them the city of Ar.'

¹⁰ A large group of giants called Emim formerly lived there. They were as tall as the giants who were descendants of Anak. ¹¹ They and the descendants of Anak are also called the Repha giants, but the people of Moab call them Emim. ¹² The Hor people group also formerly lived in the Edom area, but the descendants of Esau chased them out. They defeated and killed them and settled in their land, just as the Israelite people later expelled their enemies from the land that Yahweh gave to them.)

¹³ Moses also said to the Israelite people, "Then we crossed the Zered Gorge, as Yahweh told us to do. ¹⁴ It had been thirty-eight years from the time we first left Kadesh Barnea until we crossed the

Zered Gorge. During those years, all the Israelite fighting men of that generation died, as Yahweh had solemnly said would happen. ¹⁵ They died because Yahweh opposed them until he had gotten rid of all of them.

¹⁶ After all the men who had been old enough to fight in wars had died, ¹⁷ Yahweh said to me, ¹⁸ 'Today you all must travel through the region of Moab, near Ar, their city. ¹⁹ When you come near the border of the land where the Ammon people group live, do not bother them or start to fight against them. They are also descendants of Lot, so I am not going to give you any of the land that I have given to them.'

²⁰ (That region is also called the land of the Repha giants, who formerly lived there. The Ammon people group call them the Zamzum group. ²¹ They were a large and powerful group, who were as tall as the descendants of Anak. But Yahweh destroyed them, and the Ammon people group drove them away and took their land from them and started to live there. ²² Yahweh had done the same thing for the descendants of Esau who live in the hill country of Edom. He got rid of the Hor people group, with the result that the Edom people group took their land from them and started to live there. They still live there. ²³ People who came from the island of Crete got rid of the Av group who previously lived in the land close to the Mediterranean Sea, as far south as Gaza. They took their land from them and started to live there.)

²⁴ 'After we had gone through the region of Moab, Yahweh said to us, 'Now cross the Arnon River. I will help you to defeat the army of Sihon, the king of the Amor people group, who lives in the city of Heshbon. So attack their army and start to take their land from them. ²⁵ Today I will be-

gin to cause everyone, everywhere, to be afraid of you. Everyone who hears about you will tremble and be terrified.'

²⁶ Then I sent messengers to go from the desert, where we were, to King Sihon at Heshbon. I told them to give this peaceful message to the king: ²⁷ 'Please allow us to travel through your land. We promise that we will stay on the road; we will not turn off to the right or to the left. ²⁸ We will pay for any food or water that you allow us to buy. We want only to walk through your country ²⁹ until we cross the Jordan River into the land that Yahweh our God is giving to us. Do for us just as the descendants of Esau who live in the Edom area and the Moab people group did for us when they allowed us to go through their areas.' ³⁰ But King Sihon would not allow us to go through his country. That was because Yahweh our God caused him to be stubborn. The result was that Yahweh enabled us to defeat his army and take his land, which we still live in.

³¹ Yahweh said to me, 'Listen! I am about to allow you to defeat Sihon's army and to take the people's land from them. So start to occupy it!'

³² Then Sihon came out of the city with all his army to fight against us at the town of Jahaz. ³³ But God enabled us to defeat them, and we killed Sihon, his sons, and all his soldiers. ³⁴ We captured their cities and destroyed them all. We killed all the men and women and children; we did not allow any of them to remain alive. ³⁵ We took the valuable things that were in the cities that we captured, and also their cattle. ³⁶ Yahweh our God enabled us to capture all their towns from Aroer in the south, which is at the edge of the Arnon River Valley, to the region of Gilead in the north. Some of their cities had walls around them, but we were still able to capture them. ³⁷ But we did not go near

the area where the Ammon people group live, or the banks of the Jabbok River, or the towns of the hill country, or any other place where Yahweh our God told us not to go.”

Chapter 3

¹ “Then we turned north and went toward the region of Bashan. Og, the king of that area, and all his soldiers marched south to fight against us at the city of Edrei. ² Yahweh said to me, ‘Do not be afraid of him, because I will enable your army to defeat him and all his army and to capture all their land. Do to him what you did to Sihon, the king of the Amor people group, who ruled in Heshbon.’

³ So Yahweh enabled us to defeat King Og and all his army. We killed them all; we did not allow any of them to remain alive.

⁴ There were sixty cities in that region of Argob, in King Og’s kingdom of Bashan. But we captured all of them. ⁵ All those cities had high walls around them with gates and bars. We also captured many villages that did not have walls around them. ⁶ We completely destroyed everything, just as we had done in the area that King Sihon ruled. We killed all the men, women, and children. ⁷ But from those cities we took for ourselves all the livestock and other valuable things.

⁸ So at that time we took from those two kings of the Amor people group all the land east of the Jordan River, from the Arnon River gorge in the south to Mount Hermon in the north.” ⁹ (That mountain is called Sirion by the people of the city of Sidon and is called Senir by the Amor people group.) ¹⁰ “We captured all the towns on the plateau, and all the region of Gilead, and all of Bashan as far east as the cities of Edrei and Salekah, which also belonged

to Og’s kingdom.” ¹¹ (Og was the last king who was a descendant of the Repha giants. His bed was made of iron. It was four meters long and two meters wide. It was in the city of Rabbah in the region of Ammon.)

¹² “From the land that we captured at that time, I allotted to the tribes of Reuben and Gad the land north of the city of Aroer near the Arnon River, and some of the hill country of Gilead, along with the nearby cities. ¹³ The other part of Gilead and all of Bashan, which was the region of Argob that King Og had ruled, I allotted to half of the tribe of Manasseh.” (The entire region of Bashan is called the land of the Repha giants.) ¹⁴ “Jair, a man from the tribe of Manasseh, conquered all of Bashan as far north as the border of the Geshur and Maacath territories. He gave his own name to the villages there, and they are still called the villages of Jair.

¹⁵ The northern part of the Gilead region I allotted to the Machir clan, who are descendants of the tribe of Manasseh. ¹⁶ I allotted to the tribes of Reuben and Gad the southern part of Gilead, extending south to the Arnon River. The middle of the river is the southern boundary. The northern boundary is the Jabbok River, which is part of the border of region of Ammon. ¹⁷ The border extends from the plain along the east side of the Jordan valley, from Kinnereth in the north (known as the Sea of Galilee), to the Sea of Arabah (known as the Dead Sea) in the south, and to the slopes of Mount Pisgah on the east.

¹⁸ At that time, I told you three tribes, ‘Yahweh our God is giving you this land east of the Jordan River, for you to occupy. So now, your soldiers must take their weapons and go across the Jordan River ahead of the men from the other Israelite tribes to help them to conquer the land that God is going to give to them.

¹⁹ But your wives and children and your very numerous cattle must stay in the towns that I have allotted to you. ²⁰ Your men must help your fellow Israelites until Yahweh enables them to live there peacefully after they capture all the land that Yahweh our God is giving to them on the west side of the Jordan River, just like he did for you here on the east side of the river. After that, you all may return to this land that I have allotted to you.'

²¹ And I told Joshua, 'You have seen everything that Yahweh our God did to those two kings, Sihon and Og. He will do the same thing to the people who are now in the land that you will be entering. ²² Do not be afraid of those people, because Yahweh our God is the one who will fight for you all.'

²³ "At that time, I earnestly prayed, saying ²⁴ 'Yahweh our Lord, you have merely begun to show me that you are very great and to show me the powerful things that you can do. There is certainly no god in heaven or on earth who can do the powerful things that you have done. ²⁵ So please allow me to cross the Jordan River and to see the good land on the east side, the beautiful hill country and the mountains in Lebanon.'

²⁶ But Yahweh was angry with me because of what your ancestors had done, so he would not pay attention to me. Instead, he said, 'That is enough talk from you! Do not talk to me about that again! ²⁷ You will climb up to the top of Mount Pisgah and look toward the west and to the east, toward the north and to the south. You must look at it all carefully, because you will not cross the Jordan River to see the land from there. ²⁸ But tell Joshua what he must do; encourage him to be strong, because he is the one who will lead the people across the river so they can occupy the land that you will see from the top of the mountain.'

²⁹ So we remained in the Jordan River valley close to the town of Beth Peor."

Chapter 4

¹ "Now, you Israelite people, obey all the rules and regulations that I will teach you. If you do that, you will remain alive and you will enter and occupy the land that Yahweh, the God whom your ancestors worshiped, is giving to you. ² Do not add anything to what I command you, and do not take anything away from what I tell you. Obey all the commands of Yahweh our God that I am giving to you.

³ You have seen what Yahweh did at Baal Peor. He destroyed all the people who worshiped the god Baal there, ⁴ but all of you who faithfully continued to worship Yahweh our God are still alive today.

⁵ Note that I have taught you all the rules and regulations, just like Yahweh our God told me to do. He wants you to obey them when you are living in the land that you are about to enter and occupy. ⁶ Obey them faithfully because, if you do that, you will show the people of other nations that you are very wise. When they hear about all these laws, they will say, 'The people of this great nation of Israel are certainly very wise!' ⁷ Even if other nations are great, there is none of them that has a god who is as near to them as Yahweh our God is to us! ⁸ And there is no other nation, even if it is a great nation, that has laws that are as just as the laws that I am speaking to you today.

⁹ But be very careful! Do not forget what you have seen God do. Remember those things as long as you are alive. Tell them to your children and your grandchildren.

¹⁰ Tell them about the day that your ancestors stood in the presence of Yahweh our God at Mount Sinai, when he said to me,

‘Gather the people together, in order that they can hear what I say. I want them to learn to respect me and honor me for me as long as they are alive, and I want them to teach their children to do that also.’

¹¹ Tell your children that your ancestors came near to the foot of the mountain, while the mountain burned with a fire that went up to the sky, and the mountain was covered with dark clouds and black smoke. ¹² Then Yahweh spoke to your ancestors out of the middle of the fire. Your ancestors heard him speak, but they did not see him. They only heard his voice. ¹³ And he declared to them his covenant that he wants you also to obey. He gave them the Ten Commandments. He wrote those on two stone tablets. ¹⁴ Yahweh commanded me to teach all the rules and regulations to you, in order that you would obey them in the land that you are about to enter and occupy.

¹⁵ On the day that Yahweh spoke to your ancestors at Mount Sinai, they did not see him. So be careful! ¹⁶ Do not sin by making for yourselves any carved figure! Do not make anything that resembles the likeness of any person, either a man or a woman, ¹⁷ or that resembles any animal or any bird ¹⁸ or any reptile or any fish in the deep ocean. ¹⁹ And be careful to not look up toward the sky and be tempted to worship anything that you see there—the sun or the moon or the stars. Yahweh our God has given those to help all people everywhere, but you must not worship them. ²⁰ Yahweh has brought your ancestors out of Egypt, where they were suffering as though they were in a blazing furnace, in order that they would be people who belong to him, which is what you are today.

²¹ But Yahweh was angry with me because of what your ancestors did. And he promised that I would never enter the

land that he is giving to you. ²² He swore that I would die here in this land and never cross the Jordan River. But you will go across it, and you will occupy that land. ²³ Be sure that you do not forget the covenant that Yahweh our God made with you, and do not make a carved figure in the likeness of anything he has forbidden you. ²⁴ You must not do that because Yahweh your God wants everyone to worship him alone. He will destroy anyone who worships idols.

²⁵ When you have been in the land of Canaan for a long time and you have children and grandchildren, do not sin by making a carved figure that represents anything, because Yahweh says that is evil, and if you do that, you will cause him to become angry with you and punish you.

²⁶ Today I am requesting everyone who is in heaven and everyone who is on the earth to watch what you are doing. If you disobey what I am telling you, you will soon all die in the land that you will be crossing the Jordan River to occupy. You will not live very long there; Yahweh will completely get rid of many of you. ²⁷

And the rest of you, Yahweh will force you to go and live among the people of many other nations. Only a few of you will survive there. ²⁸ When you are in those nations, you will worship gods that are made of wood and stone, gods made by humans, gods that cannot see anything or hear anything or eat anything or smell anything. ²⁹ But while you are there, you will try to know Yahweh your God, and if you try with your entire heart to know him, he will answer you. ³⁰ In the future, when you are being mistreated there and all those bad things happen to you, you will again worship only Yahweh and obey him. ³¹ Yahweh is a God who acts mercifully. If you continue to obey him, he will not abandon you or destroy you or forget the agreement that he solemnly made

with your ancestors.”

³² “Now think about the past, about the time before you were born, about all the time since God first created people here on the earth. You could search everywhere, in heaven and on the earth. Has anything like this ever happened that is as great as what Yahweh did for us Israelite people? ³³ Has any group ever remained alive after they heard a god speak to them from the middle of a fire, like we did? ³⁴ Certainly God has never before tried to take a huge group of people from one nation to another location, like he did for us when he brought us out of Egypt. We saw Yahweh our God use his great power to do miracles to show us who he is, and sent plagues, and did many other things that terrified people, and how he rescued us when the army of Egypt tried to attack us.

³⁵ Yahweh showed all these things to you, in order that you would know that only he is truly God, and that there is no other God. ³⁶ He allowed your ancestors to hear him speak from heaven in order that he could discipline them. Here on the earth he allowed them to see his great fire on Mount Sinai, and he spoke to them from the middle of the fire. ³⁷ Because he loved our ancestors, he chose you Israelites who are their descendants, and by his great power he brought your ancestors out of Egypt. ³⁸ As they traveled, he expelled the people of nations that were greater and more powerful than they were, in order that they could capture their land and cause it to become yours, which is what is happening now.

³⁹ So today you should think about the fact that Yahweh is God, that he rules in heaven and also on the earth, and that there is no other god. ⁴⁰ Obey all the rules and regulations that I am giving to you today, in order that things will go well for you and for your descendants, and that

you will live a long time in the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you, for it to belong to you forever.”

⁴¹ Then Moses chose three cities that are on the east side of the Jordan River. ⁴² If someone accidentally killed another person, a person who had not been his enemy previously, he could escape to one of those cities. He would be safe in one of those cities because the people there would protect him. ⁴³ For the tribe of Reuben, Moses chose the city of Bezer in the wilderness; for the tribe of Gad, he chose the city of Ramoth in the region of Gilead. For the tribe of Manasseh, Moses chose the city of Golan in the region of Bashan.

⁴⁴ Moses gave God’s laws to the Israelite people. ⁴⁵ They included all the solemn commands, instructions and laws that Moses spoke to the people of Israel after they had come out of Egypt, ⁴⁶ when they were in the valley east of the Jordan River. They were across from the town of Beth Peor, in the land that previously was ruled by Sihon, the king of the Amor people group, who lived in Heshbon. Moses and the other Israelites had defeated his army when they came out of Egypt. ⁴⁷ They captured Sihon’s land and the land that Og, the king of the region of Bashan, had ruled. Those were the two kings who ruled the Amor people group in the area east of the Jordan River. ⁴⁸ Their land extended from the city of Aroer in the south along the Arnon River, as far north as Mount Sirion, which most people call Mount Hermon. ⁴⁹ It also included all the area in the plain east of the Jordan River valley, extending to the Sea of Arabah (known as the Dead Sea) and east to the slopes of Mount Pisgah.

Chapter 5

¹ Moses summoned all the people of Israel and said to them,

"You Israelite people, listen to all the rules and decrees that I am giving to you today. Learn them and be sure to obey them. ² When we were at Mount Sinai, Yahweh our God made a covenant with us. ³ But this covenant was not only for our ancestors. He made it also for us, who are alive now. ⁴ Yahweh spoke with us face to face on that mountain, from the middle of the fire. ⁵ On that day, I stood between your ancestors and Yahweh to tell them what he said, because they were afraid of the fire, and they did not want to climb up the mountain. This is what Yahweh said: ⁶ 'I am Yahweh your God, the one you worship. I am the one who brought you out of the land of Egypt. I am the one who freed you from being slaves there.

⁷ You must worship only me; you must not worship any other god.

⁸ You must not make a carved figure of anything that represents any living creature that exists in the skies, or on the earth, in the waters of the earth.

⁹ You must not bow down to any idol and worship it, because I am Yahweh God, and I will not tolerate you doing that. I will punish anyone who does that, and their children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. ¹⁰ But I will steadfastly love thousands of generations of those who love me and obey my commandments.

¹¹ Do not speak my name carelessly or for wrong purposes, because I am Yahweh God, the one whom you should worship, and I will certainly punish those who do that.

¹² Do not forget that the seventh day of every week is for you to honor me spe-

cially, as I, Yahweh your God, am commanding you.

¹³ There are six days each week for you to do all your work, ¹⁴ but the seventh day is a rest day, a day dedicated to me, Yahweh your God. On that day you must not do any work. You and your sons and daughters and your male and female slaves must not work. You must not even force your livestock to work, and you must not tell foreigners to work, those who are living in your country. You must allow your slaves to rest on that day just like you do. ¹⁵ Do not forget that you were slaves in Egypt, and that I, Yahweh your God, brought you out from there by my very great power. That is the reason that I am commanding that all of you must rest on the seventh day each week.

¹⁶ Honor your fathers and your mothers, just like I, Yahweh your God, am commanding you, in order that you as a people group may live a long time in the land that I, Yahweh your God, will give you, and in order that things will go well for you there.

¹⁷ Do not murder anyone.

¹⁸ Do not commit adultery.

¹⁹ Do not steal anything.

²⁰ Do not tell lies about anyone when you are speaking in court.

²¹ Do not covet someone else's wife, someone else's house, someone else's fields, someone else's male slave or female slave, someone else's livestock, someone else's donkeys, or anything else that another person owns.'

²² Those are the commandments that Yahweh spoke to your ancestors. When they were gathered there at the bottom of the mountain, he spoke with a very loud voice from the middle of the fire, and there were dark clouds surrounding the moun-

tain. He spoke only those Ten Commandments, no more. Then he wrote them on two stone tablets and gave them to me.

²³ After your ancestors heard Yahweh's voice when he spoke to them out of the darkness, while there was a big fire burning on the mountain, their leaders and elders came to me, ²⁴ and one of them said, 'Listen to us! Yahweh our God showed us that he is very great and glorious when we heard him speak from the fire. Today we have realized that it is possible for us human beings to continue to live even though God has spoken to us. ²⁵ But we are afraid that we will die. We are afraid that this immense fire will burn us all up, if we go on hearing Yahweh's voice. ²⁶ We are the only people on earth who have remained alive after hearing the all-powerful God speak to them from a fire! ²⁷ So Moses, you go up the mountain and listen to everything that Yahweh our God says. Then come back and tell us everything that he has said, and we will listen to what he has said and obey it.'

²⁸ Yahweh heard your leaders say that, so when I went back up the mountain, Yahweh said to me, 'I have heard what your leaders have said, and what they have said is right. ²⁹ I surely wish that they would always think like that and have an awesome respect for me and obey all my commandments, in order that things may go well for them and for their descendants forever.

³⁰ So go down and tell them to return to their tents. ³¹ But then you come back up here and stand near me, and I will give to you all the rules and decrees that I want them to obey. Then you can teach them to the people, in order that they will obey them when they are in the land that I am giving to them.'

³² So I went back down to the people and said to them, 'Be sure that you do ev-

erything that Yahweh our God has commanded us to do. Do not disobey any of his laws. ³³ Conduct your lives as Yahweh our God has commanded us to do, in order that you may live a long time, and in order that things will go well for you when you are living in the land that you will occupy.'"

Chapter 6

¹ "These are the commandments and rules and decrees that Yahweh our God commanded me to teach to you. He wants you to obey them in the land that you are about to enter and occupy. ² He wants you to honor him, and he wants you and your descendants to always obey all these rules and regulations that I am giving to you, in order that you may live for a long time. ³ So, you Israelite people, listen to them carefully and obey them. If you do that, things will go well with you, and you will become a very numerous nation when you are living in that very fertile land. That is what Yahweh, the God whom our ancestors worshiped, promised would happen.

⁴ You Israelite people, listen! Only Yahweh is our God. ⁵ You must love him with all your inner being and with all that you feel and in every way that you can. ⁶ Never forget these commands that I am giving to you today. ⁷ Teach them to your children again and again. Talk about them all the time. When you are in your houses and when you are walking outside, talk about them also when you are lying down and when you wake up. ⁸ Write them on tiny scrolls and fasten them to your arms, and write them on bands that you fasten to your foreheads to help you to remember them. ⁹ Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your city gates.

¹⁰ Yahweh our God solemnly promised to your ancestors Abraham and Isaac and Jacob that he would give you a land that already has in it large and prosperous cities that you did not build. ¹¹ He said that the houses in those cities will already be full of many good things that someone else put there; you did not put them there. There will be wells that someone else dug. There will be vineyards and olive trees that someone else planted. So when Yahweh brings you into that land, and you have all that you want to eat, ¹² be sure that you do not forget Yahweh, who rescued you from being slaves in Egypt and gave all these things to you.

¹³ You must honor Yahweh our God, and you must worship him alone. When you make a solemn oath to tell the truth or to do something, do it in his name. ¹⁴ You must not worship any other gods, the gods that the people groups who live in this land worship. ¹⁵ Yahweh our God, who lives among you, will not accept people who worship anyone or anything else. So if you worship any other god, Yahweh will be very angry with you, and he will destroy you completely. ¹⁶ Do not do sinful things to find out whether Yahweh will punish you or not, like your ancestors did at Massah. ¹⁷ Be sure that you always obey all the laws, the weighty instructions, and the regulations that he has given to you. ¹⁸ Do what Yahweh says is right and good. If you do that, things will go well with you. You will be able to enter and occupy the good land that Yahweh solemnly promised to give to our ancestors. ¹⁹ He will do that by driving out your enemies from that land, just as he promised to do.

²⁰ In the future, your children will ask you, 'Why did Yahweh our God command us to obey all these rules and decrees?' ²¹ Then you will tell them, 'Our ancestors were slaves of the king in Egypt, but Yahweh

brought them out of Egypt by his great power. ²² They saw him do many kinds of miracles and terrifying things to the people of Egypt and to the king and his officials. ²³ He rescued our ancestors from Egypt and brought them here to give them this land, just as he solemnly promised our ancestors that he would do. ²⁴ And he commanded us to obey all these laws and to honor him, so that things would go well with us, and so that he would protect our nation and enable us to prosper, as he is doing now. ²⁵ Yahweh our God will approve of us if we carefully obey everything that he has commanded us to do.'"

Chapter 7

¹ "Yahweh our God will bring you to the land that you will soon enter and occupy. As you advance, he will drive out from that land seven people groups that are more powerful and more numerous than you are. These are the Heth, the Girgash, the Amor, the Canaan, the Periz, the Hiv, and the Jebus people groups. ² When Yahweh our God enables you to defeat them, you must kill them all. You must make no agreement with them, and you must not act mercifully toward them. ³ You must not marry any of them. You must not allow your daughters to marry any of their sons, or allow your sons to marry any of their daughters. ⁴ If you did that, those people would persuade your children to stop worshiping Yahweh and to worship other gods. If that happens, Yahweh will be very angry with you and he will destroy you very quickly. ⁵ This is what you must do to those people: Tear down their altars, break apart the stone pillars that are dedicated to their gods, cut down the poles that they use when they worship the goddess Asherah, and burn their molded idols. ⁶ You must do that because you are a group

of people who belong only to Yahweh our God. He has chosen you from all the people groups in the world to be his own special people.

⁷ It was not because you were more numerous than any other people group that Yahweh chose you; you are one of the smallest people groups on the earth.

⁸ Instead, it is because Yahweh loved you and because he wanted to do what he solemnly promised to your ancestors. That is the reason that he rescued you by his great power from slavery in Egypt and from Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. ⁹ So do not forget that Yahweh is our God. He is faithful to us; he keeps his covenant for a thousand generations of people who love him and who obey his commandments. ¹⁰ But as for those who hate him, he will pay them back; he will punish them and quickly destroy them.

¹¹ So you must be sure to obey all the commandments and rules and decrees that I am giving to you today. ¹² If you pay attention to these decrees and always obey them, Yahweh our God will do what he has agreed to do for you, and he will faithfully love you, which is what he solemnly promised to your ancestors that he would do. ¹³ He will love you and bless you. He will enable you to have many children. He will bless your fields, with the result that you will have plenty of grain and grapes to make wine and plenty of olive oil. You will have many cattle and sheep. He will do all these things for you in the land that he promised to your ancestors that he would give to you. ¹⁴ He will bless you more than he will bless any other people group. All of you will be able to have children. All of your livestock will be able to produce offspring. ¹⁵ And Yahweh will protect you from all illnesses. He will not make you to be sick with any of the dreadful diseases that our ancestors knew about in

Egypt, but he will make all your enemies sick with them. ¹⁶ You must destroy all the people groups that Yahweh our God enables you to conquer. Do not act mercifully toward any of them. And do not worship their gods, because if you do that, it would be like falling into a trap from which you will never be able to escape.

¹⁷ Do not think to yourselves, 'These people groups are more numerous than we are. We will never be able to drive them out.' ¹⁸ Do not be afraid of them. Instead, think about what Yahweh our God did to the king of Egypt and to all the people whom he ruled. ¹⁹ Do not forget the terrible plagues that your ancestors saw him inflict on the people of Egypt, and the various kinds of miracles that God did in order to bring your ancestors out of Egypt. Yahweh our God will do the same kind of things to the people groups that you are afraid of now. ²⁰ Furthermore, he will cause them to become terrified, and he will destroy those who remain alive and run away to hide from you. ²¹ Do not be afraid of those people, because Yahweh our God will be with you. He is a great God; he is the one that people are afraid of. ²² He will gradually drive out those people groups. You should not try to drive all of them out at one time, because if you did that, the number of wild animals would quickly increase, and you would not be able to get rid of them. ²³ Instead, Yahweh will enable you to defeat your enemies one people group at a time. He will cause them to panic until they are destroyed. ²⁴ He will enable you to defeat their kings. After you kill them, their names will be forgotten. No people group will be able to stop you; you will destroy all of them. ²⁵ You must burn the carved figures that represent their gods. Do not desire to take the silver or gold decorations that are on those idols, because if you take them for yourselves, they will be like a trap to catch

you. Yahweh hates every part of those idols. ²⁶ You must not bring any of those disgusting idols into your houses, because if you do that, God will curse you like he curses them. You must hate and despise those idols, because they are things that Yahweh has cursed and he promises to destroy them.”

Chapter 8

¹ “You must faithfully obey all the commandments that I am giving you today. If you do that, you will live a long time, you will become very numerous, and your people will occupy the land that Yahweh solemnly promised your ancestors that he would give to you. ² And do not forget how Yahweh our God led us as we traveled through the desert during these past forty years. He caused you to have many problems, because he wanted to cause you to realize that you needed to trust him and not yourselves. And he wanted to test you, to find out what you intended to do, whether you would obey his commandments or not. ³ So he caused you to have difficulties. He allowed you to become hungry. Then he gave you manna, food from heaven, food that you and your ancestors had never eaten before. He did that to teach you that people need food for their bodies, but they also need food for their spirits, which comes from paying attention to everything that Yahweh says. ⁴ During those forty years, our clothes did not wear out, and our feet did not swell from walking through the desert. ⁵ Do not forget that Yahweh our God corrects us and punishes us, like parents correct their children.

⁶ So obey the commandments of Yahweh our God, and conduct your lives as he wants you to do, and honor him. ⁷ He is

about to bring you into a good land, which has streams which flow down from the hills and flow out of springs in the valleys. ⁸ It is a land on which wheat and barley grow, a land where there are fig trees and pomegranates, and a land where there are olive trees and honey. ⁹ It is a land where there will be plenty of food for you, where you will not lack anything, a land which has iron ore in its rocks and from which you can dig copper ore from its hills. ¹⁰ Every day you will eat until your stomachs are full, and you will thank Yahweh our God for the fertile land that he has given you.

¹¹ But when that happens, be sure not to forget Yahweh our God by disobeying his commandments and rules and regulations that I am giving to you today. ¹² Your stomachs will be full every day, and you will build good houses and live in them. But you might forget Yahweh’s commandments. ¹³ Indeed, when the number of your cattle and sheep has greatly increased, and when you have accumulated a large amount of silver and gold, and the amount of all your other possessions has greatly increased, ¹⁴ be sure that you do not become proud and forget Yahweh our God, who rescued your ancestors from being slaves in Egypt and brought them out from there. ¹⁵ Do not forget that he led them while they traveled through that huge and terrible desert, where there were poisonous snakes and scorpions. And do not forget that where the ground was very dry and there was no water, he caused water to flow for them out of solid rock. ¹⁶ Do not forget that in that desert he gave your ancestors manna to eat, food that they had never eaten. He caused them to have, because he wanted to cause them to realize that they needed to trust him and not themselves. And he wanted to test them, to find out what they intended to do, in order that when those

difficulties ended, he would do many good things for them. ¹⁷ Be sure that you do not think to yourselves, 'I have acquired all these things by my own power and ability.' ¹⁸ Do not forget that it is Yahweh our God who has enabled you to become rich. He does this because he faithfully does what he solemnly promised our ancestors that he would do.

¹⁹ I solemnly warn you, that if you forget Yahweh our God and turn to other gods and start to bow down to them and worship them, he will certainly destroy you.

²⁰ If you do not obey Yahweh our God, he will certainly destroy you just like he will destroy the people groups that you will fight against.

Chapter 9

¹ You people of Israel, listen to me! You will soon cross the Jordan River. In the land that you will enter, there are large cities that have very high walls around them that seem to extend up to the sky. There are people groups in that land that are more numerous and more powerful than you are. ² Those people are very tall and strong. Some of them are giants who are descendants of Anak. You know about them, and you have heard people say that no one can defeat the descendants of Anak. ³ I want you to know that Yahweh our God will go ahead of you. He will be like a raging fire. While you advance, he will defeat and destroy them. As a result, you will quickly be able to drive out some of them and kill the others, which is what Yahweh promised that you would do.

⁴ After Yahweh our God has expelled them for you, do not say to yourselves, 'It is because we are righteous that Yahweh has enabled us to capture this land.' The

truth is that it is because the people in that land are wicked that Yahweh will drive out them as you advance. ⁵ I say again that it is not because you are righteous within yourselves or because you do things that are righteous that you will enter and capture that land. It is because those people groups are very wicked that Yahweh our God will expel them as you advance, and because he intends to do what he solemnly promised to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that he would do. ⁶ I want you to know that it is not because you are righteous that Yahweh our God is giving you this good land. I say that because you are not righteous; you are a very stubborn people."

⁷ "Never forget what your ancestors did in the desert that caused Yahweh our God to become angry. From the day that we left Egypt until the day that we arrived here, you also have continually rebelled against him. ⁸ Even at Mount Sinai your ancestors caused Yahweh to become angry. Because he was very angry, he was ready to get rid of all of them. ⁹ When I climbed the mountain to receive from him the stone tablets on which he had written the Ten Commandments, I stayed there forty days and nights, and during that time I did not eat or drink anything. ¹⁰ Yahweh gave me the two stone tablets on which he had written the commandments with his own fingers. They were the words that he had spoken to your ancestors from the fire on that mountain, when they were gathered together at the bottom of the mountain.

¹¹ At the end of those forty days and nights, Yahweh gave me those two stone tablets on which he had written those commandments. ¹² But then he said to me, 'Go down the mountain immediately, because the people whom you are leading, the people whom you led out of Egypt, have committed a terrible sin! They have very quickly

done what I commanded them not to do. They have made for themselves a cast figure of a calf to worship.'

¹³ Then Yahweh said to me, 'I have been watching these people, and I see that they are very stubborn. ¹⁴ So do not try to stop me. I am going to destroy all of them, with the result that no one anywhere will remember their names. Then I will enable you to become the ancestor of a nation that will be more numerous and more powerful than they are.'

¹⁵ So I turned and went down the mountain, carrying in my hands the two stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments were written. Fire was burning all over the mountain. ¹⁶ I looked, and I was shocked to see that your ancestors had committed a great sin against Yahweh. They very quickly had begun to do what Yahweh our God had commanded them not to do. They had requested Aaron to make for them a metal image of a calf to worship. ¹⁷ So while they were watching, I lifted up those two stone tablets and threw them on the ground, and they broke into pieces.

¹⁸ Then I prostrated myself on the ground in Yahweh's presence as I had done before, and I did not eat or drink anything for forty days and nights. I did that because your ancestors had sinned against Yahweh and caused him to become very angry. ¹⁹ I was afraid that because Yahweh was very angry with them, he would get rid of all of them. But again I prayed that he would not do that, and again he listened to me and answered my prayer. ²⁰ Yahweh was also very angry with Aaron for making that golden calf and was ready to kill him. But at the same time I prayed for Aaron also, and Yahweh answered my prayer. ²¹ Your ancestors had sinned by requesting Aaron to make a metal statue of a calf. So I took that statue and I melted

it in a fire and crushed it and ground it into very tiny pieces. Then I threw those tiny pieces into the stream that flowed down the mountain.

²² Your ancestors also caused Yahweh to become very angry by what they did at places that they named Taberah, Massah, and Kibroth Hattaavah.

²³ And when we were at Kadesh Barnea, Yahweh said to your ancestors, 'Go up and capture the land that I am about to give to you!' But they rebelled against him. They did not trust him, and they did not obey what he told them to do. ²⁴ Your ancestors rebelled against Yahweh from the first day that I knew them, in Egypt, and you have been exactly the same as your ancestors.

²⁵ So, as I said, I lay on the ground in Yahweh's presence for forty days and nights, because Yahweh had said that he would destroy your ancestors. ²⁶ And I prayed to Yahweh, saying, 'Lord Yahweh, these people belong to you; do not destroy them. They are people whom you rescued and brought out of Egypt by your very great power. ²⁷ Do not forget what you promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Ignore how stubborn and wicked these people have been, and the sin that they have committed. ²⁸ If you do not do that, and if you destroy them, the people of Egypt will hear about it and say that you were not able to bring them into the land that you promised to give to them. They will say that you took them into the desert only to kill them there because you hated them. ²⁹ Do not forget that they are your people. You chose them to belong to you. You brought them out from Egypt by your very great power.'"

Chapter 10

¹ "Then Yahweh said to me, 'Cut two stone

tablets like the first ones. And make a wooden chest to put them in. Then bring the tablets up to me on this mountain. ² I will write on those tablets the same words that I wrote on the first tablets, the ones that you broke. Then you can put them in the chest.'

³ So I made a chest. I used wood from an acacia tree to make it. Then I cut two tablets of stone like the first ones, and I went up the mountain carrying the tablets. ⁴ There Yahweh wrote on the tablets the same Ten Commandments that he had written on the first tablet. They are the commandments that he had spoken to your ancestors from the midst of the fire on the mountain, when they had gathered at the bottom of the mountain. Then Yahweh gave the tablets to me. ⁵ Carrying the tablets, I turned and went down the mountain. Then, just as he had commanded, I put them in the chest that I had made. And they are still there."

⁶ (Then, from the wells that belonged to the people of Jaakan, the Israelite people traveled to Moserah. There Aaron died and was buried, and his son Eleazar took his place and became the high priest. ⁷ From there, the Israelites traveled to Gudgodah, and from there to Jotbathah, which was a place that had many streams. ⁸ At that time, Yahweh chose the tribe of Levi to carry the chest that contained the tablets on which were written the Ten Commandments, and to stand in Yahweh's presence in the sacred tent, to offer sacrifices, and to pray for Yahweh to bless the people. They are still doing those things at the present time. ⁹ That is the reason that the tribe of Levi did not receive any land like the other tribes did. What they received was the honor of being Yahweh's priests, which is what he said that they should do.)

¹⁰ Moses continued to speak: "I stayed

on the mountain forty days and nights, just like I did the first time. I prayed to Yahweh, and he answered my prayers again and said that he would not destroy your ancestors. ¹¹ Then Yahweh said to me, 'Continue your journey, going in front of the people, to occupy the land that I solemnly promised your ancestors that I would give to you.'"

¹² "Now, you Israelite people, I will tell you what Yahweh our God says that you do. He requires you to honor him, to conduct your lives as he wants you to, to love him, and to serve him with all that you desire and all that you feel, ¹³ and to obey all of his commandments which I am giving to you today, so they will help you.

¹⁴ Do not forget that Yahweh our God owns even the sky and everything that is in it. He also owns the earth and everything that is on it. ¹⁵ But although he owns all those things, Yahweh also loved your ancestors; from all the people groups on the earth he chose us, their descendants, and we are still his people. ¹⁶ So you must change your inner beings and stop being stubborn. ¹⁷ Yahweh our God is greater than all gods, and he is greater than all rulers. He is very powerful, more than others, and he does not accept bribes. ¹⁸ He makes sure that orphans and widows are treated fairly. He loves even foreigners who live among us Israelite people, and he gives them food and clothes. ¹⁹ So you must love those foreigners too, because you were once foreigners when you were living in Egypt. ²⁰ Be sure to honor Yahweh our God and worship only him. Be faithful to him, and say that he should punish you if you do not do what you promise. ²¹ He is the one whom you must praise. He is our God, and we have seen the great and awesome things that he has done for us. ²² When our ancestors, Jacob and his family, went down to Egypt,

there were only seventy of them. But now Yahweh our God has caused us to be as numerous as the stars in the sky.”

Chapter 11

¹ “Because of all that Yahweh your God has done for you, you must love and continually obey all his rules and decrees and commandments. ² It was you and your ancestors, not your children, whom he punished because you disobeyed him, putting you through many difficulties to teach and train you. So starting today, continue to think about how his punishment, his mighty power, and his great strength to do whatever he wants to do to you. ³ Remember the many different miracles that he performed in Egypt, miracles that showed how powerful and great he is. Think about what he did to the king of Egypt and to all the land that he ruled. ⁴ Your children did not see the army of Egypt, or their horses and their chariots destroyed by Yahweh’s power. Your children did not see how Yahweh caused the Sea of Reeds to flood and sweep away the army of Egypt as they were coming after their ancestors. Your children did not understand that Yahweh continues to make Egypt’s army weak even to this day. ⁵ Your children do not know how Yahweh took care of their ancestors in the desert before they all came to this place. ⁶ Think about what he did to Dathan and Abiram, the two sons of Eliab from the tribe of Reuben. While all of your ancestors were watching, the earth split open, and they fell into the opening and disappeared, along with their families and their tents, their servants, and their animals. ⁷ You and your ancestors have seen all these miracles that Yahweh performed.

⁸ So obey all the commandments that I am giving you today, in order that you will

be strong and able to cross the river and occupy the land that you are about to enter, ⁹ and in order that you will live for a long time in that land, a land that Yahweh solemnly promised your ancestors that he would give to them and to their descendants, a land that is very fertile. ¹⁰ The land that you are about to enter and occupy is not like the land of Egypt, where your ancestors lived. In Egypt, after they planted seeds, it was necessary for them to work hard to water the plants that grew. ¹¹ But the land that you are about to enter is a land where there are many hills and valleys, where there is plenty of rain. ¹² Yahweh takes care of that land. He watches over it every day, from the beginning of each year to the end of each year.

¹³ Today I am commanding you to love Yahweh our God and to serve him with your entire inner beings. If you do that, ¹⁴ each year he will send rain on your land at the right times. As a result, you will have grain and grapes to make wine and olives to make olive oil. ¹⁵ And he will cause grass to grow in your fields for your livestock to eat. You will have all the food that you want.

¹⁶ But I warn you, do not stop worshiping Yahweh our God; do not start to worship other gods, ¹⁷ because if you do that, Yahweh will become very angry with you. He will prevent any rain from falling. As a result, the crops will not grow, and you will soon die from hunger in the good land that Yahweh is about to give to you. ¹⁸ So, keep thinking about what Yahweh has commanded you. Write these words on tiny scrolls and fasten them to your arms, and write them on bands that you fasten to your foreheads to help you to remember them. ¹⁹ Teach them to your children again and again. Talk about them all the time: When you are in your houses and when you are walking outside; talk about

them when you are lying down and when you are doing things. ²⁰ Write them on the doorposts and on the gates of your cities. ²¹ Do that in order that you and your children will live for such a very long time in the land that Yahweh promised to our ancestors that he would give to them. That land will belong to you and your descendants as long as there is a sky above the earth.

²² Faithfully continue to obey what I am commanding you to do—to love Yahweh our God, and to conduct your lives as he wants you to do, and to be faithful to him.

²³ If you do that, Yahweh will drive out all the people groups in that land as you advance, people groups that are more numerous and more powerful than you are.

²⁴ All the ground in that land on which you walk will be yours. Your territory will extend from the desert in the south to the Lebanon Mountains in the north, and from the Euphrates River in the east to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. ²⁵ Yahweh our God will cause all the people in that land to be very afraid of you, which is what he promised, with the result that no people group will be able to stop you.

²⁶ Listen carefully: Today I am telling you that Yahweh will either bless you or he will curse you. ²⁷ If you obey the commandments of Yahweh our God that I am giving to you today, he will bless you. ²⁸ But if you do not obey them, and if you stop worshiping him and start worshiping other gods to whom you were never faithful before, he will curse you. ²⁹ And when Yahweh brings you into the land that you are about to enter and occupy, some of you must stand on top of Mount Gerizim and proclaim what will cause Yahweh to bless you, and the others must stand on top of Mount Ebal and proclaim what will cause Yahweh to curse you.” ³⁰ (Those two mountains are west of the Jordan River,

west of the plain along the Jordan, in the land where the Canaanites live. They live close to the sacred trees near Gilgal.) ³¹ “You will soon cross the Jordan River to occupy the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you. When you enter that land and start to live there, ³² be sure to obey all the rules and decrees that I am giving to you today.”

Chapter 12

¹ “I will now tell you the rules and decrees that you must faithfully obey in the land that Yahweh, the God whom our ancestors worshiped, is giving to you to occupy. You must obey these laws all the time that you are alive. ² When you drive out those people groups whose land you will take, you must destroy all the places where they worshiped their gods, places on the tops of mountains and hills and beside large trees. ³ You must tear down their altars and smash their pillars. Burn the statues of their goddess Asherah and chop down their carved figures, in order that no one will ever worship them in those places again.

⁴ Do not worship Yahweh like the people in Canaan worship their gods. ⁵ Instead, you must go to the place that Yahweh will choose. It will be in the area where one of your tribes will live. That is where you must enter Yahweh’s presence and worship him. ⁶ That is the place where you must bring your sacrifices that the priests will burn whole on the altar, and your other sacrifices that your yourselves present to me, your tithes, other offerings that you promise to give me, the first-born animals from your cattle and sheep, or any other kind of offering. ⁷ There, in the presence of Yahweh our God, you and your families will eat the good things

that you have worked to produce, and you will be happy, because he has blessed you very, very much.

⁸ When you are in that land, you must not do some of the things that we have been doing. Until now, you have all been worshipping Yahweh the way you want to, ⁹ because you have not yet arrived in the land which he will allow you to permanently possess, where you will be able to live peacefully. ¹⁰ But when you cross the Jordan River, you will start to live in the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you. He will protect you from all your enemies that will surround you, and you will live peacefully.

¹¹ Yahweh will choose one place where he wants you to worship him. That is the place to which you must bring all the offerings that I command you to bring: The sacrifices that the priests will burn whole on the altar, your other sacrifices, other offerings that you yourselves decide to present, your tithes, and all the special offerings that you will solemnly promise to give to Yahweh. ¹² Rejoice there in the presence of Yahweh, along with your children, your male and female servants, and the descendants of Levi who live in your towns. Do not forget that the descendants of Levi will not have their own land, like you do. ¹³ Be sure that you do not offer burn animals as sacrifices anywhere you want to. ¹⁴ You must offer them only in the place that Yahweh will choose for you, in an area that belongs to one of your tribes. That is the only place where he wants you to offer sacrifices that the priests will burn whole on the altar, and to do the other things that I am commanding you to do when you worship him.

¹⁵ However, God will permit you to kill and eat the meat of your animals in the places where you live. As often as you want to, you may eat meat from the ani-

mals that Yahweh our God will bless you by giving them to you. Those who are at that time clean or unclean may all eat that meat, just like you would eat the meat of a deer or an antelope. ¹⁶ But you must not eat the blood of any animal; you must let the blood drain onto the ground before you cook the meat. ¹⁷ In the places where you live, you must not eat the things that you are offering to Yahweh: You must not eat the tithes of your grain or of your wine, or of your olive oil, or the firstborn of your cattle and sheep, or the offerings that you yourselves decide to present to Yahweh, or any other offerings. ¹⁸ Instead, you and your children and your male and female servants and the descendants of Levi who live in your towns must eat those things in the presence of Yahweh in the place that he chooses. And you should be happy about everything that you have done. ¹⁹ Be sure that you take care of the descendants of Levi all during the time that you live in your land.

²⁰ When Yahweh our God gives you much more land than you will have at first—and he has promised to do this, and when you say, ‘I would like some meat to eat,’ you are permitted to eat meat whenever you want to. ²¹ If the place that Yahweh our God chooses to be the place for you to worship him is far from where you live, you are permitted to kill some of your cattle or sheep that Yahweh has given to you, and you may eat that meat in the town where you live, just like I have told you to do. ²² Those who are either clean or unclean at the time may eat that meat, just like you would eat the meat of a deer or an antelope. ²³ But be sure that you do not eat the blood of any animal, because it is the blood that sustains life in living beings. You must not eat the life along with the meat. ²⁴ Do not eat the blood; instead, let it drain onto the ground. ²⁵ If you obey this command and do what Yahweh says

is right for you to do, things will go well for you and for your descendants.

²⁶ But the offerings that Yahweh has told you to set aside for him, and the other offerings that you yourselves decide to give, you must take to the place that he will choose. ²⁷ There the priest will burn those offerings on Yahweh's altar. He will kill the animals, drain out the blood, and throw some of it onto the sides of the altar. And you may eat some of that meat. ²⁸ Faithfully obey all these things that I have commanded you. If you do that, things will go well forever for you and your descendants, because you will be doing what Yahweh our God says is right for you to do and what pleases him.

²⁹ When you enter the land that you will occupy, as you advance, Yahweh our God will destroy the people groups that live there. ³⁰ After he does that, be sure that you do not worship the gods that they have been worshiping, because if you do that, it will be like a trap that will catch you. Do not ask anyone about those gods, saying, 'Tell me how they worshiped their gods, in order that I can worship Yahweh in the same way.' ³¹ Do not try to worship Yahweh our God like they have worshiped their gods, because when they worship them, they do disgusting things, things that Yahweh hates. The worst thing that they do is that they sacrifice their own children and burn them on their altars.

³² Be sure to do everything that I have commanded you to do. Do not add anything to these commands, and do not take anything away from them.

Chapter 13

¹ Possibly there will be people among you who say that they are prophets. They may say that they are able to interpret the

meaning of dreams or perform various kinds of miracles. ² They will say those things in order to induce you to worship gods that you have never known about before. But even if what they predict happens, ³ do not pay attention to what they say. Yahweh our God will be testing you to find out if you love him with all your inner being. ⁴ You must conduct your lives as Yahweh our God wants you to, and you must honor him, do what he tells you to do, and trust in him.

⁵ But you must execute anyone who falsely says that he is a prophet, or someone who falsely says that he can interpret dreams, or who tells you to rebel against Yahweh our God, who rescued your ancestors from being slaves in Egypt. People like that are only wanting to cause you to stop living as Yahweh has commanded you to do. Execute them to get rid of this evil among you. ⁶ It does not matter if even your brother or your daughter or your wife or some close friend secretly urges you and says 'Let us worship other gods, gods that neither you nor your ancestors have never known about.' ⁷ Some of them may encourage you to worship gods that people groups that live near you worship, or gods that groups who live far away worship. ⁸ Do not do what they suggest. Do not even listen to them. Do not act mercifully toward them, and do not keep secret what they have done. ⁹ Execute them! You be the first one to throw stones at them to kill them; then everyone else must throw stones at them, too. ¹⁰ Kill such people by throwing stones at them, because they are trying to cause you to stop worshiping Yahweh our God, who rescued your ancestors from being slaves in Egypt. ¹¹ When they are executed, all the Israelite people will hear what happened, and they will become afraid, and none of them will do such an evil thing again.

¹² When you are living in one of the towns in the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you, you may hear ¹³ that some worthless people among you are deceiving the people of their town, saying, 'Let us go and worship other gods.' ¹⁴ Examine the facts about it thoroughly. Suppose you find out that it is true that such a disgraceful thing has happened. ¹⁵ Then kill all the people in that town. And kill all their livestock, too. Destroy the town completely. ¹⁶ Gather all the possessions that belonged to the people who lived there and pile them up in the city plaza. Then burn the town and everything in it, as though it were an offering to Yahweh that was completely burned on the altar. The ruins must stay there forever; the town must never be rebuilt. ¹⁷ You must not take for yourselves anything that Yahweh has said must be destroyed, because if you do what I say, Yahweh will stop being angry with you, and he will act mercifully toward you. And he will cause you to have many children, which is what he promised our ancestors that he would do. ¹⁸ Yahweh our God will do all those things if you do what he is telling you to do, and if you obey all the commandments that I am giving to you today and do what Yahweh says is right for you to do.

Chapter 14

¹ We are people who belong to Yahweh our God. So when people die, do not show that you are grieving by gashing yourselves or by shaving the hair on your foreheads like the other people groups do. ² We belong to Yahweh alone. Yahweh chose us from all the other people groups on the earth to be his special people. ³ Do not eat anything that Yahweh detests. ⁴ The animals whose meat you are permitted to eat are cattle, sheep, goats, ⁵ all

kinds of deer, gazelles, wild goats, and mountain sheep. ⁶ Those are animals that have split hooves and that also chew the cud. ⁷ But there are other animals that chew the cud that you must not eat. Those are camels, rabbits, and rock badgers. They chew the cud, but their hooves are not split. So they are not acceptable for you to eat. ⁸ Do not eat pigs. They are unacceptable for you to eat; their hooves are split, but they do not chew the cud. Do not eat the meat of those animals; do not even touch their dead bodies. ⁹ You are permitted to eat any fish that has scales and fins. ¹⁰ But anything else that lives in the water that does not have scales and fins, you must not eat, because they must be unacceptable to you.

¹¹ You are permitted to eat the flesh of any bird that is acceptable to Yahweh. ¹² But eagles, vultures, osprey, ¹³ buzzards, and all kinds of kites you may not eat. ¹⁴ You are not permitted to eat all kinds of crows and ravens, ¹⁵ and the ostrich, and the night hawk, the sea gull, no kind of hawk, ¹⁶ the little owl, the great owl, the white owl, ¹⁷ pelicans, vultures that eat dead animals, cormorants. ¹⁸ And you are not permitted to eat the stork, any kind of heron, the hoopoe, and the bat you must not eat.

¹⁹ All insects with wings and which swarm are unacceptable to Yahweh; do not eat them. ²⁰ But other insects with wings are acceptable to eat.

²¹ Do not eat any animal that has died naturally. You may allow foreigners who live among you to eat those things, or you may sell them to other foreigners. But you belong to Yahweh our God; those who belong to him are not permitted to eat the flesh of animals whose blood has not been drained out.

You must not cook a young sheep or goat in its mother's milk."

²² "Once each year you must set apart a tenth of all the crops that are produced in your fields. ²³ Take them to the place that Yahweh our God will choose for you to worship him. There you must eat the tenth of your grain, your wine, your olive oil, and the meat of the firstborn male animals of your cattle and your sheep. Do this in order that you may learn to always honor Yahweh, the one who has blessed you by giving you these things. ²⁴ If the place that Yahweh has chosen for you to worship him is very far from your home, with the result that you are not able to take there the tithes of your crops with which Yahweh has blessed you, do this: ²⁵ Sell the tenth of your crops, wrap the money carefully in a cloth, and take it with you to the place of worship that Yahweh has chosen. ²⁶ There, with that money, you may buy whatever you want to—beef or lamb or wine or fermented drinks. And there, in the presence of Yahweh, you and your families should eat and drink those things and be happy. ²⁷ But be sure to not neglect to help the descendants of Levi who live in your towns, because they will not own any land.

²⁸ At the end of every three years, bring a tithe of all your crops that have been produced in that year and store it in your towns. ²⁹ That food will be for the descendants of Levi, because they will not have their own land, and for the foreigners who live among you, and for orphans and widows who live in your towns. They are permitted to come to where the food is stored and take what they need. Do that in order that Yahweh our God will bless you in everything that you do.

Chapter 15

¹ At the end of every seven years, you must cancel all debts. ² Do it like this: Each

of you who has lent money to a fellow Israelite must cancel that debt. You must not insist that he pay it back. You must do that because Yahweh has declared that the debts must be canceled every seven years. ³ During that year you may require foreigners who live among you to pay what they owe you, but you must not demand that from any fellow Israelite. ⁴⁻⁵ Yahweh our God will bless you in the land that he is giving to you. If you obey Yahweh our God and obey all the commandments that I am giving to you today, there will not be any poor people among you. ⁶ Yahweh our God will bless you like he has promised to do, and you will be able to lend money to people of other people groups, but you will not need to borrow from any of them. You will control the finances of many people groups, but they will not control your finances.

⁷ In the towns that Yahweh our God is giving to you, if there are any Israelites who are poor, do not be selfish and refuse to help them. ⁸ Instead, be generous and lend them the money that they need. ⁹ Be sure that you do not say to yourself, 'The year when debts will be canceled is near, so I do not want to lend anyone any money now, because he will not need to pay it back when that year comes.' It would be evil to even think that. If you act in an unfriendly way toward a needy fellow Israelite, and give him nothing, he will cry out to Yahweh against you, and Yahweh will say that you have sinned by not helping that person. ¹⁰ Give freely to poor people and give generously. If you do that, Yahweh will bless you in everything that you do. ¹¹ There will always be some poor people in your land, so I command you to give generously to poor people, to your fellow Israelites.

¹² If any of your fellow Israelite men or women sell themselves to one of you to

become your slave, you must free them after they have worked for you for six years. When the seventh year comes, you must free them. ¹³ When you free them, do not allow them to go empty-handed. ¹⁴ Instead, give to them generously from the things with which Yahweh has blessed you—sheep, grain, and wine. ¹⁵ Do not forget that your ancestors were once slaves in Egypt and that Yahweh our God freed them. That is the reason that I am now commanding you to do this.

¹⁶ But one of your slaves may say, ‘I do not want to leave you.’ Perhaps he loves you and your family because you have treated him well. ¹⁷ If he says that, take him to the door of your house and, while he is standing against the doorway, pierce one of his earlobes with an awl. That will indicate that he will be your slave for the rest of his life. Do the same thing to any female slave who does not want to leave you.

¹⁸ Do not complain when you are required to free your slaves. Keep in mind that they served you for six years, and that you paid them only half as much as you pay the servants that you hire. If you free them, Yahweh our God will bless you in everything that you do.

¹⁹ Set aside for the honor of Yahweh our God the firstborn male animals from your cattle and sheep. Do not force them to do any work for you, and do not shear the wool of the firstborn animals. ²⁰ You and your family must kill them and eat their meat in the presence of Yahweh at the place that he chooses for you to worship him. ²¹ But if the animals have any defects, if they are lame or blind, or if they have any other serious defect, you must not sacrifice them to Yahweh our God. ²² You may kill and eat the meat of those animals in your towns. Those who have done things that cause them to become unacceptable to God and those who have not

done such things are permitted to eat that meat, just like anyone is permitted to eat the meat of a gazelle or a deer. ²³ But you must not eat any of the blood; you must drain all the blood on the ground when you kill those animals.

Chapter 16

¹ Each year honor Yahweh our God by celebrating the Passover Festival in the month of Aviv in early spring. It was on a night in that month that Yahweh rescued your ancestors from Egypt. ² In order to celebrate that festival, go to the place that Yahweh will choose for you to worship him, and offer there one young animal from your cattle or your sheep to be the Passover sacrifice. ³ When you eat the Passover meal, the bread that you eat must not have yeast in it. You must eat this kind of bread, which will be called the bread of suffering, for seven days. This is to help you to remember all during the time that you are alive that when your ancestors left Egypt, where they were suffering because they were slaves, they left very quickly. They did not have time to put in yeast and wait for the dough to swell up. ⁴ During that festival, which will last for seven days, you must not have any yeast in any house in your land. Furthermore, the meat of the animal that you sacrifice on the evening of the first day of the Passover Festival must be eaten during that night; do not allow any of it to remain until the next day.

⁵⁻⁶ To honor Yahweh our God, you must offer the Passover sacrifice only at the place that he chooses for you to worship him; do not offer that sacrifice in any other town in the land that Yahweh is giving to you. Offer that sacrifice when the sun is setting, at the same time of day that your ancestors started to leave Egypt. ⁷ Boil the meat

and eat it at the place of worship that Yahweh our God chooses. The next morning, you may return to your tents. ⁸ Each day for six days the bread that you eat must have no yeast in it. On the seventh day, you must all gather to worship Yahweh our God. It will be a day of rest, you must not do any work on that day.

⁹ Each year, from the day that you start to harvest your grain, count seven weeks.

¹⁰ Then, to honor Yahweh our God, celebrate the Festival of Pentecost. Do that by bringing to him an offering of grain. Yahweh has blessed you by causing it to grow in your fields during that year. If you had a big harvest, bring a big offering. If you had a small harvest, bring a small offering. ¹¹ Each married couple should be joyful in the presence of Yahweh. Their children, their servants, the descendants of Levi who are in that town, and the foreigners, orphans, and widows who are living among you, should also be joyful. Bring those offerings to the place of worship that Yahweh will choose.

¹² When you celebrate these festivals by obeying these commands, remember that your ancestors were slaves in Egypt.

¹³ Each year, after you have threshed all your grain and pressed the juice from all your grapes, you must celebrate the Festival of Shelters for seven days. ¹⁴ Each married couple along with their children, their servants, the descendants of Levi who are in that town, and the foreigners, orphans, and widows who are living among you, should be joyful in the presence of Yahweh. ¹⁵ Honor Yahweh our God by celebrating this festival for seven days in the place that he chooses for you to worship him. You should all be joyful, because Yahweh will have blessed your harvest and all the other work that you have done.

¹⁶ So, each year all of you Israelite men

must gather to worship Yahweh our God at the place that he will choose, to celebrate three festivals: The Festival of Bread with no Yeast, the Festival of Pentecost, and the Festival of Shelters. No one should come before Yahweh without an offering. Each of you men must bring an offering for Yahweh to these festivals. ¹⁷ The offerings should be in proportion to the blessings that Yahweh has given you during that year.

¹⁸ Appoint judges and other officials throughout your tribes, in all the towns in the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you. They must judge people fairly.

¹⁹ They must not judge unjustly. They must not favor one person more than another. The judges must not accept bribes, because if a judge accepts a bribe, even if he is wise and honest, it will be very difficult for him to judge fairly; he will do what the person who gave him the bribe wants him to do and declare that the innocent people must be punished. ²⁰ You must be completely fair and just, in order that you may live long enough to occupy the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you.

²¹ When you make an altar to worship Yahweh our God, do not put next to it any wooden pole that represents the goddess Asherah. ²² And do not set up any stone pillar to worship any idol, because Yahweh hates them.

Chapter 17

¹ Do not sacrifice to Yahweh our God any cattle or sheep or goats that have any defects, because Yahweh detests that kind of gift.

² When you are living in any of the towns in the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you, suppose some man or woman

sins by disobeying the covenant that Yahweh has made with you. ³ Suppose that person has worshiped and bowed down to other gods, or the sun, or the moon, or the stars. ⁴ If someone tells you that some person has been doing that, you must investigate it thoroughly to see whether this detestable thing has happened in Israel. ⁵ If it has happened, then you must take outside the town the man or woman who has done it. Then you must kill that person by throwing stones at him or her. ⁶ But you are allowed to execute such people only if at least two witnesses testify that they saw them doing that. They must not be executed if there is only one witness. ⁷ The witnesses should throw stones at the guilty person. Then the other people should throw stones until person dies. By doing that, you will get rid of this evil practice from among you.

⁸ Sometimes it will be very difficult for a judge to decide what really happened. He might be trying to decide whether, when someone injured or killed another person, that person did it accidentally or deliberately. Or he might be trying to decide if some person is taking another person to court unfairly. If in any town it is very difficult to know what really happened, and if the judge cannot decide it, you should go to the place that Yahweh our God has chosen for you to worship him. ⁹ There you should present the case to the descendants of Levi who are priests, and to the judge who is serving at that time, and they should decide what should be done. ¹⁰ After they make their decision, you must do what they tell you to do. ¹¹ Accept what they have decided, and do what they say that you should do. Do not try to change in any way what they have decided. ¹² You must execute anyone who proudly disobeys the judge or the priest who stands there in the presence of Yahweh and decides what should be done. By doing that,

you will get rid of this evil practice from among you. ¹³ Then after that person is executed, all the people will hear about it, and they will be afraid, and none of them will act that way anymore.

¹⁴ I know that after you have occupied the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you, and you are living there, you will say, 'We should have a king to rule over us, like the kings that other nations around us have.' ¹⁵ Yahweh our God will permit you to have a king, but be sure that you appoint someone whom he has chosen. That man must be an Israelite; you must not appoint someone who is a foreigner to be your king. ¹⁶ After he becomes the king, he should not acquire a large number of horses for himself. He should not send people to Egypt to buy horses for him, because Yahweh said to you, 'Never return to Egypt for anything!' ¹⁷ And he must not have a lot of wives, because if he did that, they would turn him away from worshipping only Yahweh. And he must not acquire a lot of silver and gold.

¹⁸ When he becomes your king, he must appoint someone to copy these laws. He must copy them from the scroll that is kept by the priests descended from Levi. ¹⁹ He must keep this new scroll near him and read from it every day of his life, in order that he may learn to have an awesome respect for Yahweh, and to faithfully obey all the rules and regulations that are written in these laws. ²⁰ If he does that, he will not think that he is more important than his fellow Israelites, and he will completely obey Yahweh's commands. As a result, he and his descendants will rule as kings in Israel for many years."

Chapter 18

¹ "The priests, who are all from the tribe

of Levi, will not receive any land in Israel. Instead, they will receive some of the food that other people offer to be burned on the altar to be sacrificed to Yahweh and some of the other sacrifices that will be offered to Yahweh. ² They will not be allotted any land like the other tribes will be. What they will receive is the honor of being Yahweh's priests, which is what he said that they should have.

³ When the people bring an ox or a sheep to be sacrificed, they must give to the priests the shoulder, the cheeks, and the stomach of those animals. ⁴ You must also give to them the first part of the grain that you harvest, and the first part of the wine that you make, and the first part of the olive oil that you make, and the first part of the wool that you shear from your sheep. ⁵ You must do this because Yahweh our God has chosen the tribe of Levi from all of your tribes, in order that it would be ones from that tribe who would always be the priests who would serve him.

⁶ If any man from the tribe of Levi who has been living in one of the towns in Israel wants to come from there to the place of worship that Yahweh has chosen, and to start living there, ⁷ he is permitted to serve Yahweh there as a priest, just like the other men from the tribe of Levi who have been serving there. ⁸ He must be given the same amount of food that the other priests receive. He is permitted to keep the money that his relatives receive for selling some of their possessions and send to him.

⁹ When you enter the land that Yahweh our God is giving you, you must not imitate the disgusting things that the people groups who are there now do. ¹⁰ You must not sacrifice any of your children by burning them on your altars. Do not try to use supernatural power to discover what will happen in the future. Do not try to

use magic to find out what will happen in the future. Do not interpret omens to find out what will happen. Do not practice sorcery. Do not put spells on people. ¹¹ Do not try to talk with spirits of dead people. Do not do magic. ¹² Yahweh hates people who do any of those disgusting things. And as you advance through that land, he is going to drive out the people groups because they do those disgusting things. ¹³ But you must always be faithful to Yahweh and avoid doing any of those disgusting things.

¹⁴ The people groups that you are about to expel from the land that you will occupy consult soothsayers and those who practice divination. But as for you, Yahweh our God does not allow you to do that. ¹⁵ Some day he will send from among you a prophet like me. He will tell you what will happen in the future, and you must obey him. ¹⁶ On the day that your ancestors were gathered at the bottom of Mount Sinai, they pleaded with me saying, 'We do not want Yahweh to speak to us again, and we do not want to see this huge fire that is burning on the mountain!' Your ancestors said that because they were afraid that they would die if Yahweh spoke to them again.

¹⁷ Then Yahweh said to me, 'What they have said is true. ¹⁸ So I will send from among them a prophet like you. I will tell him what to say, and then he will tell people everything that I tell him to say. ¹⁹ He will speak for me. And I will punish anyone who does not heed what he says. ²⁰ But if any person says that he is a prophet and dares to speak a message which he falsely says comes from me but which I did not tell him to speak, or anyone who speaks a message that he says other gods have revealed to him, he must be executed for doing that.'

²¹ But perhaps you will say to yourself,

‘How can we know if a message that someone tells us does not come from Yahweh?’ ²² The answer is that when someone speaks a message about what will happen in the future, a message that he says was revealed by Yahweh, if what he says does not happen, you will know that the message did not come from Yahweh. That person has wrongly claimed that it was revealed to him by Yahweh. So you do not need to be afraid of anything that he says.

Chapter 19

¹ After Yahweh our God has destroyed the people groups from the land that he is giving to you, and after you have driven them out from their cities and you start to live in their houses, ²⁻³ you must divide into three parts the land that he is giving to you. Then select a city in each part. You must make good roads in order that people can get to those cities easily. Someone who kills another person can escape to one of those cities to be safe.

⁴ This is the rule about someone who has killed another person. If someone accidentally kills another person who was not his enemy, he may escape to one of those cities and be safe. ⁵ For example, if two men go into the forest to cut some wood, if the axe head comes off the handle while one of them is chopping down a tree and the ax head strikes and kills the other man, the man who was using the ax will be allowed to run to one of those cities and be safe there, because the people of that city will protect him. ⁶ Because he accidentally killed someone, and because the man was not his enemy, he can try to run to one of those cities. If there were only one city, it may be a long distance to that city. Then if the relative of the man who was killed to get revenge, is very angry, he may be

able to catch the other person before he arrives at that city. ⁷ Therefore, I give you this command, that you select three cities for this purpose.

⁸⁻⁹ If you do everything that I am today commanding you to do, and if you love Yahweh our God, and if you conduct your lives as he wants you to do, Yahweh our God will give you much more land than you will have when you first occupy it, which is what he promised to do. He will give you all the land which he promised your ancestors that he would give to you. When he gives you that land, you must select three more cities to which people may escape. ¹⁰ Do this in order that people who are innocent will not die, and you will not be guilty for allowing them to be executed, in the land that Yahweh is giving to you.

¹¹ But suppose someone hates his enemy and hides and waits for that person to come along the road. Then when he passes by, suddenly he attacks him and murders him. If the attacker flees to one of those cities to be protected there, ¹² the elders of the city where the murdered man lived must not protect the attacker. They must send someone to the city to which the other man escaped, and bring him to to get revenge, so that he may execute that man. ¹³ You must not pity those who murder other people! Instead, you must execute them, in order that the people in the land of Israel will not be punished for murdering innocent people, and in order that things will go well for you.

¹⁴ When you are living in the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you, do not move the markers of your neighbors’ property boundaries that were placed there long ago.

¹⁵ If someone is accused of committing a crime, one person who says, ‘I saw him do it’ is not enough to find him guilty. There must be at least two people who say, ‘We

saw him do it.' If there is only one witness, the judge must not believe that what he says is true.

¹⁶ Or suppose that someone tries to do wrong to another person by falsely accusing him. ¹⁷ Then both of them must go to the place where the people worship, to talk to the priests and judges who are serving at that time. ¹⁸ The judges must investigate the case carefully. If the judges determine that one of them has accused the other falsely, ¹⁹ that person must be punished in the same way that the other one would have been punished if the judges had decided that he was guilty. By punishing such people, you will get rid of this evil practice from among you. ²⁰ And when that person is punished, everyone will hear what has happened, and they will be afraid, and no one will dare to act that way anymore. ²¹ You must not pity people who are punished like that. The rule should be that a person who has murdered someone else must be executed; one of a person's eyes must be gouged out if he has gouged out someone else's eye, one tooth of a person who has knocked out the tooth of another person must be knocked out; one hand of a person who has cut off the hand of another person must likewise be cut off; one foot of a person who has cut off the foot of another person must also be cut off.

Chapter 20

¹ When your soldiers go to fight your enemies, and you see that they have many horses and chariots and that their army is much bigger than yours, do not be afraid of them, because Yahweh our God, who brought your ancestors safely out of Egypt, will be with you. ² When you are ready to start the battle, the high priest

must stand in front of the troops. ³ He must say to them, 'You Israelite men, listen to me! Today you are going to fight against your enemies. Do not be timid or afraid, ⁴ because Yahweh our God will go with you. He will fight your enemies for you, and he will enable you to defeat them.'

⁵ Then the army officers must say to the troops, 'If anyone among you has just built a new house and has not dedicated it to God, he should go home and dedicate the house. If he does not do that, if he dies in the battle, someone else will dedicate the house and live in it. ⁶ If anyone among you has planted a vineyard and has not yet harvested any grapes from it, he should go home. If he stays here and dies in the battle, someone else will harvest the grapes and enjoy the wine made from them. ⁷ If anyone among you has become engaged to marry a woman but has not married her yet, he should go home. If he stays here and dies in the battle, someone else will marry her.'

⁸ Then the officers must also say, 'If anyone among you is afraid or timid, he should go home, in order that he does not cause his fellow soldiers to also stop being courageous.' ⁹ When the officers have finished speaking to the troops, they must appoint commanders over them.

¹⁰ When you go up to a city that is far away to attack it, first tell the people there that if they surrender, you will not attack them. ¹¹ If they open the gates of the city and surrender, they will all become your slaves to work for you. ¹² But if they refuse to surrender peacefully and decide instead to fight against you, your troops must surround the city and break through the walls. ¹³ Then, when Yahweh our God enables you to capture the city, you must kill all the men in the city. ¹⁴ But you are allowed to take for yourselves the women, the children, the livestock, and everything

else that you want to take from the city. You will be allowed to enjoy all the things that belonged to your enemies, the things that Yahweh our God has given to you. ¹⁵ You should do that in all the cities that are far from the land in which you will settle.

¹⁶ But in the cities that are in the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you forever, you must kill all the people and all the animals. ¹⁷ You must get rid of them completely. Get rid of the Heth, the Amor the Canaan, the Periz, the Hiv, and the Jebus people groups; that is what Yahweh our God commanded you to do. ¹⁸ If you do not do that, they will teach you to sin against Yahweh our God and do the disgusting things that they do when they worship their gods.

¹⁹ When you surround a city for a long time, trying to capture it, do not cut down the fruit trees outside the city. You are allowed to eat the fruit from the trees, but do not destroy the trees, because they certainly are not your enemies. ²⁰ You are permitted to cut down the other trees and use the wood to make ladders and towers to enable you to go over the walls and capture the city.”

Chapter 21

¹ ”Suppose someone has been murdered in a field in the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you, and you do not know who killed that person. ² If that happens, your elders and judges must go out to where that person’s corpse was found and measure the distance from there to each of the nearby towns. ³ Then the elders in the closest town must select a young cow that has never been used for doing work. ⁴ They must take it to a place near a stream where the ground has never been plowed or planted. There they must break

its neck. ⁵ The priests must go there also, because Yahweh our God has chosen them from the tribe of Levi to serve him and to be his representatives when they bless people. And he has also chosen them to settle disputes in which someone has been injured. ⁶ The elders from the closest town must wash their hands over the young cow whose neck was broken, there in the valley, ⁷ and they must say, ‘We did not murder this person, and we did not see who did it. ⁸ Yahweh, forgive us, your Israelite people whom you rescued from Egypt. Do not consider us to be guilty. Instead, forgive us.’ ⁹ By doing that, you will be doing what Yahweh considers to be right, and you will not be considered to be guilty for murdering that person.

¹⁰ When you who are soldiers go to fight against your enemies, and Yahweh our God enables you to defeat them, and they become your prisoners, ¹¹ one of you may see among them a beautiful woman that he likes, and he may want to marry her. ¹² He should take her to his home, and there she must shave all the hair off her head and cut her fingernails to signify that now she does not belong to her people group anymore, but now she is becoming an Israelite. ¹³ She must take off the clothes that she was wearing when she was captured, and put on Israelite clothes. She must stay in that man’s house and mourn for a month because of leaving her parents. After that, he will be allowed to marry her. ¹⁴ Later, if he no longer is pleased with her, he will be permitted to allow her to leave him. But because she was shamed and was forced to sleep with him, he will not be allowed to treat her like a slave and sell her to anyone else.

¹⁵ Suppose that a man has two wives, but he likes one of them and dislikes the other one. And suppose that they both give birth to sons, and that the oldest son is the child

of the woman that he does not like. ¹⁶ On the day when that man decides which of his possessions each son will obtain after he dies, he must not favor the son of the wife that he loves by giving him the larger share that should go to the firstborn son. ¹⁷ He must give two-thirds of his possessions to the older son, the son of the wife whom he does not like. That son is his firstborn son, and he must be given the largest share.

¹⁸ Suppose there is a boy who is very stubborn and is always rebelling against his parents, and who will not heed what they say to him. And suppose that they punish him but he still does not pay attention to what they tell him. ¹⁹ If that happens, his parents must take him to the gate of the city where they live and have him stand in front of the elders of the city. ²⁰ Then the parents must say to the elders of that city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and always rebelling against us. He will not pay attention to what we tell him. He eats too much, and he gets drunk.' ²¹ Then all the elders of that city must execute him by throwing stones at him. By doing that, you will get rid of this evil practice from among you. And everyone in Israel will hear about what happened and they will be afraid to do what he did.

²² If someone is executed for having committed a crime for which he deserves to die, and you hang his corpse on a post, ²³ you must not allow his corpse to remain there all night. You must bury it on the day that he died, because if you keep the corpse on a post, God will curse the land. You must bury the corpse that day, in order that you do not defile the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you.

Chapter 22

¹ If you see an Israelite's ox or sheep that has strayed away, do not act as though you did not see it. Take it back to its owner. ² But if the owner does not live near you, or if you do not know who he is, take the animal to your house. It can stay with you until the owner comes, searching for it. Then you must give the animal to him. ³ You must do that same thing if you see a donkey, a piece of clothing, or anything else that someone has lost. Do not refuse to do what you should do. Do not pretend to know nothing about the matter.

⁴ And if you see a fellow Israelite's donkey or cow that has fallen down on the road, do not act as though you did not see it. Help the owner to lift the animal up so that it can stand on its feet again.

⁵ Women must not wear men's clothes, and men must not wear women's clothes. Yahweh our God hates people who do things like that.

⁶ If you happen to find a bird's nest in a tree or on the ground, and the mother bird is sitting in the nest on its eggs or with the baby birds, do not take the mother bird and kill it. ⁷ You are permitted to take the baby birds, but you must allow the mother bird to fly away. Do this in order that things will go well for you and that you will live for a long time.

⁸ If you build a new house, you must put a railing around the roof. In this way, you will not be guilty of having caused someone's death if a person falls from it and dies.

⁹ Do not plant any crop in the area where your grapevines are growing. If you do, the priests in Yahweh's sanctuary will seize both the seed and the harvest of that vineyard.

¹⁰ Do not hitch together an ox and a donkey for plowing your fields.

¹¹ Do not wear clothing that is made by weaving together wool and linen.

¹² Twist threads together to make tassels and sew them on the four bottom corners of your cloak.

¹³ Suppose a man marries a young woman and sleeps with her and later decides that he does not want her anymore, ¹⁴ and suppose that he says false things about her, and claims that she was not a virgin when he married her. ¹⁵ If that happens, the young woman's parents must take the sheet that was on the bed when the man and their daughter were married, which still has bloodstains on it, and show it to the elders of the city at the gate of the city.

¹⁶ Then the father of the young woman must say to the elders, 'I gave my daughter to this man to be his wife. But now he says that he does not want her anymore. ¹⁷ And he has falsely said that she was not a virgin when he married her. But look! Here is what proves that my daughter was a virgin! Look at the bloodstains on the sheet where they slept the night that they were married!' And he will show the sheet to the elders. ¹⁸ Then the elders of that city must take that man and whip him. ¹⁹ They shall require that he pay a fine of one hundred pieces of silver and give the money to the father of the young woman, because the man has brought shame on an Israelite young woman. Also, that woman must continue to live with him; she is his wife. He is not allowed to divorce her during the rest of his life.

²⁰ But if what the man said is true, and there is nothing to prove that she was a virgin when he married her, ²¹ they must take that young woman to the door of her father's house. Then the men of that city must execute her by throwing stones at her. They must do that because she

has done something in Israel that is very disgraceful, by sleeping with some man while she was still living in her father's house. By executing her like that, you will get rid of this evil practice from among you.

²² If a man is caught while he is sleeping with another man's wife, both of them must be executed. By doing that, you will get rid of this evil practice from Israel.

²³ Suppose in some town a man sees a young woman who is promised to be married to another man, and he is caught sleeping with her. ²⁴ You must take both of them to the gate of that town, where the town leaders decide important matters. There you must execute them both by throwing stones at them. You must execute the young woman because she did not shout for help even though she was in the town. And the man must be executed because he slept with someone who was already promised to be married. By doing that, you will get rid of this evil practice from among you

²⁵ But suppose out in the open countryside a man meets a young woman who is engaged to be married, and he forces her to sleep with him. If that happens, only that man must be executed. ²⁶ You must not punish the young woman, because she did not do anything for which she deserves to be executed. This case is like when one man attacks another man in the countryside and murders him, ²⁷ because the man who forced her to sleep with him saw her when she was in the open countryside, and even though she called out for help, there was no one there who could rescue her.

²⁸ If a man forces a young woman who is not engaged to be married to sleep with him, and if someone sees him while he is doing that, ²⁹ that man must pay fifty pieces of silver to the young woman's fa-

ther, and he must marry her, because he shamed her by forcing her to sleep with him. He is not allowed to divorce her during the rest of his life.

³⁰ A man must not take what belongs to his father by sleeping with any of his father's wives.

Chapter 23

¹ Any male person whose reproductive organs have been destroyed may not be included as one of Yahweh's people.

² No illegitimate person or descendant of an illegitimate person, extending to the tenth generation, shall be included as one of Yahweh's people.

³ No one from the Ammon or Moab people groups shall be included as one of Yahweh's people, extending to the tenth generation. ⁴ One reason for this is that their leaders refused to give your ancestors food and water when they were traveling from Egypt to Canaan. Another reason is that they paid Balaam son of Beor from the town of Pethor in Mesopotamia, to curse you Israelites. ⁵ But Yahweh our God did not pay attention to Balaam; instead, he caused Balaam to bless your ancestors, because Yahweh loved them. ⁶ As long as Israel is a nation, you must not do anything to cause things to go well for those two people groups to enable them to prosper.

⁷ But do not despise anyone from the Edom people group, because they are descendants of your ancestor Isaac, just like you are. And do not despise people from Egypt, because they treated your ancestors well when they first lived in Egypt. ⁸ The grandchildren of people from Edom and Egypt who live among you now may be included among Yahweh's people.

⁹ When your soldiers are living in camp in time of war, they must avoid doing things that would make them unacceptable to God. ¹⁰ If any soldier becomes unacceptable to God because semen comes out of his body during the night, the next morning he must go outside the camp and stay there during that day. ¹¹ But in the evening of that day, he must bathe himself, and at sunset he will be allowed to come back into the camp.

¹² Your soldiers must have a toilet area outside the camp where you can go when you need to. ¹³ When you go to fight against your enemies, carry a stick along along with your weapons, in order that when you need to defecate, you can dig a hole with the stick, and then cover up the hole when you have finished defecating. ¹⁴ You must keep the camp acceptable to Yahweh our God, because he is with you in your camp to protect you and to enable you to defeat your enemies. Do not do anything disgraceful that would cause Yahweh to stop you from being his people.

¹⁵ If slaves who escape from their masters come to you and request you to protect them, do not send them back to their masters. ¹⁶ Allow them to stay among you, in whatever town they choose, and do not mistreat them.

¹⁷ Do not allow any Israelite man or woman to become prostitutes at the temple. ¹⁸ Also, do not allow any people who earned money from being a prostitute to bring any of that money into the temple of Yahweh our God, even if they solemnly promised to pay that money to him. Yahweh hates those who are prostitutes.

¹⁹ When you lend money or food or anything else to a fellow Israelite, do not charge them interest. ²⁰ You are allowed to charge interest when you lend money to foreigners who live in your land, but not when you lend money to Israelites. Do

this in order that Yahweh our God will bless you in everything that you do in the land that you are about to enter and occupy.

²¹ When you solemnly promise to give something to Yahweh your God or to do something for him, do not delay in doing it. Yahweh expects you to do what you promised, and if you do not do it, you will be committing a sin. ²² But if you do not solemnly promise to do something, that is not sinful. ²³ But if you voluntarily promise to do something, you must do it.

²⁴ When you walk through someone else's vineyard, you are allowed to pick and eat as many grapes as you want, but you must not put any in a container and take them away. ²⁵ When you walk along a path in someone else's field of grain, you are allowed to pluck some of the grain and eat it, but you must not cut any grain with a sickle and take it with you.

Chapter 24

¹ Suppose a man marries a woman and later decides that he does not want her because there is something offensive, and he sends her away from his house. And suppose he writes a paper in which he says that he is divorcing her, and he gives the paper to her and sends her away from his house. ² Then suppose that she goes away. She is allowed to marry another man. ³ Suppose that that man later also decides that he does not like her, and that he also writes a paper in which he says that he is divorcing her, and he sends her away from his house. Or, suppose that the second husband dies. ⁴ If either of those things happen, her first husband must not marry her again. He must consider that she has become unacceptable to Yahweh. Yahweh would consider it to be disgusting

if he married her again. You must not sin by doing that in the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you.

⁵ When a man has just become married, he must not be required to become a soldier in the army or be required to do any other work for the government. He must be exempt from such work for one year after being married. He should stay at home and make his wife happy for that year.

⁶ Anyone who lends money to someone else is allowed to require that person to give him something to guarantee that he will pay back the money that he borrowed, but he must not take from him his millstone because that would be taking from the other person the millstone that his family needs to make flour for baking bread to stay alive.

⁷ If someone kidnaps a fellow Israelite to make that person his slave or to sell him to become someone else's slave, you must execute the person who did that. By doing that, you will get rid of this evil from among you.

⁸ If you are suffering from leprosy, be sure to do everything that the priests, who are from the tribe of Levi, tell you to do. Obey carefully the instructions that I have given to them. ⁹ Do not forget what Yahweh our God did to Miriam, when she became a leper, as your ancestors were coming out of Egypt.

¹⁰ When you lend something to someone, do not go into his house to take the cloak that he says that he will give you to guarantee that he will return what he has borrowed. ¹¹ Stand outside his house, and the man to whom you are lending something will bring the cloak out to you. ¹² But if he is poor, do not keep that cloak overnight. ¹³ When the sun sets, take the cloak back to him, in order that he may wear it while he sleeps. If you do that, he will ask God

to bless you, and Yahweh our God will be pleased with you.

¹⁴ Do not mistreat any servants whom you have hired who are poor and needy, whether they are Israelites or foreigners who are living in your town. ¹⁵ Every day, before sunset, you must pay them the money that they have earned. They are poor and they need to get their pay. If you do not pay them right away, they will cry out against you to Yahweh, and he will punish you for having sinned like that.

¹⁶ Parents must not be executed for crimes that their children have committed, and children must not be executed for crimes that their parents have committed. People should be executed only for the crimes that they themselves have committed.

¹⁷ You must do for foreigners who live among you and for orphans the things that the laws state that must be done for them. And if you lend something to a widow, do not take her coat from her as a guarantee that she will return it. ¹⁸ Do not forget that you had great troubles when you were slaves in Egypt, and that Yahweh our God rescued you from there. That is why I am commanding you to help others who have troubles.

¹⁹ When you harvest your crops, if you have forgotten that you left one bundle in the field, do not go back to get it. Leave it there for foreigners, orphans, and widows. If you do that, Yahweh will bless you in everything that you do. ²⁰ And when you have harvested all your olives from the trees once, do not go back to pick the ones that are still on the trees. ²¹ Similarly, when you pick the grapes in your vineyard, do not go back a second time to try to find more. Leave them for the foreigners, orphans, and widows among you. ²² Do not forget that Yahweh acted kindly toward you when you were slaves in Egypt. That is why I am commanding

you to be kind to those who are needy."

Chapter 25

¹ "If two Israelites have a dispute and they go to a court, the judge will probably decide that one is innocent and that the other one is guilty. ² If the judge says that the guilty person must be punished, he shall command him to lie with his face on the ground and be whipped. The number of times he is struck with a whip will depend on what kind of crime he committed. ³ It is permitted that he be struck as many as forty times, but no more than that. If he is struck more than forty times, he would be humiliated publicly.

⁴ When your ox is walking on the grain to separate it from the chaff, do not prevent it from eating some of grain.

⁵ If two brothers live on the same property, and one of them who has no son dies, the man's widow should not marry someone who is not a member of his family. The dead man's brother must marry her and sleep with her. It is his duty to do that. ⁶ If she later gives birth to a son, that son is to be considered the son of the man who died, in order that the dead man's name will not disappear from Israel.

⁷ But if the dead man's brother does not want to marry that woman, she must stand at the city gate. She must say to the city leaders, 'My husband's brother refuses to marry me in order that I may give birth to a son who will prevent the dead man's name from disappearing in Israel.' ⁸ Then the elders must summon that man and talk to him. Perhaps he will still refuse to marry that widow. ⁹ In that case, she must go up to him while the elders are watching, and take off one of his sandals to symbolize that he would not receive any of her property, spit in his face,

and say to him, 'This is what happens to the man who refuses to do what is needed to allow his dead brother to have a son in order that our family name does not disappear.' ¹⁰ After that happens, that man's family will be known as 'the family of the man whose sandal was pulled off.'

¹¹ When two men are fighting with each other, and the one man's wife comes up to help her husband by grabbing hold of the other man's private parts, ¹² do not act mercifully toward her; cut off her hand.

¹³⁻¹⁴ When you are buying or selling things, do not try to cheat people by having two kinds of weights, one which you use when you buy something and one which you use when you sell something, or two kinds of measuring baskets, one which you use when you buy something and one which you use when you sell something. ¹⁵ Always use correct weights and correct measuring baskets, in order that Yahweh our God will allow you to live a long time in the land that he is giving to you. ¹⁶ Yahweh hates all those who act dishonestly, and he will punish them.

¹⁷ Continue to remember what the Amalek people group did to your ancestors when they were coming out of Egypt. ¹⁸ They attacked your ancestors as they were traveling, when they were weak and exhausted. Those people were not afraid of God at all, so they attacked your ancestors from the rear and killed all those who were unable to walk as fast as the others. ¹⁹ Therefore, when Yahweh our God has given you the land that he promised to give you, and when he has enabled you to rest from fighting all your enemies around you, kill all the Amalek people group, with the result that no one will remember them anymore. Do not forget to do this!

Chapter 26

¹ After you occupy the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you, and you have settled there, ² each of you must take some of the first crops that you harvest, put it in a basket, and take it to the place that Yahweh will have chosen for you to worship there. ³ Go to the high priest who is serving at that time and say to him, 'By giving you this first part of my harvest today, I am declaring to Yahweh our God that I have picked it in the land that he solemnly promised to our ancestors to give to us.'

⁴ Then the priest must take the basket of food from your hand and put it on the altar where sacrifices are offered to Yahweh our God. ⁵ Then in Yahweh's presence you must say this: 'My ancestor Jacob was a man from Aram and powerful nation. He took his family to Egypt. They were a small group when they went there, but they lived there and their descendants became a very large and powerful nation. ⁶ Then the people of Egypt acted very harshly toward them, and they forced them to become their slaves and to work very hard. ⁷ Then our ancestors cried out to you, Yahweh our God, and you heard them. You saw that they were suffering, and that they were forced to work very hard, and were being oppressed. ⁸ Then by your great power and by performing many kinds of miracles, and other terrifying things, you brought them out of Egypt. ⁹ You brought us to this land and gave it to us, a land that is very fertile. ¹⁰ So now, Yahweh, I have brought to you the first part of the harvest from the land that I received.' Then you must set the basket down in Yahweh's presence and worship him there. ¹¹ And you must celebrate by eating a meal together to thank Yahweh our God for all the good things that he has given to you and to your family. And you must invite the descendants of Levi and

the foreigners who are living among you to also rejoice and eat with you.

¹² Every third year, you must bring to the descendants of Levi and to the foreigners who are living among you and the orphans and the widows a tithe of your crops, in order that in every town they will have plenty to eat. ¹³ Then you must say to Yahweh, 'I have brought to you, from my house, all of the tenth from my harvest this year, the tenth that I have set aside for you. I am giving it to the descendants of Levi, to the foreigners, the orphans, and the widows, as you commanded us to do. I have not disobeyed any of your commands about the tenth portion, and I have not forgotten any of your commands about it. ¹⁴ I declare that I have not eaten any food from the tenth portion while I was mourning for someone who died. And I have not taken any of it out of my house while I was in any condition unacceptable to you; I have not offered any of it to spirits of dead people. Yahweh, I have obeyed you and done everything that you have commanded us concerning the tenth portion. ¹⁵ So please look down from your holy place in heaven, and bless us, your Israelite people. Also bless this very fertile land which you have given to us, which is what you promised our ancestors that you would do.'

¹⁶ Today Yahweh our God is commanding you to obey all these rules and decrees. So obey them faithfully, with all your inner being. ¹⁷ Today you have declared that he is your God, and that you will conduct your lives as he wants you to do, and that you will obey all his commands and rules and decrees, and that you will do all that he tells you to do. ¹⁸ And today Yahweh has declared that you are his people, which is what he promised that you would be, and he commands you to

obey all his commands. ¹⁹ If you do that, he will cause you to become greater than any other nation that he has established, and he will enable you to praise him and honor him. You are a special people to Yahweh, set apart and holy to him, just as he promised."

Chapter 27

¹ Moses, along with the other Israelite leaders, said this to the people: "Obey all the commandments that I am giving to you today. ² Soon you will cross the Jordan River and enter the land that Yahweh, your God, promised to give to you. There, set up some large stones and cover them with plaster. ³ Write on those stones all these laws and teachings, when you enter that very fertile land that Yahweh, the God whom our ancestors worshiped, promised to give to you. ⁴ When you have crossed the Jordan River, set up some large stones on Mount Ebal, just as I told you, and cover them with plaster. ⁵ And build a stone altar there to offer sacrifices to Yahweh, but do not do any work on those stones with iron tools. ⁶ The altar that you make to burn sacrifices to Yahweh our God must be made with uncut stones. ⁷ And there you must sacrifice offerings to restore fellowship with Yahweh, and you must eat your share of those offerings and rejoice in the presence of Yahweh. ⁸ And, when you write these laws on those stones, you must write them very clearly."

⁹ Then Moses, along with the priests, said to all the Israelite people, "You Israelite people, be quiet and listen to what I am saying. Today you have become the people who belong to Yahweh, our God. ¹⁰ So you must do what he tells you, and obey all the rules and regulations that I am giving to you today."

¹¹ On that same day Moses said to the Israelite people, ¹² "After you have crossed over the Jordan River, the tribes of Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin must stand on Mount Gerizim and request Yahweh to bless the people. ¹³ And the tribes of Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali must stand on Mount Ebal and listen to the things that Yahweh will do when he curses the people.

¹⁴ The descendants of Levi must shout these words loudly:

¹⁵ 'Yahweh will curse anyone who carves a figure from wood or stone or casts a figure from metal, and secretly sets it up and worships it.

Yahweh considers that those things are detestable.'

And all the people must reply, 'Amen.'

¹⁶ 'Yahweh will curse anyone who dishonors his father or his mother.'

And all the people must reply, 'Amen.'

¹⁷ 'Yahweh will curse anyone who removes someone else's markers of property boundaries.'

And all the people must reply, 'Amen.'

¹⁸ 'Yahweh will curse anyone who leads a blind person to go in the wrong direction.'

And all the people must reply, 'Amen.'

¹⁹ 'Yahweh will curse anyone who deprives foreigners or orphans or widow of the things that the laws state must be done for them.'

And all the people must reply, 'Amen.'

²⁰ 'Yahweh will curse anyone who shows no respect for his father

by sleeping with any of his father's wives.'

And all the people must reply, 'Amen.'

²¹ 'Yahweh will curse anyone who sleeps with any animal.'

And all the people must reply, 'Amen.'

²² 'Yahweh will curse anyone who sleeps with his sister or with his half-sister.'

And all the people must reply, 'Amen.'

²³ 'Yahweh will curse anyone who sleeps with his mother-in-law.'

And all the people must reply, 'Amen.'

²⁴ 'Yahweh will curse anyone who secretly murders someone else.'

And all the people must reply, 'Amen.'

²⁵ 'Yahweh will curse anyone who, because someone else has given him a bribe, murders someone who is innocent.'

And all the people must reply, 'Amen.'

²⁶ 'Yahweh will curse anyone who by disobeying these laws refuses to declare that those laws are good.'

And all the people must reply, 'Amen.'"

Chapter 28

¹ "If you do what Yahweh our God tells you to do and faithfully obey everything that I am today commanding you to do, he will cause you to become greater than any other nation on the earth. ² If you obey Yahweh, all these blessings will come to you.

³ He will bless everything that you do when you are in the cities

and he will bless every thing that you do when you are working in the fields.

⁴ He will bless you by giving you many children and by giving you abundant crops, and plenty of cattle and sheep.

⁵ He will bless you by giving you plenty of grain to make bread.

⁶ He will bless you everywhere—when you go out of your houses and when you come into your houses.

⁷ Yahweh will enable you to defeat the armies of your enemies;

they will attack you from one direction, but they will run away from you in seven directions.

⁸ Yahweh will bless you by filling your barns with grain, and he will bless all the work that you do;

he will bless you in the land that he is giving to you.

⁹ If you obey all the commandments that Yahweh our God has given to you and if you live your lives by following his commandments, he will make you his own, his holy people, which is just as he promised.

¹⁰ Then all the people groups on the earth will realize that you belong to Yahweh, and they will be afraid of you.

¹¹ And Yahweh will cause you to prosper very much. He will give you many children, many cattle, and abundant crops in the land that he solemnly promised to our ancestors that he would give to you.

¹² At the time that rain is needed, Yahweh will send it from where he stores it in the sky, and he will bless all your work, with the result that you will be able to lend money to many other nations, but you will not need to borrow money from them.

¹³ If you faithfully obey all of the commands of Yahweh our God that I am giving you today, Yahweh will cause your nation to be superior to other nations, not inferior to them; you will always be prosperous and you will never be needy.

¹⁴ Yahweh will do all these things for you if you do not stop obeying what I am com-

manding you today, and if you never worship other gods.

¹⁵ But if you do not do what Yahweh our God is telling you to do, and if you do not faithfully obey all his rules and regulations that I am giving to you today, he will bring these curses upon you and he will let them have their full force against you.

¹⁶ He will curse you when you are in the cities

and he will curse you when you are working in the fields.

¹⁷ He will curse you by not giving you much grain to make bread.

¹⁸ He will curse you by giving you only a few children, by giving you poor crops, and by not giving you many cattle and sheep.

¹⁹ He will curse you everywhere—when you go out of your houses and when you come into your houses.

²⁰ If you do evil things and reject Yahweh,

he will curse you by causing you to be confused, and to be frustrated in all that you do,

until your enemies quickly and completely destroy you .

²¹ Yahweh will send terrible diseases on you,

until not one of you remains alive in the land that you are about to enter and occupy.

²² Yahweh will afflict you with diseases that shrivel your bodies, with fever, with inflammation.

It will be extremely hot, and it will not rain.

There will be scorching winds, and he will cause your crops to rot.

All these things will strike you until you die.

²³ No rain will fall from the sky, with the result that the ground will be as hard as iron.

²⁴ Instead of sending rain, Yahweh will send strong winds to blow sand and dust over your land, until your land is ruined.

²⁵ Yahweh will enable your enemies to defeat you;

your soldiers will attack them from one direction, but will run away from them in seven directions,

and when the people of other nations see what is happening to you, they will say that it is horrible.

²⁶ You will die, and birds and wild animals will come and eat your corpses,

and there will not be anyone to scare them away.

²⁷ Yahweh will cause you to have boils on your skin, like he caused the people of Egypt to have many years ago.

He will cause you to have tumors, open sores, and your skin will itch, but there will be nothing that will cure those diseases.

²⁸ Yahweh will cause some of you to become insane; he will cause some of you to become blind, and he will cause some of your minds to become confused.

²⁹ Because you will not be able to see where you are going, at midday you will grope around with your hands, like people do in the darkness.

You will not prosper in anything that you do.

You will continually be oppressed and robbed, and there will not be anyone to help you.

³⁰ Some of you men will be engaged to marry a young woman, but someone else will forcibly sleep with her.

You will build houses, but you will never live in them.

You will plant grapevines, but you will not eat the grapes; someone else will eat them.

³¹ Your enemies will butcher your cattle while you watch them, and you will not get any of the meat to eat.

They will drag away your donkeys while you watch them do it, and they will not give them back to you.

They will take away your sheep; and there will not be anyone to help you rescue them.

³² While you watch, your sons and daughters will be given to foreigners to become their slaves. Every day you will watch for your children to return, but you will watch in vain.

³³ People from a foreign nation will take all the crops that you worked hard to produce,

and they will constantly treat you harshly and cruelly.

³⁴ The result will be that all these terrible things that you see will cause you to become insane.

³⁵ Yahweh will cause your legs to be covered with painful boils that cannot be healed,

and you will have boils from the bottom of your feet to the top of your head.

³⁶ Yahweh will cause your king and the rest of you to be taken to another country, to a place in which you and your ancestors have never lived,

and there you will worship and serve gods that are made of wood or stone.

³⁷ When the people groups in nearby countries see what has happened to you, they will be shocked;

they will taunt you and make fun of you in every place where Yahweh drives you.

³⁸ You will plant plenty of seeds in your fields, but you will reap only a small harvest, because locusts will eat the crops.

³⁹ You will plant grapevines and take care of them, but you will not pick any grapes to make wine, because worms will eat the vines.

⁴⁰ Olive trees will grow everywhere in your land, but you will not get any olive oil to rub on your skin because the olives will drop on the ground before they are ripe.

⁴¹ You will have sons and daughters, but they will not stay with you, because they will be captured and taken away.

⁴² Swarms of locusts will eat your crops and the leaves of all your trees.

⁴³ Foreigners who live in your land will become more and more powerful, and you will become less and less powerful.

⁴⁴ They will have money to lend to you, but you will not have any money to lend to them.

They will be superior to you, and you will be inferior to them.

⁴⁵ All these disasters will happen to you and continue to happen to you until you are destroyed, if you do not do what Yahweh your God told you to do, and do not obey all the rules and regulations that he gave to you.

⁴⁶ These disasters will solemnly warn you and your descendants forever what happens to groups who disobey Yahweh.

⁴⁷ Because Yahweh blessed you abundantly in many ways, you should have

served him very joyfully, but you did not do that.

⁴⁸ Therefore, you will work for the enemies whom Yahweh will send to attack you. You will be hungry and thirsty; you will not have clothes to wear; and you will lack everything else that you need. And Yahweh will cause you to become slaves and work hard until he destroys you.

⁴⁹ Yahweh will bring against you an army from very far away, soldiers who speak a language that you do not understand. They will swoop down on you quickly like an eagle. ⁵⁰ They will be fierce looking. They will not act mercifully toward anyone, not even young children and old people. ⁵¹ They will kill and eat your livestock, and they will eat your crops, and you will starve. They will not leave for you any grain or wine or olive oil or cattle or sheep; and you will all die from hunger. ⁵² Your enemies will surround your towns throughout the land that Yahweh your God is about to give to you, and they will break down the high and strong walls around your towns, walls which you trusted would protect you.

⁵³ When your enemies are surrounding your towns, you will be extremely hungry, with the result that you will eat the flesh of your own sons and daughters that Yahweh your God has given to you.

⁵⁴⁻⁵⁵ When your enemies have surrounded your towns, even the most gentle and sensitive men among you will want food very desperately, with the result that they will kill their own children and eat their flesh, because they will not have anything else to eat. They will not even share any of it with their brothers or wives whom they love very much or with any of their other children who are still alive. ⁵⁶⁻⁵⁷ Even the most gentle and kind women among you, who are very rich with the result that they have never been forced to walk anywhere,

will do the same thing. When your enemies have surrounded your towns, those women will be extremely hungry, with the result that after they give birth to a child, they will secretly kill the baby and eat its flesh and also eat the afterbirth. And they will not share any of it with their husbands whom they love very much or with any of their other children.

⁵⁸ If you do not faithfully obey all of the laws that I am writing, and if you do not have the utmost respect for Yahweh our glorious God, ⁵⁹ he will punish you by sending on you and on your descendants great afflictions and plagues which will last for many years. ⁶⁰ He will bring on you the plagues that he sent on the people of Egypt, and you will never be healed. ⁶¹ He will also send on you many other sicknesses and diseases that I have not talked about in these laws, until you all will die. ⁶² You became as numerous as the stars in the sky, but only a few of you will remain alive, if you do not obey Yahweh your God. ⁶³ Yahweh was very happy to do good things for you and to cause you to become very numerous, but now he will be happy to ruin you and get rid of you. Those of you who do not die from these plagues will be snatched away from the land that you will soon be entering to possess.

⁶⁴ Yahweh will scatter you among many people groups, all over the earth, and in those places you will worship other gods that are made of wood or stone, gods which you and your ancestors have never known. ⁶⁵ In those areas you will not have any peace. You will feel hopeless and be discouraged. ⁶⁶ You will always be afraid that your enemies will kill you. You will be very fearful, all day and all night. ⁶⁷ Because you will be very fearful and because you will very distressed because of the terrible things that you see,

each morning you will say 'I wish it were evening already!' and each evening you will say 'I wish it were morning already!' ⁶⁸ Yahweh will send some of you back to Egypt in ships, even though he promised that you would never be forced to go there again. There in Egypt you will try to sell yourselves to become slaves of your enemies in order to have food to eat, but no one will buy you."

Chapter 29

¹ These are the covenantal commands of Yahweh that the Israelites were required to obey. When they were in the region of Moab on the east side of the Jordan River, Moses commanded them to keep these regulations. These regulations became part of the covenant that Yahweh had made with them at Mount Sinai.

² Moses summoned all the Israelite people and said to them, "You saw for yourselves what Yahweh did to the king of Egypt and to his officials and to his entire country. ³ You saw all the plagues that Yahweh sent on them, and all the various miracles that he performed. ⁴ But to this day, Yahweh has not enabled you to understand the meaning of all that you have seen and heard. ⁵ For forty years Yahweh has led you while you traveled through the desert. During that time, your clothes and your sandals have not worn out. ⁶ You did not have bread to eat or wine or other fermented drinks to drink, but Yahweh took care of you, in order that you would know that he is your God.

⁷ And when we came to this place, Sihon, the king who ruled in the city of Heshbon, and Og, the king who ruled the region of Bashan, came out with their armies to attack us, but we defeated them. ⁸ We took their land and divided it among the tribes

of Reuben and Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh.

⁹ So obey faithfully all of this covenant, in order that you will prosper in everything that you do. ¹⁰ Today all of us are standing in the presence of Yahweh our God—I, the leaders of all your tribes, your elders, your officials, all you Israelite men, ¹¹ your wives, your children, and the foreigners who live among us and cut wood for us and carry water for us. ¹² You are all here today to agree to accept this covenant with Yahweh, and to bind yourselves to it. ¹³ He is making this agreement with you in order to make sure that you are his people, and that he is your God. This is what he promised to do for you, and what he solemnly promised to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that he would do. ¹⁴ This covenant is not only with you. ¹⁵ God is making this agreement with us who are here today and also with our descendants who are not yet born.

¹⁶ You remember the things that our ancestors suffered in Egypt, and how they traveled through the land that belonged to other nations after they came out of Egypt. ¹⁷ In those countries they saw those disgusting idols made of wood and stone and decorated with silver and gold. ¹⁸ So be sure that no man or woman or family or tribe that is here today turns away from Yahweh our God, to worship any of the gods of those people groups. If you do that, you will bring disaster on yourselves.

¹⁹ Be sure that no one here today who hears the words of this covenant says to himself, 'Everything will go well with me, even if I stubbornly do what I want to.' If you do that, the result will be that Yahweh will eventually destroy all of you, both good people and evil people. ²⁰ Yahweh will not forgive anyone who is stubborn like that. Instead, he will be extremely angry with that person, and all

the curses that I have told you about will happen to that person, until Yahweh destroys that person and his family forever. ²¹ From all the tribes of Israel, Yahweh will choose that individual to suffer all the disasters that I have listed in the covenant—all the bad things that will happen to anyone whom Yahweh curses for disobeying the laws that I have written in this scroll.

²² In future years, your descendants and people from other countries will see the disasters and the illnesses that Yahweh has caused to happen to you. ²³ They will see that all your land has been ruined by burning sulfur and salt. Nothing will have been planted. Not even weeds will be there. Your land will resemble the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities of Admah and Zeboyim, which Yahweh destroyed when he was very angry with those people. ²⁴ And the people from those other nations will ask, 'Why did Yahweh do this to this land? Why was he so angry with the people who lived here?'

²⁵ Then other people will reply, 'It is because they refused to obey the covenant that they had made with Yahweh, the God whom their ancestors worshiped, when he brought them out of Egypt. ²⁶ Instead, they worshiped other gods that they had never worshiped before, gods that Yahweh had not told them to worship. ²⁷ So Yahweh became very angry with the people of this land, and he has caused to happen to them all the disasters that their leader warned them about. ²⁸ Yahweh became extremely angry with them and took them out of their land, and threw them into another land, and they are still there.'

²⁹ There are some things that Yahweh our God has kept secret, but he has revealed his law to us, and he expects us and our descendants to obey it forever.

Chapter 30

¹ I have now told you about the ways that Yahweh our God will bless you if you obey him and the ways that he will curse you if you disobey him. But if you choose not to obey his laws, some day you will be living in the countries to which he will have scattered you, and you will remember what I told you. ² Then, if you and your children begin to worship Yahweh our God and faithfully obey all that I have today commanded you to do, ³ he will again act mercifully toward you. He will bring you back from the nations to which he scattered you, and he will cause you to be prosperous again. ⁴ Even if you have been scattered to the most distant places on the earth, Yahweh our God will gather you from there and bring you back to your land. ⁵ He will enable you to possess again the land where your ancestors lived. And he will cause you to be more prosperous and more numerous than you are now. ⁶ Yahweh our God will change your inner beings, with the result that you will love him with all that you desire and with all that you feel. And then you will continue to live in that land. ⁷ Yahweh our God will send all the disasters that I have told you about on your enemies and on those who oppressed you. ⁸ As you did before, you will do what Yahweh wants you to do, and you will obey all the commands that I have given to you today. ⁹ Yahweh our God will cause you to be very prosperous in all that you do. You will have many children and many cattle, and you will produce abundant crops. He will again be happy to enable you to prosper, just like he was happy to enable your ancestors to prosper. ¹⁰ But he will do those things only if you do what he has told you to do, and only if you obey all his rules and regulations that I have written about in this book, and only if you turn to Yahweh with

all that you desire and with all that you feel.

¹¹ The commands that I am giving to you today are not very difficult for you to obey, and they are not difficult to know. ¹² They are not hidden in heaven. You do not need to say, 'Who can go up to heaven for us to bring them down here to us so we can learn them?' ¹³ And they are not on the other side of the sea. You do not need to say, 'Who will cross the sea for us and bring them back to us, so we can learn them?' ¹⁴ No, his commands are here with you. You know them, and you can say them again and again. So you can easily obey them.

¹⁵ So listen! Today I am allowing you to choose between doing what is evil and doing what is good, between what will enable you to live for a long time and what will cause you to die while you are still young. ¹⁶ I say again, if you obey the decrees of Yahweh our God that I am giving to you today, and if you love him and conduct your lives as he wants you to do, and if you obey all his rules and regulations, you will prosper and become very numerous, and Yahweh our God will bless you in the land that you are about to enter and possess.

¹⁷ But if you stop worshiping Yahweh, and if you refuse to obey what he says, and if you allow others to persuade you to worship other gods, ¹⁸ I am warning you today that you will soon die. Your people will not live for very long in the land that you are about to cross the Jordan River to enter and possess.

¹⁹ I am requesting everyone in heaven and on the earth to testify to you, that today I am allowing you to choose whether you want to live for a long time or to soon die, whether you want Yahweh to bless you or to curse you. So choose to live. ²⁰ Decide to love Yahweh our God and to obey him.

If you do that, you and your descendants will live for a long time in the land that Yahweh solemnly promised to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that he would give to them.”

Chapter 31

¹ When Moses finished saying all that to the Israelite people, ² “I am 120 years old. I am no longer able to go everywhere that you need to go, so I cannot be your leader any longer. Furthermore, Yahweh has told me that I will not cross the Jordan River. ³ But Yahweh our God will go ahead of you. He will enable you to destroy the nations that are living there, in order that you can occupy their land. Joshua will be your leader, which is what Yahweh has already told me. ⁴ Yahweh will do to those nations what he did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amor people group when he destroyed their armies and their people groups. ⁵ Yahweh will enable you to conquer those people groups, but you must kill all of those people, which is what I have commanded you to do. ⁶ Be brave and confident. Do not be afraid of those people. Do not forget that it is Yahweh our God who will go with you. He will always help you and never abandon you.”

⁷ Then Moses called Joshua to his side and said to him, “Be brave and confident. You are the one who will lead these people into the land that Yahweh promised to our ancestors that he would give to them, and you will enable them to occupy it. ⁸ It is Yahweh who will go ahead of you. He will be with you. He will always help you. He will never abandon you. So do not be afraid or dismayed.”

⁹ Moses wrote down all these laws and gave the scroll to the priests, who carried the sacred chest. He also gave the scroll

to all the Israelite elders. ¹⁰ Moses told them, “At the end of every seven years, at the time that all debts are canceled, read this to the people during the Festival of Shelters. ¹¹ Read it to all the Israelite people when they gather at the place that Yahweh chooses for them to worship him. ¹² Gather together everyone—men, women, children, even the foreigners who are living in your towns—in order that they may hear these laws and learn to have an awesome respect for Yahweh our God, and to faithfully obey everything that is written in these laws. ¹³ If they do that, your descendants, who have never known these laws, will hear them and will also learn to have an awesome respect for Yahweh our God, during all the years that they live in the land that you are about to cross the Jordan River to occupy.”

¹⁴ Then Yahweh said to Moses, “Listen carefully. You will soon die. Summon Joshua, and you will go to the sacred tent with him, in order that I may appoint him to be the new leader.” So Joshua and Moses went to the sacred tent.

¹⁵ There Yahweh appeared to them in a pillar of cloud, and that cloud was over the entrance to the tent. ¹⁶ Yahweh said to Moses, “You will soon die. Then these people will become unfaithful to me. They will stop obeying the covenant that I made with them. They will begin to worship the foreign gods that are worshiped by the people of the land that they will enter. ¹⁷ When that happens, I will become very angry with them. I will abandon them and refuse to help them any longer. Many bad things will happen to them, and they will be destroyed. Then they will say among themselves, ‘These things are happening to us because our God is no longer with us.’ ¹⁸ And because of all the evil things that they will have done, and especially because they will have started to worship

other gods, I will refuse to help them.

¹⁹ So I am going to give you, Moses, a song. Write it on a scroll and teach it to the Israelite people and make them memorize it. It will be like a witness that accuses them. ²⁰ I am about to take them into a very fertile land, a land that I solemnly promised their ancestors that I would give to them. There they will have plenty to eat, with the result that their stomachs will always be full and they will become fat. But then they will turn to other gods and start to worship them, and they will despise me and break the covenant that I have made with them. ²¹ And many terrible disasters will happen to them. After that happens, their descendants will remember this song, and it will be like a witness that says, 'Now you know why Yahweh punished your ancestors.' I will soon take them into the land that I solemnly promised that I would give to them; but even now, before I do that, I know what they are thinking that they will do when they are living there." ²² So on the very day that Yahweh gave Moses that song, Moses also taught it to the Israelite people.

²³ Then Yahweh appointed Joshua as leader and said to him, "Be brave and confident, because you will lead the Israelite people into the land that I solemnly promised that I would give to them. And I will be with you."

²⁴ Moses finished writing all the law onto a scroll. ²⁵ Then he told the descendants of Levi, who were carrying the Sacred Chest that contained the Ten Commandments, ²⁶ "Take this scroll on which these laws are written, and place it beside the Sacred Chest that contains the covenant that Yahweh our God made with you, in order that it may remain there to testify about what Yahweh will do to the people if they disobey him. ²⁷ I say this because I know that these people are very stubborn. They

have rebelled against Yahweh all during the time that I have been with them, and they will rebel much more after I die! ²⁸ So gather all the elders of the tribes and your officials, in order that I can teach them the words of this song, and so that I can request all those who are in heaven and on the earth to be witnesses to testify against these people. ²⁹ I say this, because I know that after I die, the people will become very wicked. They will stop doing everything that I have commanded them to do. And in the future, because of all the evil things that they will do, they will cause Yahweh to become angry with them. Then he will cause them to experience disasters."

³⁰ Then, while all the Israelite people listened, Moses sang this entire song to them:

Chapter 32

¹ "Listen to me, all you who are in the heavens,

and all you who are on the earth, listen to what I say.

² I wish that my song may help you like the rain helps you,

or like the dew on the ground in the morning,

or like a gentle rain on the young plants,
like showers of rain on the grass.

³ I will praise Yahweh.

And all you people should praise how great our God is.

⁴ He is like a rock on top of which we are protected;

everything that he does is perfect and completely just.

He always does what he says that he will do;

he never does anything that is wrong.

⁵ But you Israelite people have been very unfaithful to him;

because of your sins, you no longer deserve to be his children.

You are extremely wicked and deceitful.

⁶ You foolish and senseless people,

is this the way that you should repay Yahweh for all that he has done for you?

He is your father; he created you;

he caused you to become a nation.

⁷ Think about what happened long ago; consider what happened to your ancestors.

Ask your parents, and they will inform you;

ask the older people, and they will tell you.

⁸ When God, who is greater than any other god, long ago divided the people into groups,

he assigned to the nations their land.

He determined where each people group should live

and limited to each people group their own gods.

⁹ But Yahweh decided that we would be his people;

he chose us, the descendants of Jacob, to belong to him.

¹⁰ He saw our ancestors when they were in a desert,

wandering in a land that was desolate.

He protected them and took care of them,

as every person takes good care of his own eyes.

¹¹ Yahweh protected his people just like an eagle encourages its babies to fly

and flutters over them,

spreading its wings and catching them if they start to fall.

¹² Yahweh was the only one who led them;

no other foreign god helped them.

¹³ After they entered the land that Yahweh promised to give to them,

Yahweh enabled them to rule the hill country;

they ate the crops that grew in the fields.

They found honey in the rocks,

and their olive trees grew even in stony ground.

¹⁴ The cows gave them plenty of curds; the goats gave them plenty of milk,

they had well fed sheep and cattle,

they had very good wheat,

and they made delicious wine from their grapes.

¹⁵ The Israelite people became rich and prosperous,

but then they rebelled against God;

they abandoned him, the one who created them,

the one who powerfully saves them.

¹⁶ He abandoned them because they started to worship other gods.

Because of their worshiping disgusting idols,

he became angry.

¹⁷ They offered sacrifices to gods who were really demons,

gods that their ancestors had never known;

they offered sacrifices to gods that they had recently found out about,

gods whom your ancestors had never had any respect for.

¹⁸ They forgot the true God, the one who protects them,

the one who created them and caused them to live.

¹⁹ When Yahweh saw that they had abandoned him, he became angry,

so he rejected the Israelite people who were like his sons and daughters.

²⁰ He said, "They are very wicked people, very unfaithful;

so I will no longer help them,

and then I will watch and see what happens to them.

²¹ Because they now are worshiping idols, which are not really gods,

they have caused me to be like a jealous husband because I want them to worship only me.

So now, in order to cause them to become angry,

I will now send to attack them an army of a nation of worthless and foolish people.

²² I will be very angry, and I will destroy them

like a fire that will burn all the way down to the place where dead people are;

that fire will destroy the earth and everything that grows on it,

and it will even burn what is down under the mountains.

²³ I will pile up on them many disasters;

they will feel as though I am shooting all my arrows on them.

²⁴ They will die because of being hungry and because of having hot fevers

and because of terrible diseases;

I will send wild animals to attack them, and poisonous snakes to bite them.

²⁵ Outside their houses, their enemies will kill them with swords,

and in their homes, their enemies will cause them to be terrified.

Their enemies will kill young men and young women,

and they will kill infants and old people with gray hair.

²⁶ I wanted only to scatter them to distant countries

in order that no one would ever remember them.

²⁷ But if I did that, their enemies would wrongly boast

that they were the ones who had gotten rid of my people;

they would say, "We are the ones who defeated them;

it was not Yahweh who has done all these things."

²⁸ You Israelites are a nation of people who do not have any sense.

None of you are wise.

²⁹ If you were wise, you would understand why you would be punished;

you would have realized what was going to happen to you.

³⁰ You would have realized why a thousand of your soldiers would be defeated by only one of the enemy soldiers,

and why two of your enemies would chase away ten thousand Israelite soldiers.

You would realize that this would happen only if God, the one who always defended you, had put you in the hands of your enemies,

that Yahweh had abandoned you.

³¹ Your enemies know that their gods are not powerful like Yahweh, our God,

so their gods could not have defeated us Israelites.

³² Your enemies are like grapevines planted near the ruins of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah;

the grapes from those vines are bitter and poisonous.

³³ The wine from those grapes is like the poison of snakes.

³⁴ Yahweh says, 'I know what I have planned to do to the Israelite people and to their enemies,

and I have locked up those plans as someone would lock up his valuable possessions.

³⁵ I am the one who will get revenge and pay those enemies back for what they have done to my people,

at the right time for them to be punished;

they will soon experience disasters,
and I will punish them quickly.'

³⁶ But Yahweh will say that you who are truly his people are innocent,

and he will act mercifully toward you who serve him,

when he sees that you are helpless,

and that there are very few of you, slaves or free people, who are still alive.

³⁷ Then Yahweh will ask you, 'Where are the gods

that you thought would protect you?

³⁸ You gave to those gods the best parts of the animals that you sacrificed,

and you poured out wine for them to drink.

So they should rise and help you;

they should be the ones who will protect you!

³⁹ But now you will realize that I, only I, am God;

there is no other god who is a real god.

I am the one who can kill people and who can cause people to live;

I can wound people, and I can heal people,

and there is no one who can prevent me from doing those things.

⁴⁰ I raise my hand toward heaven and solemnly declare

that just as sure as I live forever, I will act.

⁴¹ When I sharpen my sword

and prepare to punish people,

I will get revenge on my enemies,

and I will pay back those who hate me.

⁴² I will kill all of my enemies with a sword;

it will be as though I had arrows that were covered with their blood.

I will kill all those whom I capture
and cut off their heads.'

⁴³ You people of all nations, you should praise Yahweh's people,

because Yahweh gets revenge on those who kill the people who serve him,

and he cleanses his people's land

which has become defiled because of their sins.”

⁴⁴ Joshua and Moses sang that song while the Israelite people were listening. ⁴⁵ Then they finished singing to them this song. ⁴⁶ Moses said, “Never forget all these commands that I have been giving you today. Teach these laws to your children, in order that they will faithfully obey all of them. ⁴⁷ These instructions are very important. If you obey them, you will live a long time in the land that you are about to cross the Jordan River to occupy.”

⁴⁸ On that same day, Yahweh said to Moses, ⁴⁹ “Go to the Abarim mountain range here in the region of Moab, across from Jericho. Climb Mount Nebo and look toward the west to see Canaan, the land that I am about to give to the Israelite people. ⁵⁰ You will die on that mountain, like your older brother Aaron died on Mount Hor. ⁵¹ You will die because both of you disobeyed me in the presence of the Israelite people, when you all were at the springs of Meribah near Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin. You did not honor and respect me in the presence of the Israelite people in the way that I deserve because I am God. ⁵² When you are on that mountain where I told you to go, you will see in the distance in front of you the land that I am about to give to the Israelite people, but you will not enter it.”

Chapter 33

¹ Before God’s prophet Moses died, he asked God to bless the Israelite people. ² This is what he said:

“Yahweh came and spoke to us at Mount Sinai;

he came like the sun rises in the region

of Edom

and like his light shone on us when we were in the desert near Mount Paran after we left Mount Sinai.

He came with ten thousand angels, and there was a flaming fire at his right side.

³ Yahweh truly loves his people and protects all those who belong to him.

So they prostrate themselves in front of him,

and they listen to his instructions.

⁴ I gave them laws to obey, laws that would forever be for the descendants of Jacob.

⁵ So Yahweh became the king of his Israelite people

when all the tribes and their leaders had gathered together.

⁶ I say this about the tribe of Reuben:

I desire that their tribe will never disappear,

but that they will never become numerous.

⁷ I say this about the tribe of Judah:

Yahweh, listen to them when they call out for help;

and after they separate from the other tribes, unite them with the other tribes again.

Fight for them,

and help them to fight against their enemies.

⁸ I say this about the tribe of Levi:

Yahweh, give to those who are dedicated to you the sacred stones that they will use to find out what you want to be done;

You tested them at a spring in the desert, a spring that they named Massah and also named Meribah

to find out if they would remain loyal to you.

⁹ The tribe of Levi did what you told them to do

and obeyed the covenant that you had made with the Israelite people;

those laws were more important to them

than their siblings and parents and children.

¹⁰ The tribe of Levi will teach the Israelite people your decrees and your laws,

and they are the ones who will burn incense and who will completely burn on the altar the offerings that the people bring.

¹¹ Yahweh, bless their work
and accept all that they do.

Crush all their enemies;

do not enable their enemies to be able to fight against them again.

¹² I say this about the tribe of Benjamin:

They are the tribe that Yahweh loves;
he keeps them safe.

He protects them continually,
and he lives among their hills.

¹³ I say this about the tribes of Joseph:

I desire that Yahweh will bless their land
by giving them rain from the sky
and water from deep down in the ground.

¹⁴ I desire that Yahweh will bless their land by giving them good fruit ripened by the sun

and good crops in the right months.

¹⁵ I desire that Yahweh give them that very nice fruit that will grow on trees in their ancient mountains.

¹⁶ I desire that Yahweh will bless their land and that he fill the land with many good crops.

I desire that Yahweh will bless the tribes of Joseph in all those ways,

because he was the leader over his older brothers when they were in Egypt.

¹⁷ The descendants of Joseph will be as strong as a bull;

with their weapons they will wound their enemies like a wild ox gores other animals with its horns.

They will push other people groups,
all of them, to the most distant places on the earth.

That is what the descendants of the two sons of Joseph will do,

the ten thousands of the tribe of Ephraim and the thousands of the tribe of Manasseh.

¹⁸ I say this about the tribes of Zebulun and Issachar:

I desire that the people of Zebulun will prosper in their travels across the seas,

and that the people of Issachar will prosper while they stay at home and take care of their cattle and crops.

¹⁹ They will invite people from the other Israelite tribes to the mountain where they worship Yahweh,

and they will offer correct sacrifices to him.

They will become rich from the trade that they carry out on the seas

and from using the sand along the sea to make things.

²⁰ I say this about the tribe of Gad:

Praise Yahweh, the one who made their territory large.

The people of their tribe will attack their enemies fiercely like a lion that crouches, waiting to tear off the arm or the scalp of some animal.

²¹ They chose the best part of the land for themselves;

a large share of the land, a share that should be given to a leader was allotted to them.

When the leaders of the tribes of Israel gathered together,

they decided that the tribe of Gad should have a large share of the land.

The tribe of Gad obeyed the commands of Yahweh and the things that he decided that they should do.

²² I say this about the tribe of Dan:

The people of the tribe of Dan are like a young lion;

they leap out from their caves in the region of Bashan to attack their enemies.

²³ I say this about the tribe of Naphtali:

The people of the tribe of Naphtali have been blessed by Yahweh, who has been very kind to them;

their land extends far south from Lake Galilee.

²⁴ I say this about the tribe of Asher:

Yahweh will bless the descendants of Asher more than he will bless the other tribes.

Yahweh will favor them most of all.

I desire that their land will be filled with olive trees that will produce a lot of olives to make olive oil.

²⁵ Their towns will be protected by high walls with gates that have bronze and iron bars;

I desire all the time that they live and not be harmed by anyone.

²⁶ You people of Israel, there is no god like your God,

who rides majestically across the sky to help you.

²⁷ God, who lives forever, is the one who gives you refuge;

it is as though he puts his everlasting arms under you to support you.

He will drive out your enemies while you advance;

he has told you to destroy all of them.

²⁸ So you Israelite people will live safely; you descendants of Jacob will not be disturbed by others;

in the land where you will live, there will be plenty of grain and wine,

and plenty of rain will fall from the sky.

²⁹ You people of Israel, how fortunate are you.

There is certainly no nation like your nation,

whom Yahweh has rescued from being slaves in Egypt.

He will be like a shield to protect you

and like a sword to enable you to defeat your enemies.

Your enemies will come to you begging for you to act mercifully toward them,

but you will trample on their backs.”

Chapter 34

¹ Then Moses climbed up from the plains in the region of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the highest point on Mount Pisgah, which is across the Jordan River from Jericho. There Yahweh showed him all the

land that the Israelites would occupy. He showed him the region of Gilead as far north as the city of Dan; ² all the land that the tribe of Naphtali would occupy; all the land that the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh had occupied; all the land that the tribe of Judah would occupy as far west as the Mediterranean Sea; ³ the desert area in the south part of Judah; and the Valley of the Jordan that extends from Jericho in the north to the city of Zoar in the south. ⁴ Then Yahweh said to him, "You have now seen this land that I solemnly promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying 'I will give it to your descendants.' I have allowed you to see it from a distance, but you will not go there."

⁵ So Moses, who always served Yahweh faithfully, died there in the land of Moab, which is what Yahweh said would happen. ⁶ Yahweh buried Moses' body in the valley in the land of Moab, across from the town of Beth Peor, but to this day no one knows where he is buried. ⁷ Moses was 120 years old when he died, but he was still very strong, and he could still see very well. ⁸ The Israelite people mourned for him in the plains of Moab for thirty days.

⁹ God caused Joshua to be very wise, because Moses had put his hands on Joshua to appoint him to be their new leader. The Israelite people obeyed Joshua, and they obeyed all the commands that Yahweh had given to Moses to tell to the Israelite people.

¹⁰ Since the time that Moses lived, there has never been a prophet in Israel like him, for Yahweh spoke with him face to face. ¹¹ No other prophet has performed all the kinds of powerful miracles that Yahweh caused him to do against Pharaoh, king of Egypt, against all his servants, and against the people of Egypt. ¹² No other prophet has been able to perform all the

great and terrifying deeds that Moses performed while all the Israelites watched.

JOSHUA

Chapter 1

¹ After Moses the servant of Yahweh, died, Yahweh said this to Nun's son Joshua, who had been Moses' servant leader: ² "You know that my servant Moses is now dead. So now get ready to cross over the Jordan River, you and all these people. Enter the land that I will soon give to the people of Israel. ³ Everywhere you walk in this land, I will give to you, as I promised Moses. ⁴ That land will extend from the wilderness in the south to the Lebanon mountains in the northwest, to the Euphrates River, and to the Mediterranean Sea on the west. It will include all the land where the Hittites live. ⁵ No group will be able to defeat you as long as you live. I will help you as I helped Moses. I promise that I will not abandon you and I will never leave you.

⁶ Be strong and brave, because you will lead these people so they can take this land as their own, the land that I promised to give to their ancestors. ⁷ Just be strong and very brave. Be sure to obey all the laws that my servant Moses taught you; carry out each one of them. If you do so, you will be successful wherever you go. ⁸ Talk with each other about the book of the law that Moses taught you. Think about those laws during the day and during the night. Follow the laws and do what they tell you to do, and they teach you to live so you may gain wealth and be successful. ⁹ Do not forget that I have commanded you to be strong and brave. Do not be afraid and do not be discouraged. I, Yahweh your God, will be with you wherever you go."

¹⁰ Then Joshua commanded the leaders of the people of Israel, ¹¹ "Go throughout the camp and give these orders to the peo-

ple: 'Prepare all the food that you will take with you. In three days you will go across the Jordan River in front of you, and you will go in and capture the land that Yahweh, your God, is about to give to you.'"

¹² Then Joshua spoke to the families of the descendants of Reuben and Gad, and to the half of the tribe of Manasseh that was going to settle on the east side of the Jordan River: ¹³ "Keep in mind the orders that Moses the servant of Yahweh, gave you. Moses said, 'Yahweh, your God, has promised to give you a place where you can settle down permanently—this place will be the land where you will live. ¹⁴ Your wives, your little children, and your livestock may stay here in this land on the east side of the Jordan River, but all your soldiers and your fellow tribesmen must cross the river, ahead of your other fellow Israelites, in order to help them. ¹⁵ You must help them in battle until Yahweh has enabled your fellow Israelites to permanently settle in the land there, the land that they will capture, the land that Yahweh your God is giving to them. Then each of you will come back to the land that you will settle in, and you will live there—I mean the land that Moses, Yahweh's servant, gave you here on the east side of the Jordan River."

¹⁶ The people answered Joshua, "We will obey every order you have given us, and we will go wherever you tell us to go. ¹⁷ We will obey you just as we obeyed Moses. We pray that Yahweh will be with you as he was with Moses. ¹⁸ We will put to death anyone who rebels and refuses to follow your orders. Just remember, Joshua, to be strong and brave!"

Chapter 2

¹ Then Joshua chose two men from their

camp at Acacia. He told them, "Go find out all that you can about the land, especially about Jericho." They left the camp, and they came to Jericho, to the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab. They stayed there. ² Someone told the king of Jericho, "Look! Some Israelite men have come here tonight to look at our land!" ³ So the king sent a messenger to tell Rahab, "Bring out the men who came to you and entered your house, because they have come here to look at our land!" ⁴ Now the woman had taken the men and hidden them in her house. So she said to the king's men, "Yes, it is true that those men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from." ⁵ They left when it was dark, about the time that the guards close the city gates. I do not know where they were going. If you hurry, you might catch up with them." ⁶ But in reality, the woman had taken the two men up on to the flat roof of her house and hidden them under bundles of flax that were drying on her roof. ⁷ The king's men went out of the city to search for them on the road that leads to the fords across the Jordan River. The guards shut the city gates as the king's men went out.

⁸ Before the Israelite men lay down to sleep that night, Rahab went up to the roof ⁹ and said to them, "We know that Yahweh has given you this land. All our people are terrified of you—we are so afraid of you that we will not resist you at all." ¹⁰ We have heard about how Yahweh dried up the water of the Sea of Reeds for you to cross when you left Egypt. We heard what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites who lived on the other side of the Jordan River, and how you totally destroyed everyone and everything in their kingdom. ¹¹ When we heard about those things, we were terrified. We no longer have courage to fight against you, for Yahweh is God, and he rules ev-

erything up in heaven and down here on earth. ¹² So now I want you to solemnly promise me before Yahweh, so that he may punish you if you do not do what you say. Promise me that you will act kindly to me and my family. Give me a guarantee that you will do what you promise, ¹³ and that you will spare the lives of my father and my mother, my brothers and sisters, and all of their families, and that you will rescue my family when the Israelites destroy this city." ¹⁴ The two men replied, "We will give up our lives if we do not do as we say! If you do not tell others what we are planning to do, then we will have to act kindly toward all your family, when Yahweh gives us this land." ¹⁵ One of the outside walls of the house where Rahab lived was part of the wall of the city. She fastened a rope through a window that was built into the wall, so the men could climb out the window and down the wall. ¹⁶ Then she said to them, "When you leave the city, go up into the hills so that the men who are searching for you will not find you. Hide in caves in the hills for three days until the men who are searching for you come back. Then you can return to your camp." ¹⁷ The two men gave her a red cord and said to her, "This is what you must do, if you do not do this, we will not be required to do what we have solemnly promised. ¹⁸ You must tie this red cord in the window by which you let us down, and you must gather together your father and your mother and your brothers, and everyone in your father's household. ¹⁹ If anyone in your family goes outside this house into the street, he will be risking his life, and we will not be responsible if he is killed. But if anyone who is in this house with you is injured, we will be guilty. ²⁰ Also, if you tell anyone what we are planning to do, we are not required to do what we had promised to do for you and your family." ²¹ Rahab

said, "I agree to do what you say." So she sent them away, and they left her. And she tied the red cord so it would hang out of the window. ²² When the two men left the city, they went up into the hills. They stayed there for three days while the men who had been sent by the king continued to search for them. They searched all along the road, but they did not find the two men. ²³ Then the two men started back toward their camp. They went down to the river, crossed it and returned so they could report to Joshua. They told him everything that had happened to them. ²⁴ They said to Joshua, "Yahweh has indeed given this land to us. The people there will not be able to resist us because they are too afraid."

Chapter 3

¹ Joshua and all the other Israelites got up early the next morning. They left their camp at the Acacias and went down to the Jordan River. They camped there before they crossed over the river. ² After three days, the officers went through the middle of the camp. ³ They instructed the people, "As soon as you see the priests, some of the descendants of Levi, carrying the sacred chest of Yahweh your God, then you will know it is time to leave this place and follow the sacred chest. ⁴ Keep nine hundred meters away from it. Do not come closer than that to it. You do not know the way you should go, since you have not gone this way before."

⁵ Then Joshua told the people, "Perform the ceremonies needed to make yourselves acceptable to Yahweh and to give him honor, because tomorrow he is going to do things for you that will amaze you."

⁶ Then Joshua said to the priests, "Carry the chest and go in front of the people." So

they lifted up the sacred chest and went in front of the people.

⁷ Then Yahweh said to Joshua, "This is the day that I will begin to show all people of Israel that you are a great leader. Then they will honor you and know that, as I was with Moses, I am with you. ⁸ Tell the priests who are carrying the sacred chest, 'When you come to the edge of the Jordan River, stand still in the Jordan.'" ⁹ Then Joshua said to the people of Israel, "Come here and listen to what Yahweh, your God, has said. ¹⁰ This is how you will know that God, who can do anything, is among you. With your own eyes you will see how he will take away the land from the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites. ¹¹ See! The sacred chest that belongs to the God who rules over all the earth, is about to be carried into the Jordan River ahead of you. ¹² So choose twelve men, one from each of the tribes of Israel. ¹³ When the priests who are carrying the chest set their feet in the waters of the Jordan River, the water will stop flowing. The water coming from upstream will stop and stay in one heap. It will not flow down the river."

¹⁴ So when the Israelite crossed the river, the priests who were carrying sacred chest went in front of them. ¹⁵ And as soon as the priests reached the edge of the Jordan river and stepped into the water (now it was the springtime, when the river floods over its banks), ¹⁶ and the water stopped flowing and it piled up far upstream. The water did not flow in the Jordan from the town called Adam, near Zarethan, all the way down to the Sea of Arabah (which is called the Dead Sea), so the people were able to cross the river near Jericho. ¹⁷ The priests who were carrying the sacred chest of Yahweh stood on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan

River; they continued to stand there until all the people of Israel crossed the river on dry ground.

Chapter 4

¹ After the people of Israel all crossed over the Jordan River, Yahweh said to Joshua, ² "Choose twelve men, one from each tribe, and tell them to pick up twelve large stones from the middle of the Jordan, where the priests are standing in the dry riverbed. ³ Carry those stones and put them down at the place you will stay tonight."

⁴ So Joshua chose twelve men, one from each tribe. Joshua called them together ⁵ and said to them, "Go into the middle of the Jordan riverbed, to the place where the priests are standing and holding the sacred chest that Yahweh, your God, gave you. Each of you must pick up a large stone, one for each tribe, each one carrying a stone on his shoulder—twelve stones for the twelve tribes of the people of Israel.

⁶ These stones will be a monument for you to see. In the future, your children will ask, 'What do these stones mean?' ⁷ Tell them that the water in the Jordan River was blocked off when the priests were carrying the sacred chest that Yahweh gave us. When the chest was carried into the Jordan River, the water was blocked off so that we were able to cross the Jordan on dry ground. Where we leave these stones is the place for the people of Israel to forever remember what Yahweh has done."

⁸ So the people of Israel did what Joshua commanded them to do. They went and picked up twelve large stones from the middle of the Jordan riverbed, one stone for each of the tribes of Israel, just as Yahweh had told Joshua, and they carried the stones to where they were stay-

ing, and they put the stones down there. ⁹ Then Joshua took twelve other stones and stacked them up in the middle of the Jordan River, where the priests who carried the sacred chest of Yahweh were standing. And that monument is still there to this day.

¹⁰ The priests who carried the chest stood in the middle of the Jordan River until the people had finished crossing the river, as Yahweh had commanded Joshua to tell them to do. This also was as Moses had commanded Joshua to do. The people crossed the river quickly. ¹¹ As soon as all the people had crossed over, then the sacred chest of Yahweh and the priests who carried it, crossed over. All the people were there watching. ¹² The soldiers of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and of half of the soldiers of the tribe of Manasseh, crossed over ahead of the rest of the Israelite people. As Moses had ordered them to do, they marched in the formation of an army. ¹³ About forty thousand men were marching before Yahweh. These men were armed and prepared for war, and they were heading for the plains of Jericho where they would fight a battle. ¹⁴ On that day, all the people of Israel saw that Yahweh had made Joshua a great leader. And they honored Joshua just as they had honored Moses—all the days of his life. ¹⁵ Yahweh said to Joshua, ¹⁶ "Now order the priests who are carrying the sacred chest of the testimony to come up from the dry Jordan riverbed." ¹⁷ So Joshua commanded the priests to come up from the river. ¹⁸ Then the priests, carrying the sacred chest containing the Ten Commandments that Yahweh had given to Moses, came up out of the riverbed. And as soon as they walked up out of the riverbed, the water of the Jordan River flowed again, and the river flooded over again, as it had done four days before.

¹⁹ It was on the tenth day of the first month of that year that the people crossed over the Jordan River and they camped at a place called Gilgal (which is east of the city of Jericho). ²⁰ Joshua set up the large stones at Gilgal. ²¹ He said to the people of Israel, "In the future, your descendants will ask, 'Why are these stones here?' ²² Tell them, 'This is where Israel crossed the Jordan River on dry ground.' ²³ Yahweh, your God, dried up the river for you, until you had all crossed over. Yahweh, the God you worship, did to the Jordan River just as he did to the Sea of Reeds, when he caused it to become dry until we had all crossed over it, just as he did here. ²⁴ Yahweh did that in order that all the peoples of the earth may know that he is powerful, and so you may forever give him the honor he deserves."

Chapter 5

¹ All the kings of the Amorites on the west of the Jordan River and all the kings of Canaanites, who lived close to the Mediterranean coast, heard about how Yahweh had dried up the water of the Jordan River until all the people of Israel had crossed over. They were so afraid that they became too afraid to fight the Israelites, because they had heard all about them.

² At that time Yahweh said to Joshua, "Now make knives from flint stones and circumcise all the Israelite males who have not been circumcised." ³ So Joshua made sharp stone knives and circumcised the Israelite males at a place that is now called Gibeath Haaraloth. ⁴ The reason they did that is that all the men who left Egypt, all those old enough to be soldiers, they all had been circumcised, but all of them had died in the desert after they left Egypt. ⁵ They had been circumcised in Egypt, but

the boys who had been born while they were in the desert after they left Egypt, had not been circumcised. ⁶ The people of Israel walked through the desert for forty years, until all the people, including all the men who were old enough to be soldiers, they all had died. They had not obeyed Yahweh, so Yahweh said that they would not see the land that he had promised to them—a land that was very fertile—the land was so fertile that they said it had milk and honey flowing through it, just as rivers flow with water. ⁷ It was the children of those who had died that Yahweh raised up in their place. He circumcised them because they had not been circumcised when they were walking through the wilderness. ⁸ After all the Israelite males had been circumcised, they remained in the camp and rested until they healed. ⁹ Then Yahweh said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the disgrace of Egypt from you." So, the name of the place is Gilgal, even now.

¹⁰ In the evening of the fourteenth day of that month, while the Israelite people were camped at Gilgal, on the plain near the city of Jericho, there they celebrated the Passover feast. ¹¹ The day after the Passover they ate some bread made without yeast, and they roasted the grain. ¹² The next day God stopped sending manna for them to eat. They ate food that had grown in the land of Canaan beginning that year.

¹³ While Joshua was standing near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man in front of him. The man had drawn his sword and was holding it in his hand. Joshua approached him and asked him, "Are you on our side, or are you on the side of our enemies?" ¹⁴ The man replied, "Neither side. I am the commander of Yahweh's army, and now I have come." Then Joshua fell to the ground with his face on the earth

to show him respect. Joshua said to him, "What do you, my master, command me to do? I am your servant." ¹⁵ The commander of Yahweh's army replied, "Take your sandals off of your feet, for the ground on which you are standing is holy." So Joshua took off his sandals.

Chapter 6

¹ Now every gate of the city of Jericho was shut tight, because the people were afraid of the army of Israel. No one could go enter or leave the city. ² Yahweh said to Joshua, "See what I am doing! I am giving Jericho to you. It will be yours—the city along with its king and all its brave soldiers. ³ You will march around the city, one time all the way around it. All the brave soldiers will go around it one time each day for six days. ⁴ Tell seven priests to march around with them. They will each carry a trumpet as they march before the sacred chest of Yahweh. On the seventh day, the army must march around the city seven times, and the priests must play the trumpets with a loud blast of sound while they march. ⁵ After they have all marched around the city seven times, the priests must make a very long blast with their ram's horn trumpets. When the people of Israel hear that, they must shout very loudly, and the city wall will collapse. Then every soldier must advance straight into the city."

⁶ So Joshua summoned the priests and said to them, "Tell four priests to carry Yahweh's sacred chest, and tell the priests to carry seven trumpets made from ram's horns and let them go in front of the sacred chest of Yahweh." ⁷ And he told the people, "Go on and march around the city and let the armed men go ahead of Yahweh's sacred chest."

⁸ Just as Joshua commanded his army, the seven priests, each one carrying a trumpet, marched as Yahweh had directed them. As they walked around the city, the priests gave a blast on their trumpets. The ones who carried Yahweh's sacred chest followed them. ⁹ The armed soldiers marched in front of the priests who were blowing on their trumpets. When the rest of the soldiers followed the chest, while they were all marching, the priests kept blowing their trumpets. ¹⁰ But the rest of the people were silent, because Joshua had commanded them, saying, "Do not make a war cry. Do not yell or say even one word until the day when I tell you to shout. On that day, you must shout!" ¹¹ So the men carrying Yahweh's sacred chest and all the others did what Joshua told them to do. They marched around the city once each day. Then they all returned to the camp and stayed there at night.

¹² The next morning, Joshua and the priests got up early and picked up Yahweh's sacred chest. ¹³ The seven priests who were carrying trumpets made of rams horns went in front of the men carrying the sacred chest. They gave loud blasts from their trumpets as they marched. The soldiers walked in front of them and the rear guard of the army followed the sacred chest of Yahweh. Again, the priests kept blowing their trumpets. ¹⁴ So on that second day, once again they marched around the city one time and then returned to the camp. They did the same thing for six days.

¹⁵ On the seventh day, they got up at dawn; they all marched around the city the same way that they had done before, but this time they marched around the city seven times. ¹⁶ As they were marching around the seventh time, when the priests were about to sound the long blast on their trumpets, Joshua commanded the people,

"Shout! Because Yahweh is giving this city to you! ¹⁷ Yahweh has declared that you must destroy the city and everything in it to show that it belongs to him. Only Rahab the prostitute will live—and all who are in her house with her—because she hid the spies we sent. ¹⁸ And because Yahweh has declared that everything must be destroyed, you must not take any of the things in the city. If you take anything, you will cause Yahweh to destroy the camp of Israel and bring trouble to it. ¹⁹ But all the silver and gold and articles made from iron and bronze that you find, you must set apart for Yahweh. You must put those things in his treasury."

²⁰ So they did what Joshua told them to do. When the priests blew a long blast on their trumpets, the people gave a loud shout, and the wall of the city collapsed! Then the people went up into the city, going straight into the city from wherever they were standing when the wall fell, and they captured the city. ²¹ They killed every living thing in the city—men and women, young people and old people, even cattle and sheep and donkeys.

²² Then Joshua said to the two men who had spied on the land, "Go to the prostitute's house. Bring her out, along with all her family, just as you solemnly promised to her." ²³ So, the young men who had examined the land went and brought Rahab out. They brought out her father, mother, brothers, and all the relatives that were with her. They brought them to a place outside the camp of Israel. ²⁴ Then they burned the city, along with everything in it. They saved the silver, gold, and all the vessels of bronze and iron, which they put into the treasury of the house of Yahweh. ²⁵ But Joshua allowed Rahab the prostitute, and her father's household, and everyone with her, to live. Her descendants live in Israel to this day because she hid

the spies that Joshua sent to spy on Jericho, and they promised to spare her life.

²⁶ At that time, Joshua declared this very solemnly: "May Yahweh curse anyone who rebuilds this city, Jericho. When that person lays its foundation, may his oldest son die. And when he finishes building the city wall and sets up its gates, may his youngest son die."

²⁷ Yahweh was with Joshua, and everyone in the land knew who Joshua was.

Chapter 7

¹ Yahweh had commanded that all the things that they had captured in Jericho should be destroyed to show that they belonged to him. But there was a man from the tribe of Judah named Achan. He was a son of Carmi, a grandson of Zabdi, and a great-grandson of Zerah. He disobeyed what Yahweh had commanded and took for himself some of those things. So Yahweh became very angry with the Israelites.

² Now Joshua told some of his men to go from Jericho to the city of Ai, which was east of Bethel and near Beth Aven. He said to them, "Go to Ai and scout the area." So the men went up and they scouted the town.

³ When they returned to Joshua they said, "There are only a few people in Ai. So just send two or three thousand to attack them. There is no need to make all our soldiers go." ⁴ So about three thousand Israelite men went to attack Ai. But they did not defeat them. Instead, they had to run for their lives. ⁵ The enemy killed about thirty-six Israelites and chased the rest from the city gate to the bottom of the hill, and then to a place where people had cut stone out from a hill. When the people

of Israel saw this, they were very afraid and lost all their courage.

⁶ Joshua tore his clothes to show that he was sad. He and the leaders of Israel threw themselves on the ground because they were so sad and angry. They lay there until dark in front of Yahweh's sacred chest. ⁷ Then Joshua prayed and said, "Yahweh Lord, you brought us Israelites safely across the Jordan River. So why are you now allowing the Amorites to destroy us? We should have made a different decision; we should have stayed on the other side of the Jordan River!" ⁸ O Lord, I have no more words to say to you. Israel has run away in defeat. We have turned our backs in shame as we ran away from our enemies. I do not know what to say. ⁹ The Canaanites and all the other people who are living in this land will hear about this. Then they will surround us and kill all of us! Then what will you do to defend your honor?"

¹⁰ But Yahweh said to Joshua, "Stand up! Stop lying there with your face in the dirt!"

¹¹ Israel has sinned. You have disobeyed the commands that I told you to obey. They have lied, they have stolen, and they have taken what they stole and put them in with their own possessions, in order to hide it. ¹² That is why the people of Israel have been unable to defeat their enemies. That is why they have run away, and now you yourselves will be destroyed. If you do not do as I commanded you and destroy everything that you took from Jericho, I will not help you anymore!

¹³ Now go and tell the people that tomorrow they must set themselves apart and prepare to honor Yahweh. "You have kept for yourselves the things that I told you to destroy, that should have been given to me," says Yahweh, the God of Israel. "You will never defeat your enemies until you get rid of those things you took from Jeri-

cho that you have hidden with your possessions."

¹⁴ Tomorrow morning you must present yourselves before me, tribe by tribe. Then the tribe that I select by lot will come before me by each of their families. The family that I select by lot will come near by each of their households. The household that I select by lot will come before me each one, one at a time. ¹⁵ Then the one who has taken some of the things that should have been given to me—he will be destroyed in a fire. He and everything he owns will be burned, because he has disobeyed the promise and agreement that Yahweh made with us, and he has committed a disgraceful sin among the people of Israel."

¹⁶ Early the next morning, Joshua told all the Israelite people to come near to the place of worship, tribe by tribe. When they did that, Yahweh indicated that a man from the tribe of Judah was the one selected. ¹⁷ Then the clans of Judah presented themselves, and Yahweh selected the clan of Zerah. Then the families of Zerah's clan presented themselves, and Yahweh indicated that he was selecting someone from the family of Zabdi. ¹⁸ Then Joshua told the men from that family to present each member of their family, one at a time, so that the guilty person may be selected. And Yahweh indicated that Achan was the guilty man and he was taken out of the people of Judah. Achan was the son of Carmi; Carmi was the son of Zabdi; and Zabdi was the son of Zerah.

¹⁹ Then Joshua said to Achan, "Son, make your confession to Yahweh, the God of Israel. Tell me what you did, and do not try to hide it from me."

²⁰ Achan replied, "It is true. I have sinned against Yahweh, the God of Israel. This is what I did: ²¹ Among the things in Jericho that I saw was a beautiful coat from Baby-

lonia. I also saw over two kilograms of silver and some gold that weighed six hundred grams. I wanted those things very much for myself, so I took them. I buried them in the ground under my tent. You will find them there. The silver is buried beneath it all.”

²² So Joshua sent some men to find those things. They ran to Achan’s tent and found all the things hidden there. ²³ The men brought them all out of the tent and took them to Joshua and the rest of Israel. Then they laid them out, like an offering to Yahweh.

²⁴ Then Joshua and the rest of the people led Achan down to a valley. They also brought the silver, the coat, the gold, Achan’s wife and sons and daughters, and his cattle and donkeys and sheep, and his tent, and everything else that he owned. ²⁵ Joshua said, “I do not know why you caused so much trouble for us, but now Yahweh will bring trouble to you.” Then all the people threw stones at Achan so that he died, and they burned them all with fire, and they threw stones at them all.

²⁶ They piled rocks over the ashes of their corpses, and those rocks are still there. That is why that valley is called the Valley of Trouble to this day.

Chapter 8

¹ Then Yahweh said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid or discouraged. Take with you all the soldiers you have and go there again. Go up to Ai. See! I am giving you victory over the king of Ai, and you will capture his people, and his city, and his land. ² Your army will do to the people of Ai and their king like what you did to the people of Jericho and their king. But this time

I will permit you to take all their possessions and keep them for yourselves. But first, tell some of your soldiers to hide behind the city and prepare to attack it.”

³ So Joshua led all his army toward Ai. He chose thirty thousand men—his strongest men, men known for their bravery in battle—and he sent them out during the night. ⁴ He said to them, “Pay attention! Some of you must prepare a surprise attack on the city—an attack formed behind the city. Do not go far from the city. All of you get ready to attack. ⁵ I and the men who are with me will march toward the city in the morning. The men in the city will come out to fight us, as they did before. Then we will turn around and start to run away from them. ⁶ They will think that we are running away from them like we did before. So they will chase us away from the city. While we are running away from them, ⁷ those of you who are hiding must come out and rush into the city and capture it. Yahweh, your God, will give the city to you. ⁸ After you capture the city, burn it. Do what Yahweh has commanded us to do. Those are the orders I am giving to you.”

⁹ Then Joshua prepared to send some of them to hide and wait between Ai and Bethel, which was west of Ai. But Joshua slept that night among the main force of soldiers.

¹⁰ Early the next morning, Joshua gathered his soldiers together. He led the soldiers and the other Israelite leaders; they all went to attack the people of Ai. ¹¹ They all set up their tents close to Ai, just to the north of the city, where all the people of the city could see them. There was a valley between them and the city of Ai. ¹² Joshua had taken about five thousand men and told them to go and stay hidden so they could make a surprise attack, just west of the city, between Ai and Bethel. ¹³ So

those men did that. The main group of soldiers was north of the city, and the others were hiding west of the city. That night Joshua went down into the valley.

¹⁴ When the king of Ai saw the Israelite army, he and his soldiers got up early the next morning and quickly went out of the city to fight them. They went to a place east of the city, and from there they could look over the plain of the Jordan River, but they did not know that some Israelite soldiers were hiding ready to attack them from behind the city. ¹⁵ Joshua and the Israelite soldiers who were with him allowed the army of Ai to push them back. And the army of Israel ran toward the wilderness. ¹⁶ The men in Ai were ordered to chase after Joshua and his men. So they left the city and pursued Joshua and his army. ¹⁷ All the men of Ai and the men of Bethel pursued the Israelite army. They did not leave even one man in Ai to defend it. And they left the city gates wide open.

¹⁸ Then Yahweh said to Joshua, "Lift up your spear and point it toward Ai, because I am going to enable your soldiers to capture it!" So Joshua pointed his spear toward Ai. ¹⁹ When the Israelite men who were hiding saw that, they rushed out from the places where they were hiding and ran into the city. They captured it and quickly set it on fire.

²⁰ When the men of Ai looked back, they saw smoke rising from their city. But they could not escape, because the Israelite troops stopped running away and had turned around and now were facing the army that had been coming after them. ²¹ Joshua and his men saw that the men who had been hiding had captured the city and were burning it, and they saw the smoke rising. So they turned back and began killing the men of Ai. ²² Meanwhile, the soldiers who had captured the city came out and attacked them from the rear. So

the men of Ai were surrounded by the two groups of Israelite soldiers. None of the men of Ai escaped. The Israelites fought until they killed all of them. ²³ But they captured the king of Ai and brought him to Joshua.

²⁴ While they were fighting, the Israelite army pursued the men of Ai into the fields and into the wilderness, and killed all of them. Then they went to Ai and killed everyone and anything still alive there. ²⁵ They killed twelve thousand men and women. ²⁶ Joshua continued to point his spear toward Ai until all the people in Ai had been killed. ²⁷ The Israelite soldiers took for themselves the animals and the other things that had belonged to the people of Ai, just as Yahweh had told Joshua that they should do.

²⁸ Joshua and his soldiers burned Ai and caused it to become a pile of ruins forever. It is an abandoned place even today. ²⁹ Joshua hanged the king of Ai on a tree and left his corpse hanging there until the evening. At sunset Joshua told his men to take the king's body down from the tree and to throw it where the city gate had been. After they did that, they made a great mound of rocks on top of his body. That pile of rocks is still there to this day.

³⁰ Then Joshua told his men to build on Mount Ebal an altar for Yahweh, the God of Israel. ³¹ They built it just like Moses, the man who served God well, had written previously in the laws that God had given to him. They made it from stones that had not been cut, stones on which they had done no work using iron tools. The Israelites then offered sacrifices to Yahweh that were burned completely on the altar. They also made sacrifices to promise friendship with him. ³² As the Israelites watched, Joshua wrote on stones a copy of the laws that Yahweh had given to Moses. ³³ The Israelite leaders, the officials, the

judges, and other Israelites were there, standing nearby. Many people who were not Israelites were also there. Half of the people stood on one side of the valley below Mount Ebal, and the other half of the people stood on the other side of the valley below Mount Gerizim. The sacred chest was in the valley between the two groups. And they blessed the people of Israel just as Moses the servant of Yahweh had told them to do, at the very first.

³⁴ Then Joshua read to the people all that Moses had written previously. That included what Yahweh had taught them and the ways that he promised to bless them if they obeyed his commands, or to curse them if they disobeyed them. ³⁵ Joshua carefully read all the commands that Moses had given; he read every word in front of the entire assembly of Israel. All the women and the little children were there as well, and also the foreigners who were living among the people of Israel.

Chapter 9

¹ There were several kings who ruled in lands on the west side of the Jordan River. They were the kings of the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. They lived in the hill country, in the lower hills further west, and on the plains beside the Mediterranean Sea. They heard about what happened at Ai. ² So they all gathered their armies under one leader to fight against Joshua and the Israelite army.

³ However, when the people who lived in the city of Gibeon heard that Joshua's army had defeated the people of Jericho and Ai, ⁴ they decided to trick the Israelites. They sent some of their men who pretended to be ambassadors for their

people. These men gathered some old sacks and some old leather wine bags that had been mended after they were cracked, and they put these on the backs of their donkeys. ⁵ They put on old sandals that had been patched and wore old ragged clothes. And they took along bread that was dry and moldy. ⁶ They went to where Joshua and the other Israelites had set up their tents near Gilgal. They said to them, "We have traveled from a land very far away. Please make a peace treaty with us."

⁷ The Israelite leaders said to those men from Gilead (they were Hivites), "Perhaps you really live close by. How can we make a treaty with you?"

⁸ They replied to Joshua and insisted, "We are your servants!"

But Joshua answered, "Who are you? Where do you actually come from?"

⁹ The men from Gibeon answered, "We want to be your servants. We have come here from a distant land, because of the fame of Yahweh your God. We heard about all the great things he did in Egypt.

¹⁰ And we have heard about what he did to the two kings of the Amorites who are on the east side of the Jordan River—Sihon, the king who ruled in Heshbon, and Og, the king of Bashan who lived in Ashtaroth.

¹¹ So our leaders and the rest of our people said to us, 'Take some food and go to talk with the Israelites. Tell them, "We want to be your servants. So make a peace agreement with us."' ¹² "Look at our bread. It was fresh and warm when we baked it on the day that we left our homes to come here to you. But now it is dry and moldy.

¹³ Look at our leather wine bags, they were new when we filled them with wine before we left, but now they are cracked and old. Our clothes and our sandals are worn out from traveling on the long road to come here."

¹⁴ The Israelite leaders accepted some of their old food and ate a meal with them in order to make a peace treaty. They did not think to ask Yahweh what they should do. ¹⁵ In this way, Joshua agreed to make peace. The Israelites made a treaty with the men from Gibeon, in which they agreed not to kill these strangers. All the Israelite leaders made a solemn vow to this effect.

¹⁶ However, three days later the Israelites found out that the men had only come from Gibeon and that they really lived close by. ¹⁷ So they went to where the men from Gibeon lived. After traveling only three days, they came to their cities: Gibeon, Kephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath Jearim. ¹⁸ But the Israelites did not attack those cities because they had made a solemn vow to live peacefully with them, and because Yahweh had heard the promise they made.

All the people of Israel grumbled against their leaders for making this treaty. ¹⁹ But the leaders answered, "We promised to live peacefully with them and Yahweh, the God of Israel, heard us promise to do that. So now we cannot do them any harm. ²⁰ If we kill them, God will be very angry with us and punish us because we did not keep our promise to them, a promise that binds us by solemn oath. But this is what we can do: ²¹ We will allow them to live, but they will become our servants; they will cut wood and carry water for all the people." This is what happened, just as the leaders planned.

²² Then Joshua summoned the men from Gibeon and asked them, "Why did you lie to us? Your homes are near to us; you live close to us, but you told us that you were from a far land! ²³ Now you are going to live under a curse. You will become our slaves. You will always be our slaves, and you will be forced to cut wood and carry

water for the house of our God."

²⁴ The men from Gibeon replied, "We lied to you because we were afraid that you would kill us. We heard that Yahweh, your God, had declared to his servant Moses that he would enable your people to kill all of us in Canaan, and that he would give you our lands. ²⁵ So now you should decide what you will do with us. Do to us whatever you think is good and right."

²⁶ So Joshua saved the lives of the people of Gibeon; he did not permit the army of Israel to harm them. ²⁷ Instead, he forced them to become the Israelites' slaves. They cut wood and carried water for Israel. They also brought the wood and water that was needed for the sacred altar of Yahweh. And the people of Gibeon are still doing that to this present time.

Chapter 10

¹ Adoni-Zedek, the king of the city of Jerusalem, heard that Joshua's army had captured Ai and had completely destroyed everything in the town. He heard that they had done to the people of Ai and to their king the same thing that they had done to the people of Jericho and their king. He also heard that the people of the city of Gibeon had made peace with the Israelite people and that they were now living among the Israelites. ² The people of Jerusalem became very afraid because Gibeon was an important city, like the other cities that were so important that they had their own kings. Gibeon was larger than Ai, and all its soldiers were experienced. ³ So King Adoni-Zedek sent a message to Hosham the king of Hebron, to Piram the king of Jarmuth, to Jarmuth the king of Lachish, and to Debir the king of Eglon. ⁴ In the message he said, "Please come up and help me attack Gibeon, be-

cause the people of Gibeon have made peace with Joshua and the Israelites.”

⁵ So those five kings who ruled all the groups who were descendants of Amor—the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Debir—came to Gibeon with all of their soldiers and surrounded the city, to fight against it.

⁶ The people of Gibeon sent a message to Joshua while he was in the camp at Gilgal. They said, “We are your servants. So do not forsake us. Come up to us quickly and save us! Help us, because the kings of the Amorites and their armies have joined their forces together to attack us!”

⁷ So Joshua and all his army, including the soldiers and his best fighting men, marched up from Gilgal. ⁸ Then Yahweh said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid of those armies! I will enable your army to defeat them. None of their soldiers will resist you.”

⁹ Joshua’s army marched all night and arrived very early in the morning. ¹⁰ And Yahweh caused their enemies to become confused when they saw the Israelite army. Joshua led the army and he killed them—a great number of them were killed at Gibeon, and he came after the rest of them as they were going up the road to Beth Horon. He also killed them along the road that goes to the cities of Azekah and Makkedah. ¹¹ As they fled in front of the Israelite army, Yahweh threw down on them huge stones from the sky. More of them died from hailstones than died by the swords of the army of Israel.

¹² On the day that Yahweh enabled the Israelite army to defeat the Amorites, Joshua said to Yahweh while the Israelite people were watching,

“Sun, stand still over Gibeon,

and you, moon, be still over the Valley of Aijalon.”

¹³ And the sun stood still and the moon did not move, until the Israelite army killed their enemies. Was this not written in the Book of Jashar?

“The sun stopped while it was in the middle of the sky,

and did not set for about a whole day.”

¹⁴ On that day, Yahweh performed a great miracle. There was never a day like that previously, and there has never been a day like that since, when Yahweh did this kind of thing because a human being asked him to. On that day, Yahweh truly went to war for Israel.

¹⁵ Joshua and all Israel with him returned to their camp at Gilgal.

¹⁶ Now the five kings ran away and hid themselves in a cave at Makkedah. ¹⁷ Then someone told Joshua, “We found those five kings, hiding in a cave at Makkedah!” ¹⁸ When Joshua heard that, he said, “Roll some very large stones over the entrance of the cave, and leave some soldiers there to guard them. ¹⁹ But do not stay there! Pursue your enemies! Attack them from behind! Do not allow them to escape to their cities, because Yahweh, your God, will help you triumph over them.”

²⁰ So Joshua’s army did what he told them to do. They killed almost all of the enemy soldiers, but a few of them survived and were able to reach their cities. ²¹ Then Joshua’s army returned to Joshua, who was still in their camp at Makkedah. No one in the land dared any longer to criticize the Israelites.

²² Then Joshua said, “Open the entrance of the cave and bring out to me those five kings!” ²³ So the soldiers brought those five kings out of the cave—the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon. ²⁴ When they brought those kings to Joshua and forced them to lie on the

ground, he summoned all the Israelite soldiers and he said to the army commanders, "Come here and put your feet on the necks of these kings!" So the commanders did that. ²⁵ Then Joshua said to them, "Do not be afraid of any of our enemies! Never be discouraged! Be strong and courageous. This is what Yahweh will do to all the enemies you will fight!" ²⁶ Then Joshua killed each of the five kings with his sword and hung their bodies from five trees. He left their bodies to hang on the trees until sunset. ²⁷ At sunset, Joshua told them to take the bodies down from the trees and throw them into the cave where they were hiding. So the soldiers did that, and then they put those large rocks at the entrance of the cave again. And the bones of the kings are in that cave even to this day.

²⁸ That is how Joshua's army attacked and captured Makkedah. They killed the king and everyone else in the city. They did not leave even any living creature alive. They did to the king of Makkedah the same thing that they had done to the king of Jericho.

²⁹ Then Joshua and all Israel went southwest from Makkedah to Libnah and attacked it. ³⁰ Yahweh enabled the Israelites to conquer that city and its king. Joshua killed everything that lived in the city; he did not spare even one person. Joshua killed the king of Libnah just as he had killed the king of Jericho.

³¹ Then Joshua and his army went south from Libnah to Lachish. He surrounded the city and waged war against it. ³² On the second day of the battle, Yahweh gave the city to the Israelites, and they conquered it. They killed everything that lived in it, including all the people. He did at Lachish the same thing that he had done at Libnah. ³³ King Horam from Gezer and his army came to help the sol-

diers of Lachish, but Joshua's army defeated Horam and his army, and did not allow even one of them to remain alive.

³⁴ Then Joshua and his army went west from Lachish to the city of Eglon. They surrounded it and attacked it. ³⁵ On that same day, they captured the city and killed everyone in it, just as they had done at Lachish.

³⁶ Then Joshua and his army marched from Eglon up into the hills to the city of Hebron. They waged war against it ³⁷ and captured it. They killed the king and every living thing, as they had done at Eglon. They did not leave one person alive.

³⁸ Then Joshua and his army turned and went to the city of Debir and waged war against it. ³⁹ They captured the city and its king, and they also captured the nearby villages. Then they killed every living thing in it; they did not allow even one person to stay alive. They did to these people the same as they had done at Hebron and Libnah.

⁴⁰ In this way, Joshua and his army conquered the entire southern part of Canaan. They defeated the kings who ruled the hill country, the southern Judean wilderness, the lowlands, and the foothills. They killed every living thing in those places, just as Yahweh, the God of Israel commanded them. ⁴¹ Joshua's soldiers killed people in all the cities from Kadesh Barnea to Gaza, including all the country of Goshen to Gibeon. ⁴² In one campaign, Joshua's army conquered all the kings and took possession of all their territory, because Yahweh, the God of Israel, was fighting for them.

⁴³ Then Joshua and his army returned to their camp at Gilgal.

Chapter 11

¹ When King Jabin of Hazor heard about all these things that had happened, he sent messages to Jobab, king of Madon, to the king of Shimron, and to the king of Akshaph, requesting them to send their armies to come and help him fight against the Israelites. ² He also sent messages to the kings in the northern hills and to the kings in the plain along the Jordan, south of the Sea of Galilee, in the low country. He also sent a message to the king of the high country of Dor in the west, ³ to the kings of the Canaanites in both the east and the west, to the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, and to the Jebusites who lived in the hill country, and to the Hivites by Mount Hermon in the region of Mizpah. ⁴ So the armies of all those kings gathered together. Their men were as many as the grains of sand on the seashore. They also came with horses and chariots in great numbers. ⁵ All of those kings met at the fixed time and set up their armies in a camp at the brook of Merom, in order to wage war against Israel.

⁶ Then Yahweh said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them, because at this time tomorrow I will give them to you. You will defeat them and kill all of them. Then you must cripple all their horses and burn all their chariots."

⁷ So Joshua and his army came to the brook of Merom and without warning attacked their enemies. ⁸ Yahweh enabled the Israelites to defeat them. They pursued them to the city of Sidon, to Misrephothmaim, and to Mizpah in the east. They attacked them until they had killed them all. ⁹ Then Joshua did what Yahweh told them to do: He crippled their enemies' horses and he burned up their chariots.

¹⁰ So Joshua and his army went back to the

city of Hazor, and captured it, and killed their king. Hazor was the most important city of all these kingdoms that fought against Israel. ¹¹ They killed everything that was living in Hazor, and then they burned the city to ashes.

¹² Joshua's army captured all of those cities and killed all of their kings. They did that as Moses, the man who served Yahweh well, had commanded them to do. ¹³ Joshua's men burned Hazor, but they did not burn any of the other cities that were built on mounds and were surrounded by wall. ¹⁴ The Israelites took for themselves the animals that they found in the fields and everything else that was valuable. But they killed every human being and every living thing in the cities. ¹⁵ As Yahweh had given Moses instructions to act, in the same way Moses also gave Joshua commands to act. And Joshua did everything that Yahweh had commanded Moses to do.

¹⁶ Joshua's army defeated all the people who were living in that land. They took control of the hill country and the southern Judean wilderness, all the area of Goshen, the western foothills, and the plain along the Jordan. They took control of all the mountains in Israel and of all the lowlands near the mountains. ¹⁷ They took control over all the land from Mount Halak in the south of Edom to Baalgaal in the valley near the region of Lebanon to the north, near Mount Hermon. They captured all the kings of those areas and killed them. ¹⁸ Joshua's men fought against all those kings for a long time. ¹⁹ There was only one city that made a peace treaty with the Israelites; they were the people of the Hivites who lived in Gibeon. The Israelites captured all the other cities in battles. ²⁰ Yahweh caused the people in all those other groups to be stubborn, with the result that they fought against the Is-

raelite army, and so God used the Israelite army to destroy them all. God did not hold back the Israelite army from totally destroying their enemies. This is what Yahweh had commanded Moses to do.

²¹ Joshua's army also fought the Anakite giants who lived in the hills near Hebron, Debir, and Anah. They also fought against the people who lived in the hill country of Judah and Israel, and they killed all of those people and destroyed their cities as well. ²² As a result, there were no descendants of Anak who remained alive in Israel. Only a few remained alive in Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod. ²³ Joshua's army took control of all the land, just as Yahweh long ago had told Moses to do. Yahweh gave the land to the Israelites, because he had promised to give it to them. Then Joshua divided the land among the Israelite tribes. And after that, there was peace in the land.

Chapter 12

¹ The Israelites took control of the land that was east of the Jordan River, from the Arnon River gorge in the south to Mount Hermon in the north, including all the land on the eastern side of the plain along the Jordan.

² Sihon was the king of the Amorites. He lived in Heshbon and ruled over the area from Aroer along the Arnon River gorge, north to the Jabbok River. His land started in the middle of the gorge, which was the border between his land and the land of the Ammonites. Sihon also ruled over half of the region of Gilead. ³ Sihon also ruled over the land on the eastern plain along the Jordan, from the Sea of Galilee south to the Dead Sea. He also ruled over the land east of the Dead Sea from Beth Jeshimoth south to Mount Pisgah.

⁴ The other king whom the Israelite army defeated was Og, the king of the region of Bashan. He was the last of the descendants of the giant people of Rapha. He lived in the cities of Ashtaroth and Edrei.

⁵ He ruled over the area from Mount Hermon and Salekah in the north, and over all Bashan in the east, and to the borders of the Geshurites and Maacathites to the west. Og ruled over half of the region of Gilead, as far as the border of the land ruled by Sihon, king of Heshbon.

⁶ Moses, who had served Yahweh so faithfully, and all the Israelite army had defeated the armies of those kings. Then Moses gave that land to the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh.

⁷ Joshua and the Israelite army also defeated kings who ruled over the land on the west side of the Jordan River. That land was between Baal Gad in the valley near Lebanon to Mount Halak, which goes up to Edom. Joshua gave land to the tribes of Israel for them to possess, ⁸ as well as the hill country, the lowlands, the plain along the Jordan, the mountainsides, in the desert, and in the southern Judean wilderness, the land of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and the Jebusites. ⁹ The kings that the Israelites conquered were those of the following cities: Jericho, Ai (which was near Bethel), ¹⁰ Jerusalem, Hebron, ¹¹ Jarmuth, Lachish, ¹² Eglon, Gezer, ¹³ Debir, Geder, ¹⁴ Hormah, Arad, ¹⁵ Libnah, Adullam, ¹⁶ Makkedah, Bethel, ¹⁷ Tappuah, Hepher, ¹⁸ Aphek, Lasharon, ¹⁹ Madon, Hazor, ²⁰ Shimron Meron, Akshaph, ²¹ Taanach, Megiddo, ²² Kedesh, Jokneam in the Carmel area, ²³ Dor in the Naphoth Dor area, Goyim in the region of Gilgal, ²⁴ and Tirzah.

There was a total of thirty-one kings that the Israelite army defeated.

Chapter 13

¹ When Joshua was very old, Yahweh said to him, "Joshua, you are now an old man, but there is still a lot of land for your army to capture. ² Here is a list of the lands that remain: The region of the Philistines and all those of the Geshurites, ³ (from Shihor, which is located to the east of Egypt, and to Ekron in the north; the five rulers of the cities of the Philistines, Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron—the territory of the Avvites). ⁴ In the south, you must still capture the regions where the Canaan people groups live; and Arah that belongs to the Sidonians, to Aphek, to the boundary of the Amorites; ⁵ the land of the Gebalite, all Lebanon, toward the east, from Baal Gad below Mount Hermon to Lebo Hamath.

⁶ Still to capture are all the people who live in the hill country from Lebanon to Misrephothmaim, including all the people of the city of Sidon. I will drive them out before your army. Be sure to give that area to the Israelite people when you divide the land among them, as I gave you orders to do so. ⁷ Divide all that land as an inheritance among the nine tribes and the half tribe of Manasseh."

⁸ Along with the half tribe of Manasseh, the Reubenites and the Gadites received their possessions on the east side of the Jordan River, the lands that Moses assigned to them. ⁹ These lands stretched from Aroer, which is on the edge of the Arnon Gorge (including the city that is located in the middle of the gorge), to all the plateau of Medeba, extending down as far as the city of Dibon. ¹⁰ These lands also included the cities of Sihon king of the Amorites, the king who had reigned in Heshbon, and they extended to the border of the Ammonites; ¹¹ Gilead, and the region of the Geshurites and Maacathites, including all

of Mount Hermon, and all of the region of Bashan extending to the city of Salekah; ¹² all the kingdom of Og within the region of Bashan, he who reigned in the cities of Ashtaroth and Edrei (these are what was left of the remnant of the Rephaim); these people Moses had attacked with the sword and driven away. ¹³ But the Israelites did not force out of Canaan the people of Geshur and the Maacathites. Instead, these people live with the Israelites even at the present time.

¹⁴ The Levites received no assignment of lands; they were the only tribe that received no land. Moses gave them no possessions. Yahweh, the God of Israel, told them that the offerings given to himself would be their possession.

¹⁵ Moses had allotted land to each clan in the tribe of Reuben. ¹⁶ So their territory extended from Aroer, on the edge of the Valley of the Arnon River, and the city that is in the middle of the valley, and includes the region of the plateau near Medeba. ¹⁷ It also includes Heshbon and all its cities that are in the plateau including Dibon, and Bamoth Baal, and Beth Baal Meon; ¹⁸ and Jahaz, and Kedemoth, and Mephaath, ¹⁹ and Kiriathaim, and Sibmah, and Zereth Shagar, which stands on a hill within the valley. ²⁰ The territory also includes Beth Peor, the slopes of Mount Pisgah, Beth Jeshimoth, ²¹ all the cities situated along the plateau, and all the kingdom of Sihon, the king of the Amorites, who reigned there in Heshbon, the ones that Moses defeated along with the leaders of Midian, who were Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur and Reba, the princes of Sihon who ruled there. ²² The people of Israel killed with the sword Balaam son of Beor, the one who practiced divination. The people of Israel also killed with the sword many others at that same time. ²³ The border of the people of the tribe of

Reuben is the Jordan River. This was the inheritance given to the people of Reuben and assigned to all their clans. They lived there in their cities and villages.

²⁴ Moses also gave land to the tribe of Gad, to the people of Gad, and allotted to each of their families the land they needed to live on. ²⁵ They lived near Jazer, in all the cities of Gilead, and in half the land where the Ammonites lived, all the way to Aroer, which is a city east of Rabbah. ²⁶ Their land extended from Heshbon to Ramath Mizpah and Betonim, all the way to Mahanaim and to the region of Debir. ²⁷ Their land was also in the valley: Beth Haram, Beth Nimrah, Succoth, and Zaphon, the rest of the kingdom of Sihon, who had been king of Heshbon; his kingdom had bordered on the Jordan River and extended to the lower end of the Sea of Galilee, eastward beyond the Jordan River. ²⁸ This is the inheritance of the people of Gad that was allotted to them according to the needs of their clans, along with the cities and villages where they lived.

²⁹ Moses gave inheritance of land to the half tribe of Manasseh for them to live on. It was allotted to the half tribe of the people of Manasseh according to the needs of their clans. ³⁰ Their territory was from Mahanaim, including all the region of Bashan, all the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, and all the towns of Jair, which are in Bashan. There are sixty cities in the region. ³¹ Their land also included half of the region of Gilead, as well as the cities of Ashtaroth and Edrei (sometimes referred to as the royal cities of Og in Bashan). These were allotted to the people of Machir son of Manasseh, and that would include half the descendants of Machir, assigned to their clans according to their need.

³² These were the lands that Moses dis-

tributed to the people of Israel on the plains of Moab, when they were beyond the Jordan just east of Jericho. ³³ But to the tribe of Levi Moses gave no inheritance. Yahweh, who is the God of Israel, promised them that he would be their inheritance.

Chapter 14

¹ Eleazar, the leader of all the priests, Joshua, and the leaders of the twelve tribes decided what land to allot to each of the Israelite tribes in Canaan. ² The assignments were made by casting lots for each one of the nine and one-half tribes. This was just as Yahweh had commanded Moses to do, so that the land could be assigned to each of the tribes and their clans. ³⁻⁴ Now Moses had given land as a permanent possession to two and one-half tribes before Israel crossed over the Jordan River. But to the Levites he gave no inheritance; they were treated differently because of their priestly duties. No portion of the land was given to the Levites. They were, however, given cities in which to live, including pastureland for their livestock so they could sustain their families. And the people of Joseph were divided into two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim. ⁵ The people of Israel did as Yahweh commanded Moses: They gave out portions of the land as permanent possessions.

⁶ Some men from the tribe of Judah went to Joshua while he and all the Israelites were at Gilgal. Among those men was Jephunneh's son Caleb. He said to Joshua, "I am sure that you remember what Yahweh said to the prophet Moses concerning you and me when we were at Kadesh Barnea. ⁷ I was forty years old at that time. Moses sent me from Kadesh Barnea and

you and some other men to explore this land. When we returned, I gave to Moses a true report about what we had seen.⁸ The other men who went with us gave a report that caused the people to be afraid. But I fully followed Yahweh and obeyed everything he commanded us to do.⁹ Moses promised me, 'It is a firm promise that the land on which you walked will become yours as your permanent possession, to belong to you and your descendants forever. I am giving it to you because you obeyed Yahweh, my God, in everything you did.'

¹⁰ Now Yahweh has done for me as he promised he would. Forty-five years have passed since Moses said that to me during the time that we were still in the wilderness. And just as Yahweh promised, he has kept me alive and well all during that time. Look at me! I am eighty-five years old.¹¹ I am as strong today as I was on the day that Moses sent me to explore this land. My strength is now as my strength was when I was young. I can wage war or I can travel far away and still have the strength to come home.¹² So please give me the hill country that Yahweh promised to give to me on that day long ago. At that time, you heard me say that the Anakim lived there. You heard me say that their cities were large and that they had walls around them to protect them. But now, perhaps Yahweh will help me to drive them away with our army, just as Yahweh promised."

¹³ So Joshua asked God to bless Caleb, and he gave to Caleb the city of Hebron.¹⁴ In this way, Hebron became the permanent possession and the home of Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite. To this day his descendants live there because Caleb did everything that Yahweh, the God of Israel, told him to do.¹⁵ Now the name of Hebron formerly was Kiriath Arba (Arba

had been the greatest man among the Anakim). And there was peace in the land; they no longer waged war.

Chapter 15

¹ The land that was assigned to the tribe of Judah was divided among its clans. Their land extended south to the wilderness of Sin at the border of Edom.

² Their south border of the land that was assigned to the tribe of Judah started at the end of the Salt Sea (also called the Dead Sea), from the bay that faces to the south.³ It then went southward and up the hill of Akrabbim and continued along to Sin, and then it went up once more south of Kadesh Barnea, beside Hezron, up to Addar, and then it bent around to Karka.⁴ From there it continued past Azmon, and from there it ran beside the brook of Egypt; from there it turned west to the Mediterranean Sea. That will be your south border.⁵ The eastern border of the land of the tribe of Judah was the Dead Sea. It extended north to the end of the Jordan River, where it empties into the Dead Sea.⁶ The northern border continued from that point, and extended north to Beth Hoglah. From there it went further north of Beth Arabah to the Stone of Bohan (a stone that had been set up by Bohan, son of Reuben).⁷ From that point the border turned west and went through the Valley of Achor to Debir. From there it turned north again to go to Gilgal. Gilgal is north of the road that goes over the hill of Adummim, on the south side of the river valley. From Gilgal the border extended west to the springs at En Shemesh, and from there to En Rogel.⁸ From that point the border along the south shoulder of the Jebusite city (that is, Jerusalem). The boundary goes to the top of the hill on the

west side of Valley of Hinnom, at the northern end of the Valley of Rephaim. ⁹ From there the border extended northwest to the top of the hills leading to the spring of Nephtoah, and from there to the cities near Mount Ephron. From there the border extended west toward Baalah (which is now named Kiriath Jearim). ¹⁰ Then the border continued to extend west, past Baalah, to Mount Seir. Then it went southwest along the north side of Mount Jearim (which is also called Kesalon), and went down to Beth Shemesh. From there it passed by Timnah. ¹¹ The border continued northwest to the hill north of Ekron. From there it extended west to Shikkeron and past Mount Baalah, on to Jabneel, and then northwest to the Mediterranean Sea.

¹² The western border of the land that was assigned to the tribe of Judah was the Mediterranean Sea. All the clans of Judah lived inside those borders.

¹³ Yahweh commanded Joshua to give part of the land of the tribe of Judah to Caleb. So he gave to Caleb the city of Kiriath Arba, which is now called Hebron. (Arba was the father of Anak.) ¹⁴ Caleb forced the three clans of the Anak people group to leave Hebron. Those were the Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai clans. ¹⁵ Then Caleb left there and went to fight against the people who were living in Debir (which was previously named Kiriath Sepher). ¹⁶ Caleb said, "If someone attacks the people in Kiriath Sepher and captures their city, I will give my daughter Aksah for him to marry." ¹⁷ Othniel son of Caleb's brother Kenaz, captured the city. So Caleb gave his daughter, Aksah, for him to marry.

¹⁸ When Caleb's daughter married Othniel, she told him to ask her father to give her a field. Then Aksah went to talk with her father Caleb. As she got down from her donkey, Caleb asked her, "Do you want something?"

¹⁹ Aksah replied, "Yes, I want you to do something for me. You have given me the land of the southern Judean wilderness, but there is no water there. So please give me some land that has springs." So Caleb gave her the upper and lower springs near Hebron.

²⁰ Here is a list of the towns in the land that God had promised to give to the tribe of Judah. Each clan was assigned some of the land.

²¹ The tribe of Judah was assigned all these cities in the southern Judean wilderness, near the border of the region of Edom:

Kabzeel, Eder, Jagur, ²² Kinah, Dimonah, Adadah, ²³ Kedesh, Hazor, Ithnan, ²⁴ Ziph, Telem, and Bealoth. ²⁵ Also Hazor Hadattah, Kerioth Hezron (also called Hazor), ²⁶ Amam, Shema, Molodah, ²⁷ Hazar Gaddah, Heshmon, Beth Pelet, ²⁸ Hazar Shual, Beersheba, and Biziothiah. ²⁹ Also Baalah, Iyim, Ezem, ³⁰ Eltolad, Kesil, Hormah, ³¹ Ziklag, Madmannah, Sansannah, ³² Lebaoth, Shilhim, Ain, and Rimmon. There were twenty-nine cities, together with their surrounding villages.

³³ The tribe of Judah was assigned these cities in the northern part of the western foothills: Eshtaol, Zorah, Ashnah,

³⁴ Zanoah, En Gannim, Tapuah, Enam, ³⁵ Jarmuth, Adullam, Sokoh, Azekah, ³⁶ Shaaraim, Adithaim, and Gederah (also called Gederothaim). There were fourteen cities, together with their surrounding villages.

³⁷ The tribe of Judah was also assigned these cities in the southern part of the western foothills: Zenan, Hadashah, Migdalga, ³⁸ Dilean, Mizpah, Joktheel, ³⁹ Lachish, Bozkath, and Eglon. ⁴⁰ Also Kabbon, Lahmas, Kitlish, ⁴¹ Gederoth, Bethdagon, Naamah, and Makkedah.

There were sixteen cities, together with their surrounding villages.

⁴² The tribe of Judah was also assigned these cities in the central part of the western foothills: Libnah, Ether, Ashan, ⁴³ Iphtah, Ashnah, Nezib, ⁴⁴ Keilah, Aczib, and Mareshah. There were nine cities, together with their surrounding villages.

⁴⁵ There was also the city of Ekron, with its surrounding towns and its villages. ⁴⁶ From Ekron to the Mediterranean Sea, Judah's territory also included all the land near the city of Ashdod, including its villages.

⁴⁷ Ashdod and its surrounding towns and villages; the city of Gaza and its surrounding towns and villages down to the brook of Egypt and to the Mediterranean Sea. The border followed the coastline.

⁴⁸ The tribe of Judah was also assigned these towns in the southwest part of the hill country: Shamir, Jattir, Sokoh, ⁴⁹ Danah, Kiriath Sannah (also called Debir), ⁵⁰ Anab, Eshtemoh, Anim, ⁵¹ Goshen, Holon, and Giloh. There were eleven cities, together with their surrounding villages.

⁵² The tribe of Judah was also assigned these towns in the south central part of the hill country: Arab, Dumah, Eshan, ⁵³ Janim, Beth Tappuah, Aphekah, ⁵⁴ Humtah, Kiriath Arba (now called Hebron), and Zior. There were nine cities, together with their surrounding villages.

⁵⁵ The tribe of Judah was also assigned these towns in the southeastern part of the hill country: Maon, Carmel, Ziph, Juttah, ⁵⁶ Jezreel, Jokdeam, Zanoah, ⁵⁷ Kain, Gibeah, and Timnah. There were ten cities, together with their surrounding villages.

⁵⁸ The tribe of Judah was also assigned these towns in the central part of the hill country: Halhul, Beth Zur, Gedor, ⁵⁹ Maarath, Beth Anoth, and Eltekon. There were six cities, together with their sur-

rounding villages.

⁶⁰ The tribe of Judah was also assigned two towns in the northern part of the hill country, Rabbah and Kiriath Baal (which is also named Kiriath Jearim).

⁶¹ The tribe of Judah was also assigned these towns in the desert near the Dead Sea: Beth Arabah, Middin, Secacah, ⁶² Nibshan, the City of Salt, and En Gedi. There were six cities, together with their surrounding villages.

⁶³ The army of the tribe of Judah was not able to drive out the Jebusites and so they stayed in Jerusalem. So today they are still living among the tribe of Judah.

Chapter 16

¹ The land that was assigned to the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh—the tribes that were descended from Joseph—started at the Jordan River, east of Jericho. ² It extended west from Jericho to Bethel, and then to Luz, and it passed on to Ataroth, which is the territory where the Archites live. ³ From there it extended west to the border of the land where the Japhletites lived, and then west to the area near Lower Beth Horon. From there it continued west to Gezer, and from there to the Mediterranean Sea. ⁴ This was the territory that the people of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, received as their permanent possession. ⁵ The border of the land that was assigned to the clans of the tribe of Ephraim started at Ataroth Addar in the east. It extended to Upper Beth Horon ⁶ and continued to the Mediterranean Sea. From Mikmethath on the north it turned eastward toward Taanath Shiloh, and went on toward the east to Janoah. ⁷ They went down from Janoah to Ataroth and then on to Naarah. From

there it reached the city of Jericho, ending at the Jordan River. ⁸ The northern border extended from Tappuah west to the ravine of Kanah, and ended at the Mediterranean Sea. This was the land that was assigned to all the clans of the tribe of Ephraim. ⁹ Some of the cities and their dependant villages that were set apart for the people of Ephraim were actually within the assigned territory of the people of Manasseh.

¹⁰ The people of the tribe of Ephraim could not force the Canaanites to leave Gezer. The Canaanites still live there. However, the people of Ephraim forced them to be their slaves.

Chapter 17

¹ This is a list of the land that was allotted to the tribe of Manasseh. Manasseh's oldest son was Makir, and his grandson was Gilead. Their descendants were assigned the lands in the regions of Gilead and Bashan, in honor of Makir, who had been a great soldier. ² Land was also allotted to the other clans in the tribe of Manasseh: The clans of Abiezer, Helek, Asriel, Shechem, Hepher, and Shemida. These had been the names of Manasseh's male descendants (he himself had been a son of Joseph). Assignments of land were made for each clan.

³ Now Zelophehad son of Hepher, a descendant of Gilead, who had been the son of Makir and grandson of Manasseh, had no sons. He had only daughters, and their names were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milkah, and Tirzah. ⁴ These women went to Eleazar (the leader of all the priests), and to Joshua and the other Israelite leaders. They said, "We want you to give us some land, because Yahweh told Moses that he should give to us some land, just

as you have given to the men in our tribe." So Eleazar did what Yahweh had commanded: He assigned some land to them, just as he had done for their uncles. ⁵ So the tribe of Manasseh eventually had ten sections of land west of the Jordan River and two sections on the east side of the Jordan River in Gilead. ⁶ And these women in the tribe of Manasseh also were assigned land on the west side of the river just like the men. The other parts of Gilead were assigned to the rest of the people of Manasseh.

⁷ The land assigned to the tribe of Manasseh was between the land where the tribe of Asher lives and Mikmethath, near Shechem. The border extended south to the spring of Tappuah. ⁸ The land near the city of Tappuah belonged to the tribe of Manasseh. But Tappuah itself was on the border with the tribe of Ephraim and in fact belonged to the Ephraimites. ⁹ The border extended down south to the brook of Kanah, and all the cities south of that stream belonged to Manasseh. The border of Manasseh was on the north side of the brook of Kanah; it extended to the Mediterranean Sea. ¹⁰ The land to the south belong to Ephraim and the land to the north belonged to the tribe of Manasseh; the Mediterranean Sea was Manasseh's border. The tribe of Asher was on the north side of the boundary, while the tribe of Issachar was to the east.

¹¹ But there were cities inside the territory assigned to the tribes of Issachar and Asher, that, along with their surrounding villages, were in fact assigned to people from the tribe of Manasseh. These cities were Beth Shan, Ibleam, Dor, Endor, Taanach, and Megiddo (and the third city in the list is Napheth).

¹² The men of the tribe of Manasseh were not able to force the people who lived in those cities to leave, so the Canaanite peo-

ple continued to live in their land. ¹³ When the people of Israel grew strong they forced those Canaanites to work for them as slaves but they were not able to take their land away from them.

¹⁴ The descendants of Joseph (that is, the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh) said to Joshua, "You have assigned to us only one area of land, but we have a great number of people in our tribes. In every way Yahweh has blessed us, so why did you give us only a small portion of land to live on?"

¹⁵ Joshua replied to them, "Since you have a lot of people, go up and cut down the trees in the forest and make a place for your crops and for yourselves to live in the land of the Perizzites and the Raphaim. This is what you must do, since the hill country is too cramped for you to live there."

¹⁶ The people of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh replied, "The hill country is not big enough for us. But we cannot spread out into the plain because of the Canaanites who live on it. The Canaanites in Beth Shan and the surrounding villages have chariots with iron wheels."

¹⁷ Joshua replied to the house of Joseph, that is, to Ephraim and Manasseh; he said, "Your people are indeed very numerous and very powerful. So I will make one more assignment of land for you: ¹⁸ the hill country will belong to you, too. You will have to cut down the trees in order to make it your own, and to make a place for you to live. You will drive out the Canaanites, even though they are strong and have chariots with iron wheels."

Chapter 18

¹ The entire assembly of the people of Israel met together at Shiloh. There they

set up the tent where they worshiped Yahweh. There was no more war in the land. ² However, there seven tribes of Israel had not yet been assigned any land. ³ Joshua said to the people of Israel, "Why are you waiting such a long time? How long are you going to delay going into the land that Yahweh, the God whom your ancestors worshiped, has promised to give to you?"

⁴ Choose three men from each of your seven tribes. I will send them out to explore the parts of the land which you have not occupied yet. When they finish, they will write a report to tell you what the land is like. They will also make a map to show you where cities and important places are located and which tribe will live in which area. ⁵ They will divide the remaining land into seven parts. The tribe of Judah will keep its land in the south, and the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh will keep their land in the north. ⁶ But in their report, the men from the seven tribes should describe the seven parts of the remaining land that they wish to receive, and bring the report to me. While Yahweh is watching, I will cast lots to decide which land should be assigned to each tribe. ⁷ But the tribe of Levi will not be assigned any land, because their reward is to be Yahweh's priests. The tribes of Gad, Reuben, and the half tribe of Manasseh have already been assigned their land on the east side of the Jordan River, just as Moses, the man who served God well, decided, so they will not get any more land."

⁸ When the men who were chosen got ready to leave, Joshua told them, "Go and explore the land. Then write a report of what you have seen, and bring it back to me. Then while Yahweh is watching, I will cast lots here at Shiloh, to determine what area each tribe will receive." ⁹ So the men left and walked through the area. Then they described in a scroll each of the

seven parts into which they had divided the land, together with their cities. Then they returned to Joshua, who was still at Shiloh. ¹⁰ After Joshua read their report, while Yahweh was watching, he cast lots to choose which land would be assigned to each of the seven Israelite tribes.

¹¹ The first tribe that was assigned land was the tribe of Benjamin. Each clan in that tribe was assigned some of the land that was between the area that was assigned to the tribe of Judah and the area that was assigned to the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.

¹² The northern border started at the Jordan River and extended west along the northern side of Jericho, into the hill country. From there the border extended west to the wilderness near Beth Aven. ¹³ From there it extended south to Luz (which is now called Bethel). From there it goes down to Ataroth Addar, which is on the hill south of Lower Beth Horon.

¹⁴ At the hill south of Beth Horon, the border turned and extended south to Kiriath Baal (which is also named Kiriath Jearim). That is a town where people of the tribe of Judah live. That was the western border.

¹⁵ The south border of their land started near Kiriath Jearim and extended west to the springs of Nephtoah. ¹⁶ From there it extended down to the bottom of the hill, near the Valley of Ben Hinnom, on the north side of the Valley of Rephaim. The border extended down along the Hinnom Valley, south of the city where the Jebusites lived, to En Rogel. ¹⁷ From there the border extended west to En Shemesh and continued to Geliloth near the hill of Adummim. Then it extended to the great stone of Reuben's son Bohan. ¹⁸ From there the border extended to the northern edge of Beth Arabah and down into the plain along the Jordan. ¹⁹ From there it

extended east to the northern edge of Beth Hoglah and ended at the north end of the Dead Sea, where the Jordan River flows into the Dead Sea. That was the boundary on the south.

²⁰ The Jordan River was the eastern boundary of the land assigned to the tribe of Benjamin. Those were the boundaries of the land assigned to them, each border well described in turn.

²¹ The cities in the land assigned to the tribe of Benjamin were Jericho, Beth Hoglah, Emek Keziz, ²² Beth Arabah, Zemaraim, Bethel, ²³ Avvim, Parah, Ophrah, ²⁴ Kephrah Ammoni, Ophni, and Geba. Altogether there were fourteen cities, not counting their villages.

²⁵ The tribe of Benjamin also had the cities of Gibeon, Ramah, Beeroth, ²⁶ Mizpah, Kephirah, Mozah, ²⁷ Rekem, Irpeel, Taralah, ²⁸ Zelah, Haeleph, Jebus (the city where the Jebusites lived, which is now called Jerusalem), Gibeah, and Kiriath. Altogether there were fourteen cities, not counting their villages. All that area was assigned to the clans of the tribe of Benjamin.

Chapter 19

¹ The second tribe that was assigned land was the tribe of Simeon. Each clan in that tribe was assigned some land that was in the middle of Judah's territory.

² Simeon's land included the following cities: Beer Sheba, Sheba, Moladah, ³ Hazarshual, Balah, Ezem, ⁴ Eltolad, Bethul, and Hormah. ⁵ Simeon's land also included the cities of Ziklag, Beth Markaboth. Hazarsusah, ⁶ Beth Lebaoth, and Sharuh. There were thirteen cities, together with their surrounding villages.

⁷ The land assigned to Simeon also

included the four cities of Ain, Rimmon, Ether, and Ashan, and their surrounding villages.⁸ They were also assigned some villages in an area that extended south to Baalath Beer (which is also called Ramah in the southern wilderness). That was the land assigned to the clans of the tribe of Simeon.

⁹ The tribe of Judah had been assigned much more land than they needed, so part of their land was given to the tribe of Simeon.

¹⁰ The third tribe that was assigned land was the tribe of Zebulun. Each clan of that tribe was assigned some of the land.

The southern border started at Sarid.¹¹ It extended west to Maralah and on to Dabbesheth, and extended to the brook in front of the city of Jokneam.¹² The border turned to the east from Sarid and went to the area near Chisloth Tabor and then on to Daberath, and farther on to Japhia.¹³ From there it extended east to Gath Hepher and Eth Kazin, and north to Rimmon. From there the border turned toward Neah.¹⁴ From Neah the border extended south to Hannathon and from there to the Valley of Iphtah El.¹⁵ Zebulun's area included the cities of Katath, Nahalal, Shimron, Idalah, and Bethlehem. Altogether there were twelve cities, together with their nearby villages.

¹⁶ That was the land that was allotted to the clans of the tribe of Zebulun, including the cities and their surrounding villages.

¹⁷ The fourth tribe that was assigned land was the tribe of Issachar. Each of the clans of that tribe was assigned some of the land.¹⁸ Their land included the cities of Jezreel, Kesulloth, Shunem,¹⁹ Hapharaim, Shion, and Anaharath.²⁰ Issachar's land also included the cities of Rabbith, Kishion, Ebez,²¹ Remeth, En Gannim, En Hadah, and Beth Pazzez.²² The border of the

area that was assigned to the tribe of Issachar was close to the cities of Tabor, Shazumah, and Beth Shemesh, and ended in the east at the Jordan River. Altogether there were sixteen cities, together with their surrounding villages.

²³ Those cities and surrounding villages were in the land assigned to the clans of the tribe of Issachar.

²⁴ The fifth tribe that was assigned land was the tribe of Asher. Each of the clans in that tribe was assigned some of the land.

²⁵ Their land included the cities of Helkath, Hali, Beten, Akshaph,²⁶ Allamelek, Amad, and Mishal. The western border started at Mount Carmel and Shihorlibnath.²⁷ From there it extended southeast to the city of Bethdagon, and then to the area that was allotted to the tribe of Zebulun, and farther to the Valley of Iphtah El. From there the border extended east and then north to Beth Emek and Neiel and Kabul.²⁸ From there it extended west to the cities of Abdon, Rehob, Hammon, and Kanah, and continued to Sidon, which was a very large city.²⁹ From Sidon, the border extended south toward Ramah and to the very large city of Tyre that had strong walls around it. From there the border extended west to Hosah and ended at the Mediterranean Sea, in the region of Aczib,³⁰ Ummah, Aphek, and Rehob. Altogether there were twenty-two cities, together with their surrounding villages.

³¹ Those cities and their villages were within the land that was assigned to the clans of the tribe of Asher.

³² The sixth tribe that was assigned land was the tribe of Naphtali. Each of the clans in that tribe was assigned some of the land.

³³ The border of Naphtali's land started in the west at the huge oak tree

at Zaanannim, near the city of Heleph. It extended east through Adami Nekeb and Jabneel, then to Lakkum, and ended at the Jordan River. ³⁴ The western boundary extended through Aznohtabor as far as Hukkok. It extended to the borders of the tribe of Zebulun at the south, to the border of the tribe of Asher on the west, and the to Jordan River to the east. ³⁵ Within their land were many cities with strong walls around them. These cities were Ziddim, Zer, Hammath, Rakkath, Kinnereth, ³⁶ Adamah, Ramah, Hazor, ³⁷ Kedesh, Edrei, and Enhazor. ³⁸ Naphtali's cities with strong walls also included Yiron, Migdal El, Horem, Bethanath, and Bethshemesh. Altogether there were nineteen cities, together with their surrounding villages.

³⁹ Those cities and surrounding villages were in the land that was assigned to the clans of the tribe of Naphtali.

⁴⁰ The seventh tribe that was assigned land was the tribe of Dan. Each of the clans in that tribe was assigned some of the land. ⁴¹ Their land included the cities of Zorah, Eshtaol, Ir Shemesh, ⁴² Shaalabbin, Aijalon, and Ithlah. ⁴³ Dan's land also included the cities of Elon, Timnah, Ekron, ⁴⁴ Eltekeh, Gibbethon, Baalath, ⁴⁵ Jehud, Beneberak, Gath Rimmon, ⁴⁶ Me-jarkon, Rakkon, and the area near Joppa.

⁴⁷ But the people of the tribe of Dan were unable to take control of the land that had been assigned to them. So they went northeast and fought against the people in the city of Leshem. They defeated and killed all those people. Then they settled down to live in Leshem, and changed the name of the city to Dan, the man from whom their tribe descended.

⁴⁸ All of those cities and surrounding villages were in the land that was assigned to the clans in the tribe of Dan.

⁴⁹ After the Israelite leaders had divided

the land among the tribes, they also assigned some land to Joshua. ⁵⁰ They assigned to him the city of Timnath Serah. Yahweh had said that he could have whatever city he wanted, and that was the city that he chose. It was in the hill country that had been assigned to the tribe of Ephraim. Joshua rebuilt the city and lived there.

⁵¹ Those were the areas that were assigned to the various tribes of Israel. Eleazar (the leader of all the priests), Joshua, and the leaders of each tribe divided up the land while they were all at Shiloh, by casting lots to decide which area each tribe would receive. They did that while Yahweh was watching at the entrance of the sacred tent. In that way they completed dividing up the land.

Chapter 20

¹ Then Yahweh said to Joshua, ² "Tell the Israelite people that they should choose some cities to which people can run in order to be safe, as I told Moses that you should do. ³ If someone kills another person accidentally, without intending to kill that person, then he can run to one of these cities and be safe.

⁴ When that person arrives at the gate of one of those cities, he must stop there and tell the leaders of the city what happened. If they believe him, they must allow him to enter the city, and they must give him a place to live among them. ⁵ If some relative of the dead person comes to that city to get revenge, the leaders of that city must not allow the relative to take the killer, because what happened was accidental. He did not hate that person; he did not deliberately kill him. ⁶ The person who killed someone else must stay in that city until the city judges put him on trial.

Only if the judges decide that the person who has run to their city did not deliberately kill the other person will they allow him to stay in that city, and he must stay there until the high priest who was serving at the time of the offense dies. Then the man may safely go back to his own home.”

⁷ So the Israelites chose these cities to be cities to which people could run to be safe: Kedesh in the region of Galilee, in the hill country where the tribe of Naphtali lived; Shechem in the hill country where the tribe of Ephraim lived; and Kiriath Arba (which is now called Hebron) in the hill country where the tribe of Judah lived; ⁸ Bezer, on the east side of the Jordan River near Jericho, in the wilderness, where the tribe of Reuben lived; Ramoth in the region of Gilead, in the land where the tribe of Gad lived; and Golan in the region of Bashan, where the tribe of Manasseh lived. ⁹ Any Israelite or any foreigner who lived among them, anyone who had killed someone accidentally, was allowed to run to one of those cities. There he would be safe from some relative of the person who died coming there and killing him to get revenge. He could stay in that city until he was put on trial to decide whether he was telling the truth when he said that he did not kill that person on purpose.

Chapter 21

¹ The leaders of the clans of the Levites came to Shiloh to speak with Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the heads of the clans of the people of Israel. ² They said to them, “Yahweh commanded Moses that you should give us cities where we can live and where we can have pasture for our animals.” ³ So the Israelite leaders

obeyed this command from Yahweh. They gave cities and pasturelands to the tribe of Levi out of their own lands that had been assigned to them.

⁴ First Israelite leaders cast lots to assign some cities to the descendants of Kohath. These were clans that were the descendants of Aaron. They assigned thirteen cities in areas that the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin possessed. ⁵ To the other clans descended from Kohath, Israelite leaders assigned ten cities in areas that the tribes of Ephraim and Dan possessed, as well as the part of the tribe of Manasseh that lives on the west side of the Jordan River.

⁶ To the people in the clans descended from Gershon, Israelite leaders assigned thirteen cities the areas that the tribes of Issachar, Asher, and Naphtali possessed, as well as the half tribe of Manasseh in region of Bashan.

⁷ To the people in the clans descended from Merari, the Israelite leaders assigned twelve cities in areas that the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun possessed.

⁸ In this way, the Israelite leaders gave cities and pasturelands to the tribe of Levi, just as Yahweh had commanded Moses that they should do.

⁹ These are the names of the cities and surrounding pasturelands that the Israelite leaders assigned to the tribe of Levi in areas where the tribes of Judah and Simeon lived.

¹⁰ First, the Israelite leaders assigned cities to certain clans descended from Kohath, the clans of Aaron’s descendants, those in the tribe of Levi who served as priests. The Israelite leaders cast lots first for these clans descended from Kohath.

¹¹ The Israelite leaders assigned to them Kiriath Arba (which is now called Hebron), in the hill country of Judah (Arba

had been the father of Anak). They also gave the pasturelands around the city.¹² However, the Israelite leaders had already assigned the cultivated fields and villages surrounding Kiriath Arba to Caleb son of Jephunneh.

¹³ In this way, the Israelite leaders assigned Hebron to the descendants of Aaron the priest. Hebron was one of the cities to which people could run if they accidentally killed a person. To Aaron's descendants they also gave the cities of Libnah,¹⁴ Jattir, Eshtemoa,¹⁵ Holon, Debir,¹⁶ Ain, Juttah, and Bethshemesh—nine cities with all their pasturelands. These cities were located in the areas that the tribes of Judah and Simeon had possessed.

¹⁷ The Israelite leaders also gave the descendants of Aaron some cities in the area that the tribe of Benjamin possessed: Gibeon, Geba,¹⁸ Anathoth, and Almon—four cities with all their pasturelands.

¹⁹ Altogether there were thirteen cities with their surrounding pastureland that the Israelite leaders assigned to the priests, the descendants of Aaron.

²⁰ The other clans descended from Kohath received four cities in the area that the tribe of Ephraim possessed.

²¹ Those cities were Shechem (which was one of the cities to which people could run if they killed someone unintentionally), Gezer,²² Kibzaim, and Beth Horon—four cities with all their pasturelands.

²³ These particular clans descended from Kohath also received four cities with their surrounding pasturelands in the area that the tribe of Dan possessed. These cities were Eltekeh, Gibbethon,²⁴ Aijalon, and Gath Rimmon—four cities with all their pasturelands.

²⁵ These clans descended from Kohath also received two cities from the area that the tribe of Manasseh possessed. These

cities were Taanach and Gath Rimmon—two cities with all their pasturelands.

²⁶ There were ten cities in all, together with their surrounding pasturelands, that these particular clans descended from Kohath received.

²⁷ The Israelite leaders also cast lots in order to assign cities and their surrounding pasturelands to the clans descended from Gershon. These clans were also descendants of Levi.

So these clans received two cities from the area the tribe of Manasseh received—that is, the half of the tribe that had settled down on the east side of the Jordan River. Those cities were Golan in the region of Bashan, which was one of the cities to which people could run, and Beeshtarah—two cities with their pasturelands.

²⁸ These clans also received some cities from the area that the tribe of Issachar possessed. Those cities were Kishion, Daberath,²⁹ Jarmuth, and En Gannim—four cities with their pasturelands.

³⁰ These clans received some cities from the area that the tribe of Asher possessed. These cities were Mishal, Abdon,³¹ Helkath, and Rehob—four cities with their pasturelands.

³² These clans received some cities from the area that the tribe of Naphtali possessed. These cities were Kedesh in the region of Galilee (one of the cities to which people could run if they killed a person unintentionally), Hammoth Dor, and Kartan—three cities with their pasturelands.

³³ Altogether, therefore, the Gershonite received thirteen cities, together with their surrounding pasturelands.

³⁴ The Israelite leaders also assigned cities to the rest of the Levites, that is, the peo-

ple who belonged to the clans descended from Merari.

These clans received some cities in areas that the tribe of Zebulun possessed. These cities were Jokneam, Kartah,³⁵ Dimnah, and Nahalal—four cities with their pasturelands.

³⁶ The clans descended from Merari also received cities in the area that the tribe of Reuben possessed. These cities were Bezer, Jahaz,³⁷ Kedemoth, and Mephaath—four cities with their pasturelands.

³⁸ The clans descended from Merari also received cities in the area that the tribe of Gad possessed. These cities were Ramoth, which was one of the cities in Gilead to which people could run if they killed a person unintentionally, and Mahanaim. ³⁹ There were also the cities of Heshbon, and Jazer—four cities in all, together with their pasturelands.

⁴⁰ In all the clans descended from Merari received twelve cities because the Israelite leaders had cast lots for them.

⁴¹ So the Levites received all together forty-eight cities from the areas that the other tribes of Israel possessed, as well as the pasturelands belonging to those cities. ⁴² These cities each had surrounding pastureland.

⁴³ It was in this way that Yahweh assigned to the Israelite people all the land that he had promised to give to their ancestors. The Israelite people took control of these areas and settled down in them. ⁴⁴ Just as he had promised their ancestors, Yahweh allowed them to have peace with the enemies that surrounded them. None of their enemies defeated them. Yahweh helped Israel defeat all their enemies. ⁴⁵ Yahweh kept every promise he made to the Israelites. Every promise came true.

Chapter 22

¹ Joshua then summoned the leaders of the Reubenites, Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh. ² He said to them, "You have done everything that Moses the servant of Yahweh, commanded you to do. You have also done what I commanded you to do. ³ For a long time you have helped the other tribes to defeat their enemies. You have obeyed everything that Yahweh your God taught you and commanded you to do. ⁴ He promised to give peace to your fellow Israelites, and he has done what he promised. So now you may go back to your homes, to the land that Moses gave to you, on the east side of the Jordan River. ⁵ Moses also commanded you to love Yahweh your God and to live your life as he wants you to live. He told you to obey his commands, to trust in him and to turn away from all others. Do this as you worship him and serve him by everything that you think and everything that you do."

⁶ Then Joshua blessed them and sent them away, so they went back to their tents. ⁷ Moses had given the region of Bashan, to the east of the Jordan River, to one-half of the tribe of Manasseh, and Joshua had given land on the west side of the Jordan River to the other half of that tribe. When Joshua sent them away to their tents, he asked God to bless them. ⁸ He said to them, "Go back to your tents with much money with many animals and silver, gold, bronze, and iron, and with many beautiful clothes. But you should share the plunder from your enemies with your brothers and sisters."

⁹ So the people of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh left the other people of Israel at Shiloh in the region of Canaan. They returned home to the region of Gilead, which belonged to them, because Moses had assigned it to

them by Yahweh's command.

¹⁰ They arrived at the western bank of the Jordan River in the land of Canaan. There the people of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh built an altar—a very large and impressive altar. ¹¹ The other people of Israel heard about this altar; they were concerned about what the people of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh had built. It was an altar at the entrance to the land of Canaan. It was built at the city of Geliloth, near the Jordan, on the side that was part of the land of Israel. ¹² The people of Israel heard of this, and the whole assembly of the people came together at Shiloh. They decided to go to war against them because of this altar.

¹³ But first, the Israelites sent Phinehas son of Eleazar and the leader of all the priests, to talk with the people of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh. ¹⁴ They also sent one leader from each of the ten tribes of Israel west of the Jordan River. Each of the leaders was an important leader in his own clan.

¹⁵ Those leaders went to the region of Gilead to talk to the people of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh. They said, ¹⁶ "All the other Israelites are asking, 'What is this you have done? You have disobeyed the commands of God. You have turned against Yahweh by building your own altar here in this place. You you rebelled against the Yahweh. ¹⁷ Have you forgotten about how Yahweh punished us at Peor, when we stopped worshiping him and began to worship other gods? Yahweh sent a deadly sickness among the people of Israel, and many died from it. ¹⁸ Maybe you have built this altar because you have stopped worshiping Yahweh. If this is true, you have rebelled like this against him, and he will be angry with all the people of Israel.'

¹⁹ "If you think that Yahweh considers your land here is not suitable for worshiping him, come back to our land, where Yahweh's sacred tent is. We can share our land with you. But do not rebel against Yahweh or against us by building another altar for Yahweh our God. ²⁰ Surely you remember what happened when Zerah's son Achan refused to obey Yahweh's command to destroy everything in Jericho? That one man disobeyed God's command, but many other Israelites were punished for what he did."

²¹ The leaders of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh replied, ²² "Yahweh, the almighty God, knows why we did that, and we want you to know, too. If we have not been faithful to our promise to serve Yahweh, do not have any mercy on us, but take our lives. ²³ If we have built this altar so we can stop obeying Yahweh, or if we have built this altar to offer sacrifices, grain offerings, or sacrifices to promise friendship with him, in violation of the law, may Yahweh punish us and even take our lives.

²⁴ No, we built this altar because we were afraid that your children might speak to our children one day in the future and ask, 'What have you to do with Yahweh, the God of Israel?' ²⁵ We are afraid that they will say to our children, "Yahweh made the Jordan River to be a boundary between us and you people of Reuben and you people of Gad. You have nothing to do with Yahweh.' And your children might try to stop our children from worshiping Yahweh.

²⁶ So we said, 'Let us now build an altar, but not for bringing sacrifices nor for any offerings. ²⁷ Instead, we want it to be a monument to prove to you, to ourselves, and to all of our descendants after us, that we truly worship Yahweh. We indeed worship him by our burned sacrifices and our

offerings, and our offerings to promise friendship with him. We built this altar so your descendants may never say to our descendants in the future, “Yahweh never gave you any portion of this land; you do not belong here.”

²⁸ In the future, if your descendants say that, our descendants can say, ‘Look at the altar that our ancestors made! It is exactly like Yahweh’s altar at Shiloh, but we do not burn sacrifices on it. It is a monument which means that we and you together worship Yahweh!’ ²⁹ We certainly do not want to rebel against Yahweh or stop doing what he desires. This altar was never intended to be used for the sacrifices, for burning flour offerings or for making other sacrifices. We know that there is only one true altar for Yahweh our God and that it is in front of the sacred tent.”

³⁰ When Phinehas the priest and the other ten leaders of the people of Israel heard what the people of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh said, they were pleased. ³¹ So Phinehas said to them, “Now we know that Yahweh is with all of us Israelites, and that you were not rebelling against him when you built that altar. Because what you did did not break Yahweh’s laws, we are sure that he will not punish us.

³² Then Phinehas and the Israelite leaders left the people of the tribes of Reuben and Gad in the region of Gilead, and returned to Canaan. There they told the other Israelites what had happened. ³³ They were pleased, and they thanked God. They did not talk anymore about fighting against the people of the tribes of Reuben and Gad and destroying everything in their land.

³⁴ The people of the tribes of Reuben and Gad named their new altar “Reminder,” and they said, “It is a reminder to us all that Yahweh is God.”

Chapter 23

¹ A long time later, by the time Yahweh had allowed the Israelites to live in peace, without fearing any longer any enemies, Joshua had become very old.

² Joshua called for all of Israel’s elders and leaders, together with their judges and officers, to come and listen to him. When they arrived, he began to speak to them: “I am now very old. ³ We have all seen what Yahweh our God has done to all the nations in this land. Yahweh our God has fought for us. ⁴ I have given to you the nations that remain. Their lands will also be your permanent possession for the tribes of Israel, just as are the lands of the people groups that our people destroyed when I was leading them—all those other nations that the Israelites destroyed from the Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea when I was the leader. ⁵ Yahweh your God will force those people out from their lands. He will capture their lands from them, in order that you might settle down in those lands. This is what he has promised to do for you.

⁶ Pay careful attention so that you obey all that are written in the book of laws that Moses wrote down. Do not disobey them or change any of them. ⁷ If you obey the law of Moses, you will not mix our people with those people groups. Do not even mention the names of their gods, and do use the names of their gods when you make promises or take oaths. Do not worship those gods or bow down to them. ⁸ Love Yahweh and trust in him, as you have been doing. Do not stop worshiping him.

⁹ Yahweh has forced many great and powerful nations to get out of your way as you advanced. No one has been able to stop you. ¹⁰ Any single soldier among you will be able to cause a thousand men of war

in the army of your enemy, to run away, because Yahweh your God fights for you. That is what he promised to do. ¹¹ So do all you can to love Yahweh your God.

¹² However, if you stop doing what Yahweh desires; if you associate with those people groups who survived the wars with our people, or if you marry them and become their friends, and if they become friends with you, ¹³ then you can be sure that Yahweh our God will not help you force them out of your land. They will become like traps that will catch you. They will be like whips that strike your backs, and like thorns that will stick you in the eye. Your people group will become weaker and weaker until you die out in this land, this very good land that Yahweh our God has given to us.

¹⁴ It is almost time for me to die, like everyone else does. You know deep within you, that every single thing that Yahweh promised to do for you, he has done it. ¹⁵ He has given to you all the good things he promised. In the same way, the other things that he promised, things that are not good, will also happen if you do what is evil. In that case he will take your lives and your land away from you. ¹⁶ If you do not obey the covenant between Yahweh and you, and if you leave him and go and worship other gods and bow down to them, Yahweh will become very angry with you, just as a fire starts from a spark. Very quickly he will take away your lives, and he will take away this good land from you, the same land he has now given to you."

Chapter 24

¹ Joshua brought together the elders, leader, judges, and officers of the nation of Israel, and they presented them-

selves before God. ² Joshua said to all of them, "This is what Yahweh, the God we Israelite people worship, is saying: 'Long ago, your ancestors, including Abraham's father Terah and Abraham's younger brother Nahor, lived far beyond the Euphrates River, where they worshiped other gods. ³ But I took your ancestor Abraham, and I led him into the land of Canaan. I gave him many descendants through his son Isaac. ⁴ I gave Isaac his own sons, Jacob and Esau. I gave Esau the hill country of Edom as his own, but I sent Jacob and his children went down to Egypt, where they lived for many years.

⁵ I sent Moses and his brother Aaron to Egypt, and I caused the people of Egypt to suffer many terrible plagues. After that, I brought your people out of Egypt. ⁶ When I brought your ancestors out of Egypt, they came to the sea. The Egyptian army pursued them with chariots and on horseback, as far as the Sea of Reeds." ⁷ Joshua continued to speak: "When you pleaded to Yahweh for help, he caused darkness to come between the nation of Israel and the Egyptian army, and he covered the Egyptian army with the waters of the sea so that your enemies were drowned. This is what Yahweh says: 'You saw what I did in Egypt. You lived in the desert for many years.

⁸ Then I brought you to the land of the Amorites, who lived on the east side of the Jordan River (the other side of the Jordan River from us here today). They fought against you, but I made you defeat them and destroy them; you captured their land. But I was the one who actually destroyed them, and I let you see everything that I did for you. ⁹ Then Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, prepared his army and attacked Israel. He sent for Beor's son Balaam, and he told him to call for a curse from Yahweh on your people.

¹⁰ But I would not listen to Balaam. Instead, I made him bless you, and I saved you from his curse.

¹¹ Then you all crossed the Jordan River and came to Jericho. The leaders of Jericho fought against you, as did the armies of the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. I made all of you more powerful than they were, and you defeated them all. ¹² I am the one who caused them to panic. They acted as if they were being chased by hornets. And you drove out the two kings of the Amorites as your army moved ahead and pushed them away. But it was not because of your swords or your bows and arrows, but it was because that I, Yahweh, was fighting on your side. ¹³ So I gave you a land that you had not cleared or plowed, and I gave you cities that you did not build. Now you live in those cities, and you eat the grapes from grapevines that you did not plant, and you eat olives from trees that you did not plant.'

¹⁴ Joshua continued to speak: "Now be afraid and be in awe of Yahweh. Worship him sincerely, and be faithful when you make promises to him. Throw away the idols that your ancestors worshiped when they lived on the far side of the Euphrates River, and when they lived in Egypt. Worship Yahweh alone. ¹⁵ If you do not want to worship Yahweh, then decide today what gods you will worship. In that case, you must decide whether you will worship the gods of your ancestors, the gods that they worshiped when they lived on the other side of the Euphrates River, or whether you will worship the gods of the Amorites, the gods that those people worshiped in this land where you now live. But as for me and my family, we will worship Yahweh."

¹⁶ The Israelite people answered, "We will

always worship Yahweh! We promise that we will never worship or bow down to any other gods! ¹⁷ It was Yahweh who brought our ancestors up out of Egypt. He rescued us from that land, where they were slaves. We saw him perform great miracles, and he protected us when we were traveling. He protected us wherever we went; he kept us safe from the armies of many kings. We became a great nation, and we have entered this land. ¹⁸ Yahweh drove out all the people before us. He defeated the Amorites, who lived in the land. So we will worship and bow down to Yahweh, for he is our God."

¹⁹ But Joshua replied to the people, "You cannot serve Yahweh! He is a holy God, and he will not allow you to worship other gods. He will not forgive you for breaking his laws, or when you sin, ²⁰ if you forsake Yahweh and worship other gods. If you forget him, he will turn and do the same harm to you as he did to your enemies, and he will burn you as with fire! He will do all this to, after he has been so good to you—if you turn your back on him and leave him." ²¹ But the people answered Joshua, "No, we will worship Yahweh."

²² Then Joshua said, "You are bearing witness to what you have said. You have chosen Yahweh and you are promising to worship him alone." They replied, "Yes, that is what we promise to do." ²³ Then Joshua said, "You must throw away all the other idols you have with you, and with all the strength you have within you, you must turn to Yahweh and worship him as your God, and no other." ²⁴ The people replied, "We will worship Yahweh, our God, and we will obey him alone."

²⁵ On that same day, Joshua made a covenant with the people. There at Shechem, he wrote down for them all the decrees and laws that Yahweh commanded them to obey. ²⁶ He wrote down

all the words that were in the book of the law of God. He took a great stone and set it up there at Shechem, under the large oak tree that grew beside the place where they worshiped Yahweh. ²⁷ Joshua said to all the people, "Look! This stone will bear testimony against us. This is the place where we promised that we would serve Yahweh. This stone will be a place to remember our promise to Yahweh, and a place to remind us of what will happen to us if we do not keep our promise to God." ²⁸ Then Joshua sent the people away, and they went to the places that were assigned to them.

²⁹ After these things happened, Joshua son of Nun, the servant of Yahweh, died. He was 110 years old when he died. ³⁰ They buried his body on his own property in Timnathserah. It is in the north hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. ³¹ The people of Israel worshiped Yahweh as long as the elders who had served with Joshua were alive; they had seen everything that Yahweh had done for Israel. ³² Joseph's bones, which the people of Israel had brought up out of Egypt, were buried at Shechem, in the piece of land that Jacob had bought long ago for the price of one hundred pieces of silver. He had bought it from Hamor, the father of Shechem. That piece of land became a permanent possession for Joseph's descendants. ³³ Eleazar son of Aaron, also died. They buried his body at Gibeah, the city that belonged to Phinehas, his son, in the hill country of Ephraim.

JUDGES

Chapter 1

¹ After Joshua died, the Israelite people asked Yahweh, “Which of our tribes should attack the Canaanites first?”

² Yahweh replied, “The men of the tribe of Judah must attack first. I will enable the tribe of Judah to defeat the Canaanites.”

³ The men of Judah went to their fellow Israelites, the men from the tribe of Simeon, and said to them, “Come and help us to fight the Canaanites in order that we can take from them the land that Yahweh allotted to us. If you do that, we will go with you and help you conquer the people in the land that Yahweh promised to give to you.” So the men from the tribe of Simeon went with the men of the tribe of Judah.

⁴ When the men of those two tribes attacked, Yahweh enabled them to defeat ten thousand men of the Canaanites and the Perizzites at the city of Bezek. ⁵ During the battle they found Adoni-Bezek, the leader of the city. ⁶ Adoni-Bezek tried to run away. The Israelites pursued him and caught him. Then they cut off his thumbs and his big toes.

⁷ Adoni-Bezek said, “My army captured seventy kings. We cut off their thumbs and big toes. After that, we forced those kings to eat scraps that fell from our table. Now God has paid me back for what I did.” Then the men of Judah took Adoni-Bezek to Jerusalem, and he died there.

⁸ The army of Judah fought against the men of Jerusalem, and they captured the city. With their swords they killed the people who lived there and they burned the houses in the city.

⁹ Later, the men of Judah went down to

fight the Canaanites who lived in the hill country, in the southern Judean wilderness, and in the foothills to the west. ¹⁰ The men of Judah also went to fight against the Canaanites who lived in the city of Hebron (which used to be named Kiriath Arba). They defeated the armies of kings Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai.

¹¹ Then they left that area and went to fight against the people living in the city of Debir, which was previously named Kiriath Sepher. ¹² Before they attacked the city, Caleb said to them, “The person who attacks and captures Kiriath Sepher, I will allow him to marry my daughter.” ¹³ Othniel, who was the son of Caleb’s younger brother Kenaz, captured the city. So Caleb gave his daughter Aksah to him, to become his wife.

¹⁴ After Aksah married Othniel, she asked him to request her father to give him a field. Then she rode back to her father Caleb’s house on her donkey. When she got off the donkey, Caleb asked her, “What do you want?”

¹⁵ She replied, “I want you to do a favor for me. You have given me the land of the southern Judean wilderness, but it is very dry there. So please also give me some land that has springs of water.” So Caleb gave her some land on higher ground that had a spring, and some land on lower ground that had a spring in it.

¹⁶ The Kenites who were descendants of Moses’ father-in-law left Jericho, which was called “The City of Palm Trees.” They went with some of the men of Judah to live with them in the southern Judean wilderness, near the city of Arad.

¹⁷ The men of Judah and their fellow Israelites from the tribe of Simeon defeated the Canaanites who lived in the city of Zephath. They completely destroyed the city and gave it a new name, Hormah,

which means “complete destruction.” ¹⁸ The men of Judah also captured Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron cities and all the land that is near those cities. ¹⁹ Yahweh helped the men of Judah to capture the hill country, but they could not force the people who were living in the plains to leave, because they had better weapons—they had iron chariots.

²⁰ The city of Hebron was given to Caleb because Moses had promised him that he could have that city. And Caleb forced the three clans descended from Anak to leave that area. ²¹ But the tribe of Benjamin could not force the Jebusites to leave Jerusalem. So, since that time the Jebusites have lived in Jerusalem with of the tribe of Benjamin.

²² The men of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh went to fight against the men of city of Bethel, and Yahweh helped them.

²³ They sent some spies to find out everything that they could find out about Bethel, which was previously called Luz. ²⁴ The spies saw a man who was coming out of the city. They said to him, “If you show us a way to get into the city, we will be kind to you and we will not kill you.” ²⁵ So the man showed them a way to enter the city. The men of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh entered the city and killed all the people with their swords, but they did not kill the man who showed them how to get into the city, and they did not kill his family. ²⁶ That man went to the area where the descendants of Heth lived, and he built a city. He named the city Luz, and that is still the name of that city.

²⁷ There were Canaanites who lived in Beth Shan, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, and Megiddo cities and in the surrounding villages. The men of the tribe of Manasseh did not force them to leave those towns, because the Canaanites were determined to stay there. ²⁸ Later, the Is-

raelites became stronger, and they forced the Canaanites to work for them as their slaves, but they did not force all the Canaanites to leave their land. ²⁹ The men of the tribe of Ephraim did not force the Canaanites to leave the city of Gezer. So the Canaanites continued to live with the tribe of Ephraim. ³⁰ The men of the tribe of Zebulun did not force the Canaanites who were living in the cities of Kitron and Nahalol to leave. They stayed there and lived with the tribe of Zebulun, but the people of Zebulun forced them to work for them as their slaves. ³¹ The men of the tribe of Asher did not force the Canaanites who lived in Akko, Sidon, Ahlab, Aczib, Helbah, Aphek and Rehob cities to leave. ³² So the tribe of Asher lived with the Canaanites (those who were still there), and did not make them leave. ³³ The men of the tribe of Naphtali did not compel the people who lived in the cities of Beth Shemesh and Beth Anath to leave, so they continued to live with the Canaanites in those cities, but the Canaanites were forced to work as the slaves of Naphtali. ³⁴ The Amorites forced the tribe of Dan to live in the hills. They did not allow them to come down and live on the plain. ³⁵ The Amorites were determined to stay at Mount Heres and in the cities of Aijalon and Shaalbim. But when the Israelites became stronger, they forced the Amorites to work as their slaves. ³⁶ The land where the Amorites lived extended from Scorpion Pass toward the west beyond Sela, up into the hill country.

Chapter 2

¹ The angel of Yahweh went up from Gilgal to a place that the people of Israel would soon call Bokim. He said to the Israelite people, “I brought your ancestors up here from Egypt. I led them into this land that

I solemnly promised to give to your ancestors. I said to them, 'I will never break the covenant I made with you.' ² But as for you, you must never agree to have peace with the people who live in this land. You must tear down the altars where they make sacrifices to idols.' But you have not obeyed me. ³ So now, I am telling you that I will not drive out your enemies as you advance. They will be like thorns in your sides. And they will try to trap you by persuading you to worship their idols."

⁴ After he said that to all the Israelites, the people lamented loudly. ⁵ They named that place Bokim, which means "weeping." There they offered sacrifices to Yahweh.

⁶ After Joshua sent the people of Israel away, each group went to possess the land that had been permanently assigned to the people. ⁷ They obeyed Yahweh as long as Joshua was alive, and as long as the elders, those who had seen all the great things that Yahweh had done for Israel, were alive.

⁸ Then Yahweh's servant Joshua died. He was 110 years old when he died. ⁹ They buried his body in the land that he had received from Moses, at Timnath Heres, in the area where the descendants of Ephraim lived, north of Mount Gaash.

¹⁰ After all the people who lived at the same time as Joshua died, more people grew up who did not know Yahweh and had not seen him do the great things he had done for the Israelite people. ¹¹⁻¹³

They did things that Yahweh said were very evil. They worshiped idols that represented the god Baal and the female fertility goddess, the Ashtoreth. They worshiped the various gods that the people groups around them worshiped. They stopped worshiping Yahweh, the God their ancestors worshiped, the one who had brought their ancestors out of Egypt.

This caused Yahweh to be very angry. ¹⁴ Because Yahweh was angry, he allowed people from other groups to attack them and steal their crops and animals. They were no longer able to resist their enemies, and Yahweh allowed all their enemies around them to defeat them. ¹⁵ Whenever the Israelites went to fight their enemies, Yahweh always worked against them and allowed their enemies to defeat them, just as he had said he would do. So the Israelites were greatly distressed.

¹⁶ Then Yahweh brought leaders to them. These leaders rescued the Israelites from the people who were attacking them. ¹⁷ But the Israelites still would not obey their leaders. Instead, they betrayed Yahweh for idols, like prostitutes to other gods and they worshiped those idols. They were not like their ancestors. Their ancestors obeyed what Yahweh commanded, but these new people quickly stopped behaving as their ancestors had behaved.

¹⁸ Whenever Yahweh brought a leader to them, he helped that leader and enabled him to rescue the people from their enemies. He did that as long as that leader was alive. Yahweh pitied them as they groaned because they were being oppressed and caused to suffer. ¹⁹ But after that leader died, the people always began behaving in more evil ways than their ancestors had behaved. They worshiped other gods and bowed down to them and did all the things that they thought those gods wanted them to do.

²⁰ So Yahweh was very angry with the Israelite people. He said, "These people have disobeyed the covenant that I made with their ancestors. They have not done what I told them to do. ²¹ So I will no longer expel the people groups that Joshua left in this land when he died. ²² I will use them to test the Israelite people to see whether they will do what I want

them to do, as their ancestors did.”²³ Yahweh allowed these people groups to stay in that land for a long time after the people of Israel had come. He did not expel them by allowing Joshua and his men to defeat them.

Chapter 3

¹ At that time there were still many people groups in Canaan. Yahweh left them there to test the Israelite people because many of the Israelites in Canaan had not fought in any of the previous wars. ² So Yahweh did this to teach the new generation of Israelites how to wage war. ³ This is a list of the people groups that Yahweh left there to test the Israelites: The Philistines and their five leaders, the people living in the area near the city of Sidon, the descendants of Canaan, and the Hivites who were living in the mountains of Lebanon between Mount Baal Hermon and Lebo Hamath (“the pass of Hamath”). ⁴ Yahweh left these people groups there to test the Israelites, to see if they would obey his commands which he had told Moses to give them. ⁵ The Israelites lived among the people groups of the Canaanites, the Hivites, the Amorites, the Perizites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ⁶ But the Israelites took the daughters of those people to be their own wives, and gave their own daughters to those men to marry them. And they worshiped the gods of those people.

⁷ The Israelites did things that Yahweh said were very evil. They forgot about Yahweh, their God, and they started to worship the idols that represented the god Baal and the goddess Asherah. ⁸ Therefore Yahweh was very angry with Israel, and he handed them over that they might live under the power of King Cushan-

Rishathaim, who was king of Aram Naharaim in Mesopotamia. The people of Israel served Cushan-Rishathaim for eight years. ⁹ But when they pleaded to Yahweh to help them, he brought a leader to rescue them. He was Othniel (the son of Caleb’s younger brother, Kenaz). ¹⁰ Yahweh’s Spirit gave him power and insight, and he became their leader. He led an army that fought against the army of Cushan-Rishathaim, and Othniel defeated them. ¹¹ After that, for forty years there was peace in the land, until Othniel died.

¹² After that, the Israelites again did things that Yahweh had forbidden them to do, things that were very evil. Yahweh made the army of King Eglon, who ruled the land of Moab, much stronger so that he could defeat the Israelites. ¹³ Eglon persuaded the leaders of the Ammonites and the Amalekites to join their armies with his army to attack Israel. They captured Jericho, which was called “The City of Palm Trees.” ¹⁴ Then King Eglon ruled the Israelites for eighteen years.

¹⁵ But then the Israelites again pleaded to Yahweh to help them. So he brought another leader to rescue them. He was Ehud son of Gera, a left-handed man from the descendants of Benjamin. The Israelites sent him to King Eglon to give him the money he required every year so he would not attack them. ¹⁶ Ehud had with him a short double-edged sword, one-half meter in length. He hid it under his clothes by strapping the sword to his right thigh. ¹⁷ He gave the money to King Eglon, who was a very fat man. ¹⁸ Then Ehud started to go back home with the men who had carried the money. ¹⁹ When they arrived at the stone quarries near Gilgal, he told the other men to go on, but he himself turned around and went back to the king of Moab. When he arrived at the palace, he said to the king, “Your majesty, I have

a secret message for you.” So the king told all his servants to be quiet, and he sent them out of the room.

²⁰ Then, as Eglon was sitting alone in the upstairs room of his summer palace, Ehud came close to him and said, “I have a message for you from God.” Just then the king got up from his chair. ²¹ As the king got up, Ehud reached with his left hand and pulled the dagger from his right thigh, and plunged it into the king’s belly. ²² He thrust it in so far that the handle went into the king’s belly, and the blade came out the king’s back. Ehud did not pull the dagger out. He left it there, with the handle buried in the king’s fat. ²³ Then Ehud left the room. He went out to the porch. He shut the doors to the room and locked them.

²⁴ After he had gone, his servants came back, but they saw that the doors of the room were locked. They said, “The king must be defecating in the inner room.” ²⁵ So they waited, but when the king did not open the doors of the room, after a while they were worried. They got a key and unlocked the doors. And they saw that their king was lying on the floor, dead.

²⁶ Meanwhile, Ehud escaped. He passed by the stone quarries and arrived at Seirah, in the hill country where the descendants of Ephraim lived. ²⁷ There he blew a trumpet to tell everyone that the people should join him to fight the people of Moab. So the Israelites went with him from the hills. They went down toward the Jordan River, with Ehud leading them.

²⁸ He said to the men, “Yahweh is going to allow us to defeat your enemies, the people of Moab. So follow me!” So they followed him down to the river, and they stationed some of their men at the place where people can walk across the river, in order that they could kill any people from

Moab who tried to cross the river to escape. ²⁹ At that time, the Israelites killed about ten thousand people from Moab. They were all strong and capable men, but not one of them escaped. ³⁰ On that day, the Israelites conquered the people of Moab. Then there was peace in their land for eighty years.

³¹ After Ehud died, Shamgar became their leader. He rescued the Israelites from the Philistines. In one battle he killed six hundred Philistines with an ox goad.

Chapter 4

¹ After Ehud died, the Israelites did not obey Yahweh and they did evil things, and Yahweh saw what they were doing. ² So he allowed the army of Jabin, one of the kings in the region of Canaan, who ruled in the city of Hazor, to conquer the Israelites. The commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth (where many of those who were not Israelites lived). ³ Sisera’s army had nine hundred chariots made out of iron. For twenty years he cruelly oppressed the Israelites. Then they pleaded to Yahweh to help them.

⁴ Now Deborah, a woman who proclaimed the word of Yahweh (who was the wife of Lappidoth), was a leading judge in Israel at that time. ⁵ She would sit under her palm tree (they called it the “palm of Deborah”) at a place between Ramah and Bethel, in the hill country where the descendants of Ephraim lived, and people would come to her and ask her to settle their legal disputes. She would determine what was right and fair. ⁶ One day she sent for Barak son of Abinoam and called him to come to her. He was from Kedesh (in the area where the descendants of Naphtali lived). She said to him, “This is what Yahweh, the God we

worship, is commanding you to do: 'Take ten thousand men with you, some from Naphtali and some of Zebulun, and gather all your men together at Mount Tabor. ⁷ Yahweh will make me able to persuade Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, to come with his chariots and his army, to the river Kishon, a few miles away. I will enable your men to defeat them there.'

⁸ Barak replied, "I will go only if you go with me. If you will not go with me, I will not go."

⁹ She replied, "Indeed I will go with you. But because that is what you have decided to do, Yahweh will enable a woman to defeat Sisera, and the result will be that no one will honor you for doing that." So Deborah went with Barak to Kedesh. ¹⁰ There he summoned men from Zebulun and Naphtali. Ten thousand men came to him, and then they went together with Deborah to Mount Tabor.

¹¹ At that time Heber (the Kenite) had moved away from the Kenites with his wife Jael, and set up his tent near the big oak tree at Zaanannim, near Kedesh. (Heber was a descendant of Moses' father-in-law Hobab.)

¹² Someone told Sisera that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up on Mount Tabor with an army. ¹³ Sisera gathered his troops with their nine hundred chariots, and they marched from Harosheth (where the non-Israelites lived) to the river Kishon.

¹⁴ Then Deborah said to Barak, "Get going! This is the day that Yahweh will enable your army to defeat the army of Sisera. Yahweh is going ahead of you!" So Barak led his men as they descended from Mount Tabor. ¹⁵ As they advanced, Yahweh caused Sisera and all his chariots and his army to have great difficulty maneuvering around. So Sisera jumped

down from his chariot and ran away. ¹⁶ But Barak and his men pursued the other chariots and the enemy soldiers as far as Harosheth (where the non-Israelites lived). They killed all of the men in Sisera's army. Not one man survived.

¹⁷ But Sisera ran to Jael's tent. He did that because Sisera's master, Jabin of the city of Hazor, was a good friend of her husband Heber.

¹⁸ Jael went out to greet Sisera. She said to him, "Sir, come into my tent! Do not be afraid!" So he went into the tent and lay down, and she covered him with a blanket.

¹⁹ He said to her, "I am thirsty; can you give me some water?" So she opened a leather container of milk, and gave him a drink. Then she covered him with a blanket again.

²⁰ He said to her, "Stand in the entrance of the tent. If someone comes and asks, 'Is anyone else here?', say 'No'."

²¹ Sisera was very exhausted, so he soon was asleep. While he was sleeping, Jael crept quietly to him, holding a hammer and a tent peg. She pounded the peg through his skull, and she hammered the peg all the way through his head and it stuck into the ground, and he died.

²² When Barak came to Jael's tent to look for Sisera, she went out to greet him. She said, "Come in, and I will show you the man you are searching for!" So he followed her into the tent, and he saw Sisera lying there, dead, with the tent peg still piercing through his head.

²³ On that day God enabled the Israelites to defeat the army of Jabin, one of the kings of the Canaanites. ²⁴ The Israelites became stronger and stronger, and they destroyed Jabin and his army.

Chapter 5

¹ On that day, Deborah and Barak (the son of Abinoam) sang this song:

² "When the leaders of the Israelite people really lead them, and the people willingly follow them, it is time to praise Yahweh!

³ Listen, you kings! Pay attention, you leaders!

I will sing to Yahweh. With this song I will praise Yahweh, the God of Israel.

⁴ O Yahweh, when you came from Seir, when you marched from that land, also known as Edom,

the earth shook,

and rain poured down from the skies.

⁵ The mountains shook when you came, just like Mount Sinai shook when you appeared there,

because you are Yahweh,

the God of Israel.

⁶ When Shamgar was our leader and in the days of Jael,

we were afraid to walk on the main roads;

instead, caravans of travelers walked on winding, less traveled roads

to avoid being molested.

⁷ There were few warriors willing to fight in Israel

until I, Deborah, became their leader.

I became like a mother to the Israelite people. ⁸ When the Israelite people abandoned Yahweh and chose new gods,

enemies attacked the gates of the cities,

and then they took away the shields and spears from forty thousand Israelite soldiers.

Not one was left with a metal weapon.

⁹ I am thankful for the leaders and soldiers who volunteered to fight.

I praise you, Yahweh, for them!

¹⁰ You wealthy people who ride on donkeys,

sitting on nice padded saddles,

and you people who just walk on the road,

think about all this!

¹¹ Listen to the voices of the singers who gather at the places where the animals drink water.

They tell about how Yahweh acted righteously

when he enabled the Israelite warriors to conquer their enemies.

Yahweh's people marched down to the city gates.

¹² The people came to my house and shouted,

'Deborah, wake up! Wake up and start singing!'

They also shouted,

'Barak (son of Abinoam), get up, and capture our enemies!'

¹³ Later, some of the Israelite people who survived the battle

came down from the highlands to where their leaders were.

These were men who belonged to Yahweh and they came down to me

to fight their enemies alongside these warriors.

¹⁴ Some came from the tribe descended from Ephraim.

They came from land that once belonged to the descendants of Amalek.

Men from the tribe descended from Benjamin followed them.

Troops from the group descended from Machir also came down,

and officers from the tribe descended from Zebulun came down, carrying staffs to show they were important.

¹⁵ Leaders from the tribes descended from Issachar joined Barak and me.

They followed Barak, rushing down into the valley.

But men from the tribe descended from Reuben could not decide what they should do.

¹⁶ Why did you men stay at your fireplaces,

waiting to hear the shepherds whistle for their flocks of sheep to come to the pens?

Men in the tribe descended from Reuben could not decide

whether they would join us to fight our enemies, or not.

¹⁷ Similarly, the men living in the Gilead area stayed at home, east of the Jordan River.

And the men from the tribe descended from Dan,

why did they stay home?

The tribe descended from Asher sat by the seashore.

They stayed in their coves.

¹⁸ But men from the tribe descended from Zebulun risked their lives on the battlefield,

and men descended from Naphtali were ready to do that, also.

¹⁹ The kings of Canaan fought us at Taanach, near the springs in Megiddo Valley.

But since they did not defeat us,

they did not carry away any silver or other treasures from the battle.

²⁰ It was as though the stars in the heavens fought for us

and as though those stars in their paths fought against Sisera.

²¹ The river Kishon swept them away—that river that has been there for ages.

I will tell myself to be brave and continue marching on.

²² The hooves of the horses of Sisera's army pounded the ground.

Those powerful horses kept galloping along.

²³ The angel sent by Yahweh said,

'I curse the people of the town of Meroz

because they did not come to help Yahweh

to defeat the mighty warriors of Canaan.'

²⁴ But God is very pleased with Jael,
(the wife of Heber the Kenite).

He is more pleased with her than with all the other women who live in tents.

²⁵ Sisera asked for some water,
and Jael gave him some milk.

She brought him some yogurt in a bowl that was suitable for kings.

²⁶ Then, when he was asleep, she reached for a tent peg with her left hand,
and she reached for a hammer with her right hand.

She hit Sisera hard with it and crushed his head.

She pounded the tent peg right through his head.

²⁷ He collapsed at her feet

and he fell and he layed there and did not move.

At her feet he sank down,

and there he fell limp. He was dead.

²⁸ Sisera's mother looked out from her window.

She waited for him to return.

She said, 'Why is he taking so long to come home in his chariot?

Why do I not hear the sound of the wheels of his chariot?'

²⁹ Her wisest princesses replied to her,

and she kept consoling herself by repeating those words:

³⁰ 'Perhaps they are dividing up the things and the people they captured after the battle.

Each soldier will get one or two women who will bear them children.

Sisera will get some beautiful robes,

and some beautiful embroidered robes for me.'

³¹ But that is not what happened! Yahweh, I hope that all your enemies will die as Sisera did!

And I desire that all those who love you, Yahweh, be as strong as the sun when it rises!"

There was peace again in the land for forty years.

people of Midian to conquer them and rule them for seven years. ² The people of Midian treated the Israelites so cruelly that the Israelites fled to the mountains. There they made places to live in caves and places to be safe. ³ At the time when the Israelites planted their crops in the fields, the people of Midian and Amalek and people from the east attacked the Israelites. ⁴ They set up tents in the area, and then destroyed the crops as far south as Gaza. They did not leave anything for the Israelites to eat and took away the sheep, the cattle and the donkeys. ⁵ They came into Israel with their tents and their livestock like a swarm of locusts. There were so many of them that arrived riding on their camels that no one could count. They stayed so they could ruin the land. ⁶ The people of Midian took almost everything the Israelites owned. So finally the Israelites pleaded for Yahweh to help them.

⁷ When the Israelites pleaded with Yahweh to help them because of what the people from Midian had done to them,

⁸ Yahweh sent to them a prophet, who said, "This is what Yahweh the God of Israel says, 'I brought up your ancestors out of Egypt, out of the places where you all were slaves. ⁹ But I rescued them from the leaders of Egypt and from all the others who oppressed you. I expelled their enemies from this land, and gave it to you.

¹⁰ I told you and your ancestors, "I am Yahweh, your God. You are now in the land of the Amorites, but you must not worship the gods they worship here in this land in which you are living." But you did not obey me."

¹¹ One day the angel of Yahweh appeared and sat under a big oak tree at the town of Ophrah. (That tree belonged to Joash, who was from the clan of Abiezer.) Joash's son Gideon was threshing wheat in the pit

Chapter 6

¹ Again the Israelites did what Yahweh said was very evil. So he allowed the

where they pressed grapes to make wine. He was threshing the grain there in order to hide it from the people of Midian. ¹² Yahweh went over to Gideon and said to him, "You mighty warrior, Yahweh is helping you!"

¹³ Gideon replied, "Sir, if Yahweh is helping us, why have all these bad things happened to us? We heard about all the miracles that Yahweh performed for our ancestors. We heard people tell us about how he rescued them from being slaves in Egypt. But now Yahweh has abandoned us, and we are ruled by the people from Midian."

¹⁴ Then Yahweh turned toward him and said, "You have the strength to rescue the Israelites from the people of Midian. I am sending you to do that!"

¹⁵ Gideon replied, "But Lord, how can I rescue the Israelites? My clan is the least significant in the whole tribe descended from Manasseh, and I am the least significant person in my whole family!"

¹⁶ Yahweh said to him, "I will help you. So you will defeat the Midianite army as easily as if you were fighting only one man!"

¹⁷ Gideon replied, "If you are truly pleased with me, do something which will prove that you who are speaking to me are really Yahweh. ¹⁸ But do not go away until I go and bring back an offering to you."

Yahweh answered, "Very well, I will stay here until you return."

¹⁹ Gideon hurried to his home. He killed a young goat and cooked it. Then he took a about twenty-two liters of flour and baked some bread without yeast. Then he put the cooked meat in a basket, and put the broth from the meat in a pot, and took it to Yahweh, who was sitting under the tree.

²⁰ Then the angel of God said to him, "Put the meat and the bread on this rock. Then pour the broth on top of it." So Gideon

did that. ²¹ Then Yahweh reached out and touched the meat and bread with the walking stick that was in his hand. A fire flamed up from the rock and burned up the meat and the bread that Gideon had brought! And then the angel of Yahweh disappeared. ²² When Gideon realized that it was the angel of Yahweh, he exclaimed, "O, Lord Yahweh, I have seen the face of the angel of Yahweh!"

²³ But Yahweh called to him and said, "Do not be afraid! You will not die!"

²⁴ Then Gideon built an altar to worship Yahweh there. He named it 'Yahweh is Peace.' That altar is still there at the town of Ophrah, in the land of the Abiezrites.

²⁵ That night Yahweh said to Gideon, "Take the bull that belongs to your father and another bull, one that is seven years old, and tear down the altar that your father built to worship the god Baal. Also cut down the pole for worshiping the goddess Asherah that is there beside it. ²⁶ Then build a stone altar to worship me, your God Yahweh, here on this hill. Take the wood from the Asherah pole you cut down and make a fire to burn the meat of these bulls as a burnt offering to me."

²⁷ So Gideon and ten of his servants did what Yahweh commanded. But they did it at night, because he was afraid what the other members of his family and the other men in town would do to him if they found out that he had done that.

²⁸ Early the next morning, as soon as the men got up, they saw that the altar to Baal was in ruins, and the Asherah pole was gone. They saw that there was a new altar there, and on it was what remained from the bulls they had sacrificed.

²⁹ The people asked each other, "Who did this?" After they investigated, someone told them that it was Gideon son of Joash who had done it.

³⁰ The men of the town said to Joash, "Bring your son out here! He must be put to death, because he destroyed our god Baal's altar and cut down the Asherah pole where we worship!"

³¹ But Joash replied to those who came against him, "Are you trying to defend Baal? Are you trying to argue his case? Anyone who tries to defend Baal should be executed by tomorrow morning! If Baal is truly a god, he ought to be able to defend himself, when someone tears down his altar!" ³² From that time, people called Gideon Jerub Baal, which means "Baal should defend himself," because he had torn down Baal's altar.

³³ Soon after that, the armies of the people of Midian and of Amalek and the people from the east gathered together. They crossed the Jordan River to attack the Israelites. They set up their tents in the Valley of Jezreel. ³⁴ Then Yahweh's Spirit took control of Gideon. He blew a ram's horn to summon the men to prepare to fight. So the men of the clan of Abiezer came to him. ³⁵ He also sent messengers throughout the tribes descended from Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali to tell their soldiers to come, and all of them came.

³⁶ Then Gideon said to God, "If you are truly going to enable me to rescue the Israelite people as you promised, ³⁷ confirm it by doing this: Tonight I will put a dry wool fleece on the ground where I thresh the grain. Tomorrow morning, if the fleece is wet with dew but the ground is dry, then I will know that I am the one you will enable to rescue the people of Israel as you promised." ³⁸ And that is what happened. When Gideon got up the next morning, he picked up the fleece, and squeezed out a whole bowlful of water!

³⁹ Then Gideon said to God, "Do not be angry with me, but let me ask you to do

one more thing. Tonight I will put the fleece out again. This time, let the fleece remain dry, while the ground is wet with the dew." ⁴⁰ So that night, God did what Gideon asked him to do. The next morning the fleece was dry, but the ground was covered with dew.

Chapter 7

¹ The next morning, Jerub Baal (his name is also Gideon) and his men got up early and went as far as the spring of Harod. The army of Midian was camped north of them, in the valley near the hill of Moreh.

² Yahweh said to Gideon, "You have too many soldiers with you. If I allow all of you to fight the army of Midian and your army defeats them, they will boast to me that they defeated their enemies by themselves, without my help. ³ So tell the men, 'Whoever among you is timid or afraid may leave us and depart from Mount Gilead.'" So after Gideon told that to them, twenty-two thousand of them went home. Only ten thousand men were left there.

⁴ But Yahweh told Gideon, "There are still too many men! Take them down to the spring, and there I will choose from among them, which ones will go with you and which ones will not go."

⁵ When Gideon took the men down to the spring, Yahweh told him, "When they drink, put into one group the ones who lap the water with their tongues, like dogs do. Put into another group the ones who kneel down to drink with their mouths in the water." ⁶ So when they drank, only three hundred men lapped the water with their tongues. All the others drank by kneeling down and putting their mouths into the water.

⁷ Then Yahweh told Gideon, "The three

hundred men who lapped the water will be your army! I will help them defeat the Midianite army. Let all the others go home!”⁸ So Gideon’s three hundred men collected the food and rams’ horns (used as trumpets) from all the other men, and then he sent them home.

The men of Midian were camping in the valley below Gideon.⁹ During that night, Yahweh said to Gideon, “Get up and go down to their camp, and you will hear something that will convince you that I will enable your men to defeat them.”¹⁰ But if you are afraid to go by yourself, take your servant Purah with you.¹¹ Go down and listen to what some of the Midian soldiers are saying. Then you will be very encouraged, and you will be ready to attack their camp.” So Gideon took Purah with him, and they went down to the edge of the enemy camp.¹² The armies of the people of Midian and Amalek and from the east had set up their tents and looked like a swarm of locusts. It seemed that their camels were too many to count, like the grains of sand on the seashore.

¹³ Gideon crept closer and heard one man telling a friend about a dream. He said, “I just had a dream, and in the dream I saw a round loaf of barley bread tumble down into our Midian camp. It struck a tent so hard that the tent turned upside down and collapsed!”

¹⁴ His friend said, “Your dream can mean only one thing. It means that God will enable Gideon, the man of Israel, to defeat all of the armies that are here with us men from Midian.”

¹⁵ When Gideon heard the man tell about his dream and the meaning of that dream, he thanked God. Then he and Purah returned to the Israelite camp, and he shouted to the men, “Get up! Because God is enabling you to defeat the men from Midian!”¹⁶ He divided his men into three

groups. He gave each man a ram’s horn (as a trumpet) and an empty clay jar. He also gave each of them a torch to carry.

¹⁷ Then he said to them, “Watch me. When we come close to the enemy camp, spread out to surround the camp. Then do exactly what I do.”¹⁸ As soon as my men blow their ram’s horns, you men in the other two groups surrounding the camp blow your horns and shout, ‘We are doing this for Yahweh and for Gideon!’”

¹⁹ A while before midnight, at the “middle of the watch,” just when a new group of guards took the places of the previous guards, Gideon and the hundred men with him arrived at the edge of the Midian camp. Suddenly he and his men blew their horns, and broke the jars that they were carrying.²⁰ Then the men in all three groups blew their horns and smashed their jars. They held the torches high with their left hands, and held up the horns with their right hands and alternatively blew them and shouted, “We have swords to fight for Yahweh and for Gideon!”²¹ Each of Gideon’s men stood in his position around the enemy camp. As they watched, all the Midian men started running around and shouting in a panic.

²² While the three hundred Israelite men kept blowing their horns, Yahweh caused the Midianites to start fighting each other with their swords. Some of them killed each other. The rest fled. Some fled south to Beth Shittah. Some fled to the town of Zerarah, as far as the border of Abel Meholah, near Tabbath.²³ The men of Israel gathered together more men from the tribes of Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh and they went after the army of Midian.²⁴ Gideon sent messengers throughout the hill country where the descendants of Ephraim lived, saying, “Go down and attack the army of Midian. Go down to the Jordan River, to the places where

people can wade across, to prevent enemy troops from crossing it! Station men as far south as Beth Barah.”

So the men of Ephraim did what Gideon told them to do. ²⁵ They also captured Oreb and Zeeb, the two generals of the Midian army. They killed Oreb at the big rock which is now called the rock of Oreb, and they killed Zeeb at the place where they crush grapes that is now called the winepress of Zeeb. Afterwards, the Israelites cut off the heads of Oreb and Zeeb and brought them to Gideon, who was on the other side of the Jordan River.

Chapter 8

¹ Then the soldiers from the tribe of Ephraim said to Gideon, “Why have you acted toward us like this? When you went out to fight against the army of Midian, why did you not call us to help you?” They argued very much with Gideon.

² But Gideon replied, “I have done very little compared with what you have done! The grapes you do not bother to pick in the land of Ephraim are much better than the whole harvest among the descendants of Abiezer! ³ God helped you defeat Oreb and Zeeb, the generals of the army from Midian. That is much more important than what I did!” After Gideon told them that, they no longer resented what he had done.

⁴ Then Gideon and his three hundred men went east. They came to the Jordan River and crossed it. Although they were very tired, they continued to pursue their enemies. ⁵ When they arrived at the town of Succoth, Gideon said to the town leaders, “Please give my men bread that they may eat it! They are very tired. We are pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian.”

⁶ But the leaders of Succoth replied, “You are ready to capture Zebah and Zalmunna and put them under your power as prisoners. You are strong enough to get food for yourself. So why should we give bread to your army?”

⁷ Gideon replied, “Because you said that, Yahweh will help us capture Zebah and Zalmunna and take them from you. We will come to you and we will make whips from the thorns and sharp barbs that grow in the desert. We will use those thorns and barbs to tear your flesh to pieces!”

⁸ Gideon and his three hundred men went up to Peniel and asked for food there in the same way. But the people gave him the same answer. ⁹ So he said to the men of Peniel, “After I defeat those kings and make peace, then I will come and pull down this tower!”

¹⁰ By that time, Zebah and Zalmunna had gone to Karkor town with fifteen thousand troops. They were all that were left of the armies that had come from the people of the East, and 120,000 of their men had already been killed. ¹¹ Gideon and his men went east along the road on which caravans travel. They went past the villages of Nobah and Jogbehah and arrived at the enemy camp by surprise. ¹² Zebah and Zalmunna fled, but Gideon’s men pursued them. He captured the two kings of Midian—Zebah and Zalmunna, and their whole army was sent off in confusion.

¹³ After that, Gideon and his men took Zebah and Zalmunna with them and started to return, going through the pass of Heres. ¹⁴ There he met a young man from Succoth, and sought advice from him. He asked him to identify all the names of the leaders in the town. The young man told him the names of seventy-seven men. ¹⁵ Then Gideon and his men returned to Suc-

coth and said to those leaders, “Here are Zebah and Zalmunna. When we were here before, you made fun of me and said ‘You have not caught Zebah and Zalmunna yet! After you catch them, we will give your exhausted men some food.’” ¹⁶ Then Gideon’s men took the town leaders and whipped them with whips made from briars from the desert, to teach them that they deserved to be punished for doing things like that. ¹⁷ Then they went to Peniel and tore down the tower, and killed all the men in the town.

¹⁸ Then Gideon said to Zebah and Zalmunna, “The men you killed near Mount Tabor, what did they look like?”

They replied, “They were like you; they all looked like they were sons of a king.”

¹⁹ Gideon replied, “They were my brothers! Just as surely as Yahweh lives, I would not kill you if you had not killed them.” ²⁰ Then he turned to his oldest son, Jether. He said to him, “Kill them!” But Jether was only a boy, and he was afraid, so he did not pull out his sword to kill them.

²¹ Then Zebah and Zalmunna said to Gideon, “Do not ask a young boy to do the work that a man should do!” So Gideon killed both of them. Then he took the golden crescent-shaped ornaments from the necks of their camels.

²² Then a group of Israelite men came to Gideon and said to him, “You be our ruler! We want you and your son and your grandsons to be our rulers, because you rescued us from the Midian army.”

²³ But Gideon replied, “No, I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you. Yahweh will rule over you.” ²⁴ Then he said, “I request only one thing. I request that each of you give me one earring from the things you captured after the battle.” Now all the men descended from Ishmael wore earrings.

²⁵ They replied, “We will be glad to give the earrings to you!” So they spread a cloth on the ground, and each man threw on it the gold earrings that he had taken from those whom he had killed in the battle. ²⁶ The weight of all the earrings was twenty kilograms. That did not include other things that they gave to Gideon—the other ornaments or the pendants or the clothes that their kings wore or the gold chains that were on the necks of their camels. ²⁷ Gideon made for the people a sacred garment that they worshiped instead of worshiping only God. Gideon and all his family sinned by worshiping it.

²⁸ That is how the Israelites defeated the people from Midian. The people of Midian did not become strong enough to attack Israel again. So while Gideon was alive, there was peace in the land for forty years.

²⁹ Gideon went back home to live there. ³⁰ He had many wives, and they bore him seventy sons. ³¹ He also had a slave wife in the city of Shechem, who bore him a son whom he named Abimelech. ³² Gideon son of Joash died when he was very old. They buried his body in the grave where his father Joash was buried, at Ophrah, in the land of the Abietherites.

³³ But as soon as Gideon died, the Israelites left God and gave themselves to worship the images of the god Baal, like adulteresses leave their husbands and go to other men. They made Baal-Berith the god they worshiped. ³⁴ They forgot about Yahweh, the one who had rescued them from all their enemies that surrounded them. ³⁵ And even though Gideon had done many good things for the Israelites, they did not act kindly toward Gideon’s family.

Chapter 9

¹ Gideon's son Abimelech went to talk with his mother's brothers in the city of Shechem. Gideon was also called Jerub Baal. He said to them and to all his mother's relatives, ² "Ask all the leaders of Shechem: 'Do you think it would be good for all seventy of Gideon's sons to rule over you? Or would it be better to have only one man, Abimelech, to rule over you?' And do not forget that I am a part of your family!"

³ So Abimelech's mother's brothers spoke to all the leaders of Shechem about what Abimelech had said. They said to each other, "We should allow Abimelech to rule over us, because he is our relative." ⁴ So the leaders of Shechem took from the temple of their god Baal-Berith one kilo of silver and gave it to Abimelech. With that silver he paid some worthless troublemakers to help him, and they went with Abimelech wherever he went. ⁵ Abimelech went to Ophrah, his father's town, and he murdered his seventy brothers, the sons of his father Gideon. They killed all those men on one huge rock. But Gideon's youngest son Jotham hid from Abimelech and his men, and he escaped. ⁶ Then all the leaders of the towns of Shechem and Bethmillo gathered under the big sacred tree at Shechem. There they appointed Abimelech to be their leader.

⁷ When Jotham heard about that, he climbed up Mount Gerizim. He stood at the top of the mountain and shouted to the people down below, "You leaders of Shechem, listen to me, in order that God will listen to you!" ⁸ One day the trees decided to appoint a king to rule over all of them. So they said to the olive tree, "You be our king!"

⁹ But the olive tree said, "No! I will not be your king! Men and gods enjoy the oil

from my fruit. I will not stop producing olives from which we make that oil, in order to rule over you other trees!"

¹⁰ Then the trees said to the fig tree, "You come and be our king!"

¹¹ But the fig tree replied, "No! I do not want to stop producing my good sweet fruit, and go and rule over you other trees!"

¹² Then the trees said to the grapevine, "Come and be our king!"

¹³ But the grapevine replied, "No! I will not be your king! The new wine that is made from my grapes causes people and gods who drink it to become very happy. I do not want to stop producing grapes and go and rule over you other trees!"

¹⁴ Then all the trees said to the thornbush, "Come and be our king!"

¹⁵ The thornbush said to the trees, "If you truly want to appoint me to be your king, come into the shade of my tiny branches. But if you do not want to do that, I hope that fire will come out from me and burn up all the cedar trees in Lebanon country!"

¹⁶ After Jotham finished telling them this parable, he said, "So now I ask you, were you being completely honest and sincere when you appointed Abimelech to be your king? Have you rewarded Gideon (who is also called Jerub Baal) by honoring him as he deserved because of all the good things he did for you? No!" ¹⁷ Do not forget that my father fought a battle for you, and he was willing to die for you if that were necessary, to save you from the power of the Midian people group. ¹⁸ But now you have rebelled against my father's family, and you have murdered seventy of his sons on one huge rock. And you have appointed Abimelech—who is the son of my father's slave girl, not the son of his wife—to be the king who will rule you people

of Shechem. You have done that only because he is one of your relatives! ¹⁹ So, if today you think that you have truly acted fairly and sincerely toward Gideon and his family, I hope that he will cause you to be happy and that you will cause him to be happy. ²⁰ But if what you did was not right, I wish that Abimelech will destroy Shechem and Beth Millo!" I wish that the leaders of Shechem and Beth Millo will also destroy Abimelech!"

²¹ After Jotham finished saying that, he escaped from them and ran away to the town of Beer. He stayed there because he was afraid that his brother Abimelech would try to kill him.

²² For three years Abimelech was the leader over the people of Israel. ²³ Then God sent an evil spirit to cause trouble between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem, with the result that the leaders of Shechem rebelled against Abimelech. ²⁴ The leaders of Shechem had helped Abimelech murder seventy of Gideon's sons, who were his brothers. So now God sent the evil spirit to punish all of them for what they had done. ²⁵ The leaders of Shechem set an ambush on the hilltops. Those men robbed everyone who passed by. But someone told Abimelech about it, so he did not go near them.

²⁶ There was a man named Gaal son of Ebed who moved into Shechem, along with his brothers. The leaders of Shechem grew to trust him. ²⁷ They went out to their vineyards to pick some grapes. They pressed the grapes to make juice, and then they made wine. Then they had a feast in the house of their god, and they ate a lot of food and drank a lot of wine. Then they cursed Abimelech. ²⁸ Gaal son of Ebed said, "Why should we allow Abimelech to rule over us? Is he not the son of Jerub Baal? And is Zebul not his officer? You should serve the men of Hamor,

Shechem's father! Why should we serve Abimelech? ²⁹ If you would appoint me to be your leader, I would get rid of Abimelech. I would say to him, 'Get your army ready! Come and fight us!'"

³⁰ Someone told Zebul what Gaal had said, and he became very angry. ³¹ He sent messengers to Abimelech. They told him, "Gaal and his brothers have come here to Shechem, and they are stirring up the people so they will rebel against you. ³² You and your men should get up during the night and go and hide in the fields outside the city. ³³ As soon as the sun rises in the morning, get up and attack the city. When Gaal and his men come out to fight against you, you can do to them whatever you want to."

³⁴ So Abimelech and all the men who were with him got up during the night. They divided into four groups and hid in the fields near Shechem. ³⁵ The next morning, Gaal went out and stood at the entrance to the city gate. While he was standing there, Abimelech and his soldiers came out of their hiding places and started walking toward the city.

³⁶ When Gaal saw the soldiers, he said to Zebul, "Look! There are people coming down from the hills!"

But Zebul said, "You are seeing only the shadows of trees on the hills. They are not people; they only look like people." ³⁷ But Gaal looked again, and said, "Look! There are people coming down in the middle of the land! There is a group of them coming down from by way of the oak tree where people claim to talk with the spirits of dead people!"

³⁸ Zebul said to Gaal, "Now what good is your bragging? You who said, 'Who is Abimelech that we should serve him?' Are these not the men you hated? Go out now and fight against them."

³⁹ So Gaal led the men of Shechem outside the city to fight the army of Abimelech. ⁴⁰ Abimelech and his men pursued them, and they killed many of Gaal's men before they could return safely inside the city gate. ⁴¹ Abimelech then stayed at Arumah, about five miles away from Shechem, and Zebul's men forced Gaal and his brothers to leave Shechem.

⁴² The next day, the people of Shechem got ready to leave the city and work in their fields. When someone told Abimelech about that, ⁴³ he divided his men into three groups, and told them to hide in the fields. So they did that. And when they saw the people coming out of the city, they jumped up and attacked them. ⁴⁴ Abimelech and the men who were with him ran to the city gate. The other two groups ran out to the people in the fields and attacked them. ⁴⁵ Abimelech and his men fought all day. They captured the city and killed all the people. They tore down all the buildings, and then they threw salt over the ruins to try to keep anything from growing there again.

⁴⁶ When the leaders who lived in the tower outside of Shechem heard what had happened, they ran and hid inside the fortress, which was also a temple of their god El-Berith. ⁴⁷ But someone told Abimelech that all the leaders had gathered there. ⁴⁸ So he and all the men who were with him went up Mount Zalmon, which is near Shechem. Abimelech cut some branches of trees with an axe, and put them on his shoulders. Then he said to all the men who were with him, "Quickly, do what I have just done!" ⁴⁹ So his men all cut branches carried them down the mountain, following Abimelech. They went to the fortress and piled the branches against its walls. Then they kindled a fire, and the fire burned down the fortress and killed all the people who

were inside. So all the people who were inside the fortress—about a thousand men and women—died.

⁵⁰ Then Abimelech and his men went to the city of Thebez. They surrounded it and captured it. ⁵¹ But there was a strong tower inside the city. So all the men, women, and leaders of the city ran to the tower. When they were all inside, they locked the door. Then they climbed up to the roof of the tower. ⁵² Abimelech and his men came to the tower and he came up to the door to light a fire to burn down the door. ⁵³ But when Abimelech came near the doorway, a woman who was on the roof dropped the upper half of a large grinding stone on his head, which cracked the bone of his skull.

⁵⁴ Abimelech quickly called to the young man who carried Abimelech's weapons, and said, "Pull out your sword and kill me with it! I do not want people to say 'A woman killed Abimelech.'" So the young man thrust his sword into Abimelech, and Abimelech died. ⁵⁵ When the Israelite soldiers saw that Abimelech was dead, they all returned to their homes.

⁵⁶ In that way God punished Abimelech for all the evil things that he had done to his father by murdering all seventy of his brothers. ⁵⁷ God also punished the men of Shechem for the evil things that they had done. And when these things happened, it made true the curse of Jotham son of Jerub Baal.

Chapter 10

¹ The king after Abimelech was Tola son of Puah and grandson of Dodo. He became the leader to rescue the Israelite people from their enemies. He was from tribe of Issachar, and yet he lived in the city of Shamir in the hill country of the tribe of

Ephraim. ² He ruled as judge over Israel for twenty-three years. Then he died and was buried in Shamir.

³ After Tola died, Jair (the Gileadite) ruled as judge over Israel for twenty-two years.

⁴ He had thirty sons, and each of them had his own donkey to ride on. They had thirty cities in Gilead that are still named even today, Havvoth Jair (or the Cities of Jair). ⁵ Then Jair died and was buried in the city of Kamon.

⁶ The Israelites did even more evil that Yahweh saw them do. They worshiped the Baal idols and female fertility idols called the Asthoreths. They worshiped the gods of the people groups of Aram, Sidon, Moab, and Ammon people groups, and the gods of the Philistines. They forgot about Yahweh and stopped worshiping him. ⁷ So Yahweh was very angry with them, and he allowed the Philistines and Ammonites to conquer Israel. ⁸ They crushed and oppressed the Israelites that year, and for eighteen years they oppressed all the people of Israel who lived on the east side of the Jordan River. That was the land of the Amorites, which is in Gilead. ⁹ Then the Ammonites crossed over the Jordan River to fight against the people of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim. They caused the Israelites' to live their lives with great fear and dread. ¹⁰ So the Israelites cried out to Yahweh, saying "We have sinned against you. We have abandoned you, and we have worshiped the idols of Baal."

¹¹ Yahweh answered them, saying, "I delivered you from the people groups of the Egyptians, the Amorites, the Ammonites, the Philistines, ¹² and also from the Sidonians, the Amalekites, and the Maonites. I did this because they hurt and imprisoned you. You cried out to me, and I brought you to freedom. ¹³ But now you have abandoned me, and you have been wor-

shipping other gods. Therefore, I will not rescue you again and again. ¹⁴ You have chosen those gods to be the ones you worship. So ask them to help you. Let them be the ones who rescue you when you are in trouble!"

¹⁵ But the people of Israel said to Yahweh, "We have sinned. Punish us in whatever way you wish. But please rescue us today!" ¹⁶ Then the Israelites threw away the idols of the foreign gods they had cherished, and they worshiped Yahweh. He saw that they were suffering very much, and he reached the limit of his endurance over the misery of Israel.

¹⁷ The Ammon people group gathered to fight against the Israelites, and they set up their tents in Gilead. The Israelite soldiers gathered and set up their tents at Mizpah. ¹⁸ The leaders of the people of Gilead said to each other, "Who will lead our attack against the Ammonite army? The one who will lead us will become the leader of all us who live in Gilead."

Chapter 11

¹ There was a man from the region of Gilead named Jephthah. He proved himself to be a great warrior. But his mother was a prostitute. His father was Gilead.

² Gilead's wife gave birth to several sons. When they grew up, they forced Jephthah to leave home, saying to him, "You are the son of another woman, not the son of our mother. So when our father dies, you will not receive any of his property." ³ So Jephthah ran away from his brothers, and he lived in the land of Tob. While he was there, some lawless men joined together with Jephthah, and they came and went with each other.

⁴ Some time later, the soldiers of Ammon attacked the soldiers of Israel. ⁵ And the

leaders of the Gilead went out to find Jephthah so they could bring him back, and away from the land of Tob. ⁶ They said to him, "Come with us and lead our army, and help us fight the army of Ammon!"

⁷ But Jephthah replied, "You hated me! You forced me to leave my father's house! So why have you come to me now and ask for my help, just when you have trouble?"

⁸ The elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "That is why we are coming to you now. Come and fight with us and lead our soldiers against the soldiers of Ammon, and you will be the leader over everyone who lives in Gilead."

⁹ Jephthah answered them, "If I go back to Gilead with you to fight against the army of Ammon, and if Yahweh helps us to defeat them, then I will be your leader."

¹⁰ They replied, "Yahweh is a witness to everything we are saying to you. So he will punish us if we do not what we are promising you." ¹¹ So Jephthah went with them back to Gilead, and the people appointed him to be their leader and the commander of their army. And Jephthah repeated to Yahweh there at Mizpah the terms of the agreement he had made.

¹² Jephthah sent messengers to the king of the Ammon people group. They asked the king, "What have we done to make you angry, so your army is coming to fight against the people in our land?"

¹³ The king replied, "You took our land when you came here from Egypt. You took all our land east of the Jordan River, from the Arnon River in the south to the Jabbok River in the north. So now give it back to us without a fight."

¹⁴ So Jephthah sent the messengers to the king again. ¹⁵ They said to him, "This is what Jephthah says: 'Israel did not take the land of the Moabites and the Ammonites. ¹⁶ When the Israelite people

came out of Egypt, they walked through the desert to the Sea of Reeds, and then walked across it and traveled to the town of Kadesh at the border of the region of Edom. ¹⁷ They sent messengers to the king of the Edomites to say to him, "Please allow us to walk across your land." But the king of the Edomites refused. Later they sent the same message to the king of the Moabites, but he also refused to allow them to go through his land. So the Israelites stayed at Kadesh for a long time. ¹⁸ Then the Israelites went into the desert and walked outside the borders of the Edom and Moab. They walked east of Moab, and then north of the Arnon River, which is the northern border of Moab. They did not cross into the territory of Moab, for the Arnon was the border of Moab.

¹⁹ Then the leaders of Israel sent a message to Sihon, the king of the Amorites, who ruled in Heshbon. They asked him, "Please allow us Israelite people to cross through your land so we may go into the land that is ours." ²⁰ But Sihon did not trust the Israelites to pass through his land in peace. So he gathered all his soldiers and they set up their tents at the village of Jahaz, and there he fought against Israel. ²¹ But Yahweh, the God of Israel, gave help to the Israelite army and they defeated Sihon and his army. Then they took possession of all the land where the Amorites had lived. ²² The Israelites took all the land that belonged to the Amorites, from the Arnon River in the south to the Jabbok River in the north, and from the desert in the east to the Jordan River in the west.

²³ It was Yahweh, the God of Israel, who forced the Amorites to leave the places where they lived, as the Israelites advanced. So do you now think that you can now take possession of their land? ²⁴ You

have the right to the land when Chemosh gives it to you. And we will live in the land that Yahweh our God has given to us! ²⁵ Are you better than Balak son of Zippor, the king of the Moab? He never dared to fight against Israel! ²⁶ For three hundred years the Israelites lived in the cities of Heshbon and Aroer, in the surrounding towns, and in all the cities along the Arnon River. Why have you Ammonites not taken back those cities during all those years? ²⁷ We have not done wrong against you, but you are doing wrong against me by attacking me and my army. I trust that Yahweh, who is the judge, will decide whether the people of Israel or the people of Ammon are in the right.”

²⁸ But the king of the Ammon ignored the warning contained in this message from Jephthah.

²⁹ Then the Spirit of Yahweh took control of Jephthah. Jephthah went through Gilead and through the area where the tribe of Manasseh lived, to enlist men for his army. He finally gathered them together in the city of Mizpah in Gilead to fight against the Ammonites. ³⁰ There Jephthah made a solemn promise to Yahweh, saying “If you will give me help to my army to defeat the Ammonites, ³¹ when I return from the battle, I will sacrifice to you whatever comes out of my house to greet me. That will belong to you.”

³² Then Jephthah and his men went from Mizpah to attack the Ammonites, and Yahweh enabled his army to defeat them. ³³ Jephthah and his men killed them, from the city of Aroer all the way to the area around the city of Minnith. They destroyed twenty cities, as far as the city of Abel Keramim. So the Israelites completely defeated the Ammonites.

³⁴ When Jephthah returned to his home in Mizpah, his daughter was the first one to come out of the house to meet him. She

was joyfully playing a tambourine and dancing. She was his only child and he had no other sons or daughters. ³⁵ When Jephthah saw his daughter, he tore his clothes to show that he was very sad about what he was going to do. He said to her, “My daughter, seeing you now, you have crushed me with a terrible sorrow, because I made a solemn promise to Yahweh to sacrifice the first one who came out of my house, and I must do what I promised.”

³⁶ His daughter said, “My father, you made a solemn promise to Yahweh. So you must do to me what you promised, because you said that you would do that if Yahweh helped you to defeat our enemies, the Ammonites.” ³⁷ Then she also said, “But allow me to do one thing. First, allow me to go into the hills and wander around for two months. Since I will never be married and have children, allow me and my friends to go and cry together.”

³⁸ Jephthah replied, “All right, you may go.” So she left for two months. She and her friends stayed in the hills and they cried for her because she would never be married. ³⁹ After two months, she returned to her father Jephthah, and he did to her what he had solemnly promised. So his daughter never was married.

Because of that, the Israelites now have a custom. ⁴⁰ Every year the young Israelite women go into the hills for four days to remember and cry about what happened to the daughter of Jephthah.

Chapter 12

¹ The men of the tribe of Ephraim called together their soldiers, and they crossed the Jordan River and went to the town of Zaphon to talk with Jephthah. They said to him, “Why did you not ask us to help

your army fight the Ammonites. So we will burn down your house while you are in it.”

² Jephthah replied, “The Ammonites oppressed us. And I asked you to come and rescue us from them, you refused. When I called to you, you did not come to our rescue. ³ When I saw that you would not come to help us, I risked my own life by leading our people to pass through the people of Ammon. And Yahweh helped us to defeat them. So why do you come to fight against me today?”

⁴ Then Jephthah called together the soldiers of Gilead to fight against the soldiers of Ephraim. They attacked them because men of the tribe of Ephraim said, “You men from Gilead are just refugees here in the land of Ephraim and Manasseh. ⁵ The Gileadites captured the low places in the Jordan River where people could cross over the river and go to the territory of Ephraim. If someone from the tribe of Ephraim came to the ford to try to escape, he would say, “Allow me to cross the river.” Then the men of Gilead would ask him, “Are you from the tribe of Ephraim?” If he said “No,” ⁶ they would say to him, “Say the word ‘Shibboleth.’” The men of Ephraim could not pronounce that word correctly. So if the person from the tribe of Ephraim said “Sibboleth,” they would know that he was lying and that he was really from the tribe of Ephraim, and they would kill him there at the ford.

So the men of Gilead killed forty-two thousand people from the tribe of Ephraim at that time.

⁷ Jephthah, the man from Gilead, served as a judge and leader over Israel for six years. Then he died and was buried in one of the towns of Gilead.

⁸ After Jephthah died, a man named Ibzan, from Bethlehem, became a leader and a

judge over Israel. ⁹ He had thirty sons and he gave thirty daughters away in marriage. He brought in thirty daughters from families outside his clan. He was a leader and a judge over Israel for seven years. ¹⁰ When died, he was buried in Bethlehem.

¹¹ After Ibzan died, a man named Elon, from the tribe of Zebulun, became a leader of Israel. He was their leader for ten years. ¹² Then he died and was buried in the city of Aijalon in the area where the tribe of Zebulun lives.

¹³ After Elon died, a man named Abdon son of Hillel, from the city of Pirathon, became a leader and a judge over Israel. ¹⁴ He had forty sons and thirty grandsons. They had seventy donkeys. Abdon was a leader and a judge over Israel for eight years. ¹⁵ When Abdon died, he was buried in Pirathon, in the land of Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekites.

Chapter 13

¹ Again the Israelite people did evil, and Yahweh saw what they had done. So Yahweh helped the Philistines to conquer them. They ruled over the Israelites for forty years.

² There was a man named Manoah from the family of Dan who lived in the town of Zorah. His wife was unable to become pregnant, and so she had not given birth.

³ One day, the angel of Yahweh appeared to Manoah’s wife and said to her, “Even though you have not been able to give birth to any children until now, you will soon become pregnant and you will give birth to a son. ⁴ From now until he is born, you must not drink any wine or other alcoholic drink, and you must not eat any food that the law says we should not eat. ⁵ You will become pregnant. After you give

birth to your son, no one may ever cut his hair. He will be dedicated to God even before he is born until the day he dies. He will begin the work that will rescue Israel from the power of the Philistines.”

⁶ The woman ran and told her husband, “A man whom God sent came to me. I was very afraid of him, because he was like an angel from God. I did not ask where he came from, and he did not tell me his name.” ⁷ But he told me, ‘You have become pregnant, and you will give birth to a son. Until then, you must not drink any wine or any alcoholic drink, and you must not eat any food that God’s law says you are not to eat. Your son will be a Nazirite; that is one who is dedicated to God before he is born and until the day he dies.’”

⁸ Then Manoah prayed to Yahweh, saying, “O Lord, I plead with you, allow that man whom you sent to us to come again and teach us how we should raise the boy who will be born to us.”

⁹ God did what Manoah asked, and his angel came to the woman again. This time she was out in the field. But again her husband Manoah was not with her. ¹⁰ So she quickly ran and said to her husband, “The man who appeared to me a few days ago has come back again!”

¹¹ Manoah ran back with his wife and asked him, “Are you the man who talked with my wife a few days ago?” He replied, “Yes I am.”

¹² Manoah asked him, “When what you promised occurs and my wife gives birth to a son, what rules will there be for the child, and what work will he do when he grows up?”

¹³ Yahweh’s angel replied, “Your wife must obey all the instructions I gave her. ¹⁴ Before the baby is born, she must not eat grapes, drink wine or any other alcoholic drink, or eat anything that the law says we

should not eat.”

¹⁵ Then Manoah said, “Please stay here until we can kill and cook a young goat for you.”

¹⁶ Yahweh’s angel replied, “I will stay here, but I will not eat anything. However, you may kill an animal and sacrifice it as a burned offering to Yahweh.” But Manoah did not yet realize that this was Yahweh’s angel.

¹⁷ Then Manoah asked him, “What is your name? When what you have promised happens, we want to honor you.”

¹⁸ Yahweh’s angel replied, “Why do you ask me my name? It is too marvelous.”

¹⁹ Then Manoah killed a young goat and burned it on a rock, along with a grain offering, as a sacrifice to Yahweh. Then he did an amazing thing as Manoah and his wife watched. ²⁰ When the flames went up from the altar toward the sky, Yahweh’s angel went up in the flame from the altar. Manoah and his wife saw that and lay facedown on the ground. ²¹ Although Yahweh’s angel did not appear again to Manoah and his wife, Manoah realized who this person really was.

²² So Manoah said, “Now we are sure to die, because we have seen God!”

²³ But his wife said, “No, I do not think so. If Yahweh intended to kill us, he would not have accepted the burned offering and the grain offering. And he would not have appeared to us and told us the wonderful thing that would happen to us, and he would not have performed this miracle.”

²⁴ When their son was born, they named him Samson. Yahweh blessed him as he grew up. ²⁵ While he was in Mahanehdan, which is between the towns of Zorah and Eshtaol, Yahweh’s Spirit began to control him.

Chapter 14

¹ Samson went down to the town of Timnah, and there he saw a young Philistine woman. ² When he returned home, he told his mother and father, "I saw one of the daughters of the Philistines in Timnah, and I want you to get her for me so I can marry her."

³ His mother and father objected very strongly. They said, "Is there no woman from our tribe, or from the other Israelite tribes, that you could marry? Why do you want a wife from the Philistines, who are not circumcised and do not worship Yahweh?"

But Samson told his father, "Get her for me! She is the one I want!" ⁴ His mother and father did not realize that Yahweh was arranging this. He was preparing a way for Samson to create a conflict with the Philistines, for they were ruling over Israel at that time. ⁵ Then Samson went down to Timnah with his mother and father. A young lion attacked him and roared at him near the vineyards close to the town. ⁶ Then Yahweh's Spirit came on Samson, and he tore the lion apart with his hands. He did it as easily as if it had been a young goat. But he did not tell his mother and father about it. ⁷ When they arrived in Timnah, Samson talked with the young woman, and he liked her very much. And his father made arrangements for the wedding.

⁸ Later, when Samson returned to Timnah for the wedding, he turned off the path to see the lion carcass. He discovered that a swarm of bees had made a nest in the carcass and had made some honey. ⁹ So he dug out some of the honey into his hands and ate some of it as he was walking along. He also gave some of it to his mother and father, but he did not tell them that he had taken the honey from the carcass of the

lion.

¹⁰ As his father was making the final arrangements for the marriage, Samson gave a feast for the young men in that area. That was the custom for men to do when they were about to be married. ¹¹ As soon as her relatives saw him, they brought him thirty of their friends to be with him.

¹² Samson said to them, "Allow me to tell you a riddle. If you tell me the correct meaning of my riddle during these seven days of the celebration, I will give each one of you a linen robe and an extra set of clothes. ¹³ But if you cannot tell me the correct meaning, you must each give me a linen robe and an extra set of clothes." They replied, "All right. Tell us your riddle."

¹⁴ So he said,

"From out of the eater I found something to eat;

from out of the strong I found something sweet."

But for three days they could not tell him the meaning of the riddle.

¹⁵ On the fourth day, they said to Samson's wife, "Use your tricks and make your husband tell you the meaning of the riddle. If you do not do that, we will burn down your father's house, with you and your family inside it! Did you invite us here only to make us poor by forcing us to buy a lot of clothes for your husband?"

¹⁶ So Samson's wife came to him, crying. She said to him, "You do not really love me. You hate me! You have told a riddle to my friends, but you have not told me the answer to it!"

He replied, "I have not even told my own mother and father the answers, so why should I tell you?" ¹⁷ She continued to cry every time she was with him, all during the rest of the celebration. Finally, on the

seventh day, because she continued to nag him, he told her the answer to the riddle. Then she told it to the young men.

¹⁸ So before sunset on the seventh day, the young men came to Samson and said to him,

”Nothing is sweeter than honey;
Nothing is as strong as a lion.”

Samson replied, ”People use their own animals to plow their fields. My bride is like a young heifer that you have used, but she does not belong to you!

If you had not forced her to ask me,
you would not have learned the answer!”

¹⁹ Then Yahweh’s Spirit powerfully came on Samson. He went down to the coast at the city of Ashkelon and killed thirty men. He took their clothes and went back to Timnah; then he gave them to the men at the feast. But he was very angry about what had happened, so he went back home to live with his mother and father. ²⁰ So his wife’s father gave her instead to the man who had been Samson’s special friend when he got married.

Chapter 15

¹ During the time that they were harvesting the wheat, Samson took a young goat to Timnah as a present for his wife. He wanted to sleep with his wife, but her father would not let him go into her room.

² He said to Samson, ”I really thought that you hated her. So I gave her to the man who was your best friend at the wedding, and she has married him. But look, her younger sister is more beautiful than she is. Take her instead.”

³ Samson replied, ”No! And this time I have a right to get revenge on you

Philistines!” ⁴ Then he went out into the fields and caught three hundred foxes. He tied their tails together, two by two. He fastened torches to each pair of tails. ⁵ Then he lit the torches and let the foxes run through the fields of the Philistines. The fire from the torches burned all the grain to the ground, including the grain that had been cut and stacked in bundles. The fire also burned down their grapevines and their olive trees.

⁶ The Philistines asked, ”Who did this?” Someone told them, ”Samson did it. He married a woman from Timnah, but then his father-in-law gave her to the man who was Samson’s best friend at the wedding, and she married him.” So the Philistines went to Timnah and got the woman and her father, and burned them to death.

⁷ Samson found out about that and said to them, ”Because you have done this, I will get revenge on you, and then I will be happy!” ⁸ So he attacked the Philistines furiously and killed many of them. Then he went to hide in a cave in the large rock at a place called Etam.

⁹ The Philistines did not know where he was, so they went up to where the descendants of Judah lived, and they arranged themselves for battle at the town of Lehi. ¹⁰ The men there asked the Philistines, ”Why do you want to attack us?”

The Philistines replied, ”We have come to capture Samson. We have come to get revenge on him for what he did to us.”

¹¹ Someone there knew where Samson was hiding. So three thousand men from Judah went down to get Samson at the cave in the rock where he was hiding. They said to Samson, ”Do you not realize that the people of Philistia are ruling over us? Do you not realize what they will do to us?”

Samson replied, ”The only thing I did was

that I got revenge on them for what they did to me.”

¹² But the men from Judah said to him, “We have come to tie you up and put you in the hands of the Philistines.”

Samson said, “All right, but promise me that you yourselves will not kill me!”

¹³ They replied, “We will just tie you up and take you to the Philistines. We will not kill you.” So they tied him with two new ropes and led him away from the cave. ¹⁴ When they arrived at Lehi, the Philistines came toward him, shouting triumphantly. But Yahweh’s Spirit powerfully came on Samson. He snapped the ropes on his arms as easily as if they had been stalks of burned flax, and they fell off his wrists. ¹⁵ Then he saw a donkey’s jawbone lying on the ground. It was new, so it was hard. He picked it up and killed about a thousand Philistine men with it. ¹⁶ Then Samson sang:

“With the jawbone of a donkey

I have made them like a heap of dead donkeys.

With the jawbone of a donkey

I have killed a thousand men.”

¹⁷ When he finished, he threw the jawbone away, but later that place was called Ramath Lehi (or Jawbone Hill).

¹⁸ Then Samson was very thirsty, so he called out to Yahweh, “You have given me strength to win a great victory. So now must I die because of being thirsty, with the result that those heathen, uncircumcised Philistines will capture me?” ¹⁹ So God caused water to gush out of a depression in the ground at Lehi. Samson drank from it and soon felt strong again. He named that place En Hakkore (or “The spring of the one who called out”). That spring can still be found at Lehi, even today.

²⁰ Samson was the leader and judge over Israel for twenty years, but during that time the Philistines were in control of the entire land.

Chapter 16

¹ Samson went to the city of Gaza. He saw a prostitute there, and he spent the night with her. ² The Gazites were told, “Samson has come here.” They surrounded the place where Samson was, and they waited in secret all night long. They were beside the city gate, so they would be sure he could not escape. They said, “Let us wait until the light, and then we will kill him.”

³ But Samson did not stay there all night. At midnight, he got up. He went to the city gate, he took hold of its two posts, and he lifted them up out of the ground, with its connecting cross bar still attached. He put it on his shoulders and carried it many miles uphill, in front of the town of Hebron.

⁴ Later Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah. She lived in the Valley of Sorek (in the Philistine area). ⁵ The Philistine leaders went to her and said, “Use your tricks to find out from Samson what makes him so strong. And find out how we can subdue him and tie him up securely. If you do that, each of us will give you 1,100 pieces of silver.”

⁶ So Delilah went to Samson and said, “Please tell me what makes you so strong, and tell me how someone can subdue you and tie you up.”

⁷ Samson said, “If someone ties me with seven new bowstrings, ones that are not dry yet, I will become as weak as other men.”

⁸ So after Delilah told that to the Philistine leaders, they brought seven new bow-

strings to Delilah. ⁹ Then she hid the leaders in one of the rooms in her house. She tied Samson up with the bowstrings and then called out, "Samson! The Philistines have come here to capture you!" But Samson snapped the bowstrings as easily as though they had been strings that had been singed in a fire. So the Philistines did not find out what made Samson so strong.

¹⁰ Then Delilah said to Samson, "You have deceived me and lied to me! Now tell me the truth, how someone can tie you up securely."

¹¹ Samson replied, "If someone ties me with new ropes, ones that have never been used, I will be as weak as other men."

¹² So again, she told the Philistine leaders, and then came and hid in the room as they did before. And again she called out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!" But Samson snapped the ropes on his arms as easily as if they had been threads.

¹³ Then Delilah said, "You have deceived me and lied to me again! Please tell me how someone can tie you up securely!" Samson replied, "If you weave the seven braids of my hair into the threads you are weaving on the loom, and then fasten those threads with a nail that makes the threads tight, then I will become as weak as other men."

So again, Delilah held the seven braids of his hair, and wove them into the threads on the loom, ¹⁴ and she secured them with a pin. Then she called out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!" But Samson woke up and pulled away his hair, taking with it the pin of the loom and the fabric in the loom.

¹⁵ Then Delilah said to him, "How can you say that you love me when you do not tell me the truth about yourself? You have deceived me three times, and you

still have not told me what really makes you so strong!" ¹⁶ Day after day she used every trick to get him to tell her his secret. He thought he would die from her nagging.

¹⁷ Finally Samson told her the truth. He said, "I have been set apart for God since the day I was born. And because of that, my hair has never been cut. If my hair were shaved off, my strength would be gone, and I would be as weak as other men."

¹⁸ Delilah realized that this time he had told her the truth. So she called together the Philistine leaders, saying, "Come back one more time, because Samson has finally told me the secret about his strength." So the Philistine leaders returned and gave Delilah the money they promised to give her. ¹⁹ Again she lulled Samson to sleep, with his head in her lap. Then she called one of the Philistine men to come and cut off Samson's hair. As he did that, Samson became weak; he had no more strength.

²⁰ Then after she tied him up, she called out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!"

He woke up and thought, "I will do as I did before. I will shake these ropes off myself and be free!" But he did not realize that Yahweh had left him.

²¹ So the Philistine men seized him and gouged out his eyes. Then they took him to Gaza. There they put him in prison and bound him with bronze chains. They made him turn a large millstone to grind grain every day. ²² But his hair started to grow again after it had been cut.

²³ Several months later the Philistine leaders celebrated a big festival. During the festival they offered sacrifices to their god Dagon. They praised him, saying, "Our god has enabled us to defeat our great en-

emy Samson!”

²⁴ When the other people saw Samson, they also praised their god Dagon, saying,

”Our god has put our great enemy into our hands.

Our god helped us to capture the one who has harmed our country so much!”

²⁵ By that time the people were half-drunk. They shouted, “Bring Samson out of the prison! Bring him here so he can entertain us!”

So they brought Samson from the prison and made him stand in the center of the temple. They made him stand between the two pillars that held up the roof. ²⁶ Samson said to the servant who was leading him by his hand, “Place my hands against the two pillars. I want to rest against them.” ²⁷ At that time the temple was full of men and women. All the Philistine leaders were also there. And there were about three thousand people on the roof, watching Samson and making fun of him. ²⁸ Samson prayed to Yahweh and he said, “Lord Yahweh, think about me again! Please give me strength only this once more, so that I may get revenge on the Philistines for gouging out my eyes!”

²⁹ Then Samson held on to the two center pillars on which the building rested. He leaned against them, one pillar with his right hand, and his left hand on the other pillar. ³⁰ Then he shouted to God, “Let me die with the Philistines!” He pushed with all his strength. The pillars collapsed, and the temple crashed down on the Philistine leaders and all the other Philistine people, and they all died. So Samson killed more people when he died than he had killed all during his life.

³¹ Later his brothers and their relatives went down from Zorah to Gaza to get his body. They took it back home and buried it between Zorah and Eshtaol, at

the place where Samson’s father Manoah was buried. Now Samson had led Israel for twenty years.

Chapter 17

¹ There was a man named Micah who lived in the hill country where the tribe of Ephraim live. ² One day he said to his mother, “I heard you curse whoever stole eleven hundred pieces of silver from your house. I am the one who took the silver, and I still have it.” His mother replied, “My son, I pray that Yahweh will bless you.”

³ Micah gave all the silver back to his mother. Then she said to herself, “I will give this silver to Yahweh. I will have someone make a carved figure and a cast figure from this silver.”

⁴ After he gave the silver to his mother, she took two hundred pieces and gave them to a metal worker. With the silver that man made a carved figure and a cast metal figure, and gave them to Micah. Micah put them in his house.

⁵ He had a house in which he worshiped his idols. He made a vest that was worn by priests, and some household idols and Micah gave one of his sons the task of being the priest for all his idols. ⁶ At that time, the Israel did not have a king, and everyone did what was right, as they saw it.

⁷ There was a young man who had been living in Bethlehem in the area where the tribe of Judah lives. He wanted to work as a priest because he was a member of the tribe of Levi. ⁸ So he left Bethlehem to find another place to live and work. He came to Micah’s house in the hill country where the tribe of Ephraim lived.

⁹ Micah asked him, "Where are you from?"

He replied, "I come from Bethlehem. I am from the tribe of Levi, and I am looking for a place to live and work as a priest."

¹⁰ Micah said to him, "Stay with me, and you can advise me and be my priest. Each year I will give to you ten pieces of silver and some new clothes. And I will provide food for you." ¹¹ So the young man agreed to live with Micah. He became like one of Micah's own sons. ¹² Micah appointed him to be a priest, and he lived in Micah's house. ¹³ Then Micah said, "Now I know that Yahweh will do good things for me, because I have a man from the tribe of Levi to be my priest."

Chapter 18

¹ At that time the Israelites had no king.

The tribe of Dan was looking for a good place for them to settle down. The other Israelite tribes had been able to receive the land that had been allotted to them, but the tribe of Dan had not been able to do that. ² So they chose five soldiers from their clans, men who lived in the cities of Zorah and Eshtaol, to go through the land and explore it and try to find some land where their tribe could live.

They came to Micah's house in the hill country where the tribe of Ephraim lived, and they stayed there that night. ³ While they were in his house, when they heard the young man who had become Micah's priest talking, they recognized him from his accent. So they went to him and asked him, "Who brought you here? What are you doing here? Why did you come here?"

⁴ He told them the things that Micah had done for him. And he said, "Micah has hired me, and I have become his priest."

⁵ So they said to him, "Please ask God if we will succeed in what we are trying to do on this journey."

⁶ The young man replied, "Go in the knowledge that Yahweh will be with you on this journey."

⁷ Then the five men left. When they came to the city of Laish, they saw that the people there lived safely, as the people did in the city of Sidon. The people there thought that they were safe, because there was no one nearby to cause trouble for them, they were far from Sidon, and they rarely had contact with any outsiders.

⁸ When those five men returned to Zorah and Eshtaol, their relatives asked them "What did you find out?"

⁹ They replied, "We have found some land, and it is very good. We should go and attack the people who live there. Why are you staying here and doing nothing? Do not wait any longer! We should go immediately and take possession of that land!"

¹⁰ When you go there, you will see that there is plenty of land, and it has everything that we will need. The people there are not expecting anyone to attack them. God is certainly giving that land to us."

¹¹ So six hundred men from the tribe of Dan left Zorah and Eshtaol, carrying their weapons. ¹² On their way they set up their tents near the city of Kiriath Jearim in the area where the tribe of Judah live. That is why the area west of Kiriath Jearim was named Mahaneh Dan (or the "Camp of Dan"), and that is still its name. ¹³ From there, they went to the hill country where the tribe of Ephraim lived. And they arrived at Micah's house.

¹⁴ The five men who had explored the land near Laish said to their fellow Israelites, "Do you know that in one of these houses there is a sacred vest, several household idols, a carved figure and a cast metal fig-

ure? We think that you know what you should do.” ¹⁵ So they went to the house where the man from the tribe of Levi lived, which was the house where Micah lived, and they greeted the young man from the tribe of Levi who was Micah’s priest. ¹⁶ The six hundred men of the tribe of Dan stood outside the gate of the house, carrying their weapons. ¹⁷ The five men who had explored the land went into Micah’s house, and took the carved figure, the sacred vest, the household gods, and the cast metal figure. While they did that, the six hundred men stood outside the gate, talking with the priest.

¹⁸ When the priest saw them bringing out the carved figure, the sacred vest, the household gods, and cast metal figure, and he said to them, “What are you doing?”

¹⁹ They replied, “Be quiet! Do not say anything! You come with us and be like a father to us and a priest for us. Is it better for you to stay here and be a priest for the people in the house of one man, or to be a priest for a clan, and a priest for a whole tribe of Israelites?” ²⁰ The priest liked what they were suggesting. So he took the sacred vest and the household gods, and the carved figure, and he prepared to go with the people. ²¹ All the men made their wives and little children, their animals, and everything else that they owned to travel just in front of themselves.

²² After they had gone a little distance from Micah’s house, Micah saw what was happening. He quickly summoned the men who lived near him, and they ran and caught up with the men from the tribe of Dan. ²³ They shouted at them. The men of the tribe of Dan turned around and said to Micah, “What is the problem? Why have you gathered these men to pursue us?”

²⁴ Micah shouted, “You took the silver idols that were made for me! You also

took my priest! I do not have anything left! So why do you ask me, ‘What is the problem?’”

²⁵ The men from the tribe of Dan replied, “You better not say anything about this matter. Some of our men might become angry and attack you, killing you and your family!” ²⁶ Then the men from the tribe of Dan continued walking. Micah realized that there was a very large group of them, so that it would be useless for him to try to fight them. So he turned around and went home.

²⁷ The men of the tribe of Dan were carrying the things that had been made for Micah, and they also took his priest, and they continued traveling to Laish. They attacked the people who were peacefully living there, and killed them with their swords. Then they burned everything in the city. ²⁸ There was no group of people to rescue the people of Laish. Laish was far from Sidon, so the people who lived there could not help the people of Laish. And the people of Laish had no other allies. Laish was in a valley near the town of Beth Rehob.

The people of the tribe of Dan rebuilt the city and started to live there. ²⁹ They gave a new name to the city, they called it Dan, in honor of their ancestor whose name was Dan. He was one of Israel’s sons. The town used to be called Laish. ³⁰ The people of the tribe of Dan set up in the city a carved figure that had been made for Micah. Jonathan son of Gershom, and the grandson of Moses, was appointed to be their priest. His descendants continued to be priests until the Israelites were captured and taken away. ³¹ After the people of the tribe of Dan set up the carved figure that had been made for Micah, and it stayed there as long as the house of God was in Shiloh.

Chapter 19

¹ At that time the Israelite people had no king.

There was a man from the tribe of Levi who lived in a remote place in the hill country where the tribe of Ephraim lives. He had previously taken to live with him a woman who was a slave. She was from Bethlehem, in the area where the tribe of Judah lives. ² But she started to sleep with other men also. Then she left him and returned to her father's house in Bethlehem. She stayed there for four months. ³ Then her husband took his servant and two donkeys and went to Bethlehem. He went to ask her to come back to live with him again. When he arrived at her father's house, she invited him to come in. Her father was happy to see him. ⁴ The woman's father asked him to stay. So he stayed there for three days. During that time he ate and drank and slept there.

⁵ On the fourth day, they all got up early in the morning. The man from the tribe of Levi was preparing to leave, but the woman's father said to him, "Eat something before you go." ⁶ So the two men sat down to eat and drink together. Then the woman's father said to him, "Please stay another night. Relax and have a good time." ⁷ The man from the tribe of Levi wanted to leave, but the woman's father requested him to stay one more night. So he stayed again that night. ⁸ On the fifth day, the man got up early and prepared to leave. But the woman's father said to him again, "Have something to eat. Wait until this afternoon, and then leave." So the two men ate together.

⁹ In the afternoon, when the man from the tribe of Levi and his slave wife and his servant got up to leave, the woman's father said, "It will soon be dark. The day is almost finished. Stay here tonight and

have a good time. Tomorrow morning you can get up early and leave for your home." ¹⁰ But the man from the tribe of Levi did not want to stay for another night. He put saddles on his two donkeys, and started to go with his slave wife and his servant toward the city of Jebus, which is now named Jerusalem.

¹¹ When it was late in the afternoon, they came near to Jebus. The servant said to his master, "We should stop in this city where the Jebus people group live, and stay here tonight."

¹² But his master said, "No, it would not be good for us to stay here where foreign people live. There are no Israelite people here. We will go on to the city of Gibeah."

¹³ He said to his servant, "Let us go. It is not far to Gibeah. We can go there, or we can go a bit further to Ramah. We can stay in one of those two cities tonight." ¹⁴ So they continued walking. When they came near to Gibeah, where people from the tribe of Benjamin live, the sun was setting. ¹⁵ They stopped to stay there that night. They went to the public square of that city and sat down. But no one who passed by invited them to stay in their house for that night.

¹⁶ But then an old man came by. He had been working in the fields. He was from the hill country of the tribe of Ephraim, but at that time he was living in Gibeah.

¹⁷ He realized that the man from the tribe of Levi was only traveling and that he did not have a place to stay in that city. So he asked the man, "Where have you come from? And where are you going?"

¹⁸ He replied, "We are traveling from Bethlehem to my home in the hill country where people of the tribe of Ephraim live. I went from there to Bethlehem, but now we are going to Shiloh where Yahweh's house is. No one here has invited us to stay in their house tonight. ¹⁹ We

have straw and food for our donkeys, and bread and wine for me and the young woman and my servant. We do not need anything else.”

²⁰ The old man said, “May everything go well for you. I can provide whatever you need. Do not stay here in the square tonight.” ²¹ Then the old man took them to his house. He gave food to the donkeys. He gave water to the man and the woman and the servant to wash their feet. And the old man gave them something to eat and drink.

²² While they were having a good time together, some wicked men from that city surrounded the house and started to bang on the door. They shouted to the old man, “Bring out to us the man who has come to your house. We want to have sex with him.”

²³ The old man went outside and said to them, “My brothers, I will not do that. That would be a very evil thing. This man is a guest in my house. You should not do such a terrible thing!” ²⁴ Look, my virgin daughter and his concubine are here. I will bring them out to you now. You may do to them whatever you wish, but do not do such a terrible thing to this man!”

²⁵ But the men did not pay attention to what he said. So the man took his concubine and sent her to them, outside the house. They forced her to have sex with them and abused her all night. Then at dawn, they let her go. ²⁶ She returned to the old man’s house, and she fell down at the doorway and lay there until it was light.

²⁷ The next morning, her master got up and went outside of the house to continue his journey. He saw his slave wife lying there at the doorway of the house, her hands still touching the doorsill. ²⁸ He said to her, “Get up! Let us go!” But she did

not answer. He put her body on the donkey, and he and his servant traveled to his home.

²⁹ When he arrived at his home, he took a knife and he cut the body of the slave woman into twelve pieces. Then he sent one piece to each area of Israel, along with a message telling what had happened. ³⁰ Everyone who saw a piece of the body and the message said, “Nothing like this has ever happened before. Not since our ancestors left Egypt have we heard of such a terrible thing. We need to think carefully about it. Someone should decide what we should do.”

Chapter 20

¹ All the soldiers of Israel came out united as one man, from the city of Dan in the north to Beersheba in the south, and from the region of Gilead to the east of the Jordan River, all of them heard what had happened. So they gathered together before Yahweh at Mizpah. ² The leaders of eleven of the tribes of Israel stood in front of the people who gathered there. There were 400,000 men on foot, fighting men who were there. ³ The people of the tribe of Benjamin heard that the other Israelites had gone up to Mizpah, but none of the men from the Benjamin tribe had gone to the meeting there.

The people of Israel asked about the evil thing that had happened. ⁴ So the Levite who was the husband of the woman who had been killed replied, “My slave wife and I came to Gibeah, wanting to stay there that night. ⁵ That evening, the men of Gibeah came to attack me. They surrounded the house where I was staying and wanted to have sex with me and then kill me. They abused my slave wife and raped her all night, and she died. ⁶ I

took her body home and cut it into pieces. Then I sent one piece to each area of Israel, because I wanted you all to know about this wicked and disgraceful thing that has been done here in Israel. ⁷ So now, all you Israelite people, speak, and tell me what you think should be done!”

⁸ All the people stood up, and unitedly said, “None of us will go home! Not one of us will return to his house! ⁹ This is what we must do to the people of Gibeah. First, we will cast lots to determine which group should attack them. ¹⁰ We will choose one tenth of our number to get supplies we will need to punish Gibeah for the terrible thing that they have done here in Israel.” ¹¹ And all the Israelite people agreed that the people of Gibeah should be punished.

¹² Then the Israelite men sent messengers throughout the tribe of Benjamin. They demanded, “Do you realize that some of your men have done a very evil thing? ¹³ Bring those wicked men to us, in order that we can execute them. By doing that, we will get rid of this evil thing that has happened in Israel.”

But the people of the tribe of Benjamin paid no attention to their fellow Israelites.

¹⁴ The men of the tribe of Benjamin left their cities and gathered at Gibeah to fight the other Israelites. ¹⁵ In that one day the men of the tribe of Benjamin recruited twenty-six thousand fighting men. They also chose seven hundred men from Gibeah. ¹⁶ From all those soldiers there were seven hundred men who were left-handed, and each of them could sling a stone without missing a target that was very small and as narrow as a hair.

¹⁷ The soldiers of Israel, not including the soldiers from Benjamin, numbered 400,000 men. All of these were trained to fight with the sword, men experienced at fighting in war.

¹⁸ Those other Israelites went up to Bethel and asked advice from God, “Which tribe should be the first to attack the men from the tribe of Benjamin?”

Yahweh answered, “The men from the tribe of Judah should go first.”

¹⁹ The next morning, the Israelite men went and set up their tents near Gibeah.

²⁰ Then they went to fight against the men from the tribe of Benjamin, and stood in their positions for fighting a battle, facing Gibeah. ²¹ The men of the tribe of Benjamin came out of Gibeah and fought against them, and they killed twenty-two thousand soldiers from Israel on that day.

²² But the soldiers of Israel encouraged themselves. Then they got ready to fight the next day in the same battle lines as on the first day. ²³ Then they came together and begged Yahweh for help; they prayed until evening. They asked advice from Yahweh about what they should do: “Should we go again to fight against our brothers, the people of Benjamin?” Yahweh answered, “Attack them!” ²⁴ The next day they again stood in their positions for fighting, just as they had done on the previous day. ²⁵ The men of the tribe of Benjamin came out of Gibeah and attacked the Israelites, and killed eighteen thousand more of their men.

²⁶ In the afternoon, all the people of Israel who had not been killed again went to Bethel. There they sat down and cried to Yahweh, and they fasted until it was evening. They brought some offerings which they burned completely on the altar, and they also brought some offerings to restore fellowship with Yahweh. ²⁷ The people of Israel asked Yahweh,—for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days, ²⁸ and Phinehas son of Eleazar, was the grandson of Aaron; he was serving before the ark in those days—“Should we go out to battle once more against the

people of Benjamin, who are out brothers, or should we stop?" Yahweh said, "Attack! For tomorrow I will help you defeat them." ²⁹ Israelite men set up an ambush in the fields around Gibeah. ³⁰ The other Israelite men went and stood in their positions for fighting a battle just as they had done on the previous days. ³¹ When the men of the tribe of Benjamin came out of the city to fight against them, the Israelite men retreated away from the city, and the men of the tribe of Benjamin pursued them. The men of the tribe of Benjamin killed many Israelites, like they had done before. They killed about thirty Israelites, who died in the fields and on the roads—one of the roads went to Bethel and another road went to Gibeah.

³² The men of the tribe of Benjamin said, "We are defeating them like we did before!" But then Israelite men did what they had planned. The main group of Israelite men retreated a short distance from the city, to trick the men of Gibeah and cause them to pursue the Israelite men along the roads outside the city.

³³ The main group of Israelite men left their positions and retreated, and then they stood in their battle positions again at a place named Baal Tamar. Then the soldiers of Israel who had been hiding in secret places ran out from their places in Maareh Gibeah. ³⁴ Then the other ten thousand Israelites came out from the places where they had been hiding, west of Gibeah, and attacked the city. They were men who had come from all parts of Israel. There was a very big battle. But the men of the tribe of Benjamin did not know that they were about to have a disastrous defeat. ³⁵ Yahweh enabled the Israelite men to defeat the men of the tribe of Benjamin. They killed 25,100 of them, all of them were fighting men. ³⁶ So the soldiers of Benjamin saw they were defeated.

The men of Israel had given ground to Benjamin, because they were counting on the men they had placed in hidden positions outside Gibeah to go out and shift the battle in their favor. ³⁷ Then the men who were hiding got up and hurried and they rushed into Gibeah, and with their swords they killed everyone who lived in the city. ³⁸ Now the arranged signal between the soldiers of Israel and the men hiding in secret would be that a great cloud of smoke would rise up out of the city.

³⁹ By that time, Israelite men had turned away from attacking, so the men of the tribe of Benjamin said, "We are winning the battle, as we did before!" ⁴⁰ But then smoke from the burning buildings began to rise up from the city. The men of the tribe of Benjamin turned around and saw that the whole city was burning. ⁴¹ Then the main group of Israelite men also saw the smoke, and they knew that the smoke signaled that they should turn around and begin to attack. The men of the tribe of Benjamin were very afraid, because they realized that they were about to have a disastrous defeat. ⁴² So the men of the tribe of Benjamin tried to run away toward the wilderness to escape from the Israelite men, but they were not able to escape, because the Israelite men who had burned the two cities came out of those cities and killed many of them. ⁴³ They surrounded some of the men of the tribe of Benjamin, and pursued the others to the area east of Gibeah. ⁴⁴ They killed eighteen thousand strong soldiers of the tribe of Benjamin. ⁴⁵ Then the rest of the men of the tribe of Benjamin realized that they had been defeated. They ran toward the rock of Rimmon, but the Israelite men killed five thousand more men of the tribe of Benjamin who fell behind along the roads. They pursued the rest of them to Gidom, and they killed two thousand more.

⁴⁶ Altogether, there were twenty-five thousand—men of the tribe of Benjamin who were killed, all of them were experienced fighting men. ⁴⁷ But six hundred men of the tribe of Benjamin ran to the rock of Rimmon in the wilderness. They stayed there for four months. ⁴⁸ Then the Israelite men went back to the land belonging to the tribe of Benjamin, and killed the people in every city. They also killed all the animals, and destroyed everything else that they found there. And they burned all the cities that they came to.

Chapter 21

¹ When the Israelite men had gathered at Mizpah before the battle started, they solemnly declared, “None of us will ever allow one of our daughters to marry any man from the tribe of Benjamin!” ² But now the Israelites went to Bethel and cried loudly to Yahweh all day until the sun went down. ³ They kept saying, “Yahweh, God of us Israelite people, one of the tribes of us Israelites does not exist anymore! Why has this happened to us?”

⁴ Early the next morning the people built an altar. Then they completely burned some sacrifices on the altar, and also offered other sacrifices to restore fellowship with God.

⁵ Then, because they had solemnly declared that anyone who did not meet with them at Mizpah to help fight the men of the tribe of Benjamin would be killed, they asked among themselves, “Were there any of the tribes of Israel who did not come to Mizpah to meet with us in the presence of Yahweh?”

⁶ The Israelites felt sorry for their fellow Israelites from the tribe of Benjamin. They said, “Today one of our Israelite tribes has

been cut off from Israel. ⁷ What can we do to make certain that the men of the tribe of Benjamin who were not killed will have wives?” Yahweh heard us solemnly declare that we would not allow any of our daughters to marry any man from the tribe of Benjamin. ⁸ Then one of them asked, “Which of the tribes of Israel did not send any men here to Mizpah?” ⁹ They realized that when the soldiers were counted, there was no one who had come from the city of Jabesh Gilead.

¹⁰ So all the Israelites decided to send twelve thousand very good soldiers to Jabesh Gilead to kill the people there, even the women and the children. ¹¹ They told this to those men: “This is what you must do: You must kill every man in Jabesh Gilead. You must also kill every married woman. But do not kill the unmarried women.” ¹² So those soldiers went to Jabesh Gilead and killed all the men, married women, and the children. But they found four hundred virgin young women there. So they brought them to their camp at Shiloh in Canaan, across the river from the region of Gilead that belonged to the tribe of Benjamin.

¹³ Then all the Israelites who had gathered sent a message to the six hundred men who were at the rock of Rimmon. They said that they would like to make peace with them. ¹⁴ So the men came back from the rock of Rimmon. The Israelites gave to them the young women from Jabesh Gilead. But there were only four hundred women. There were not enough women for those six hundred men.

¹⁵ The Israelites still felt sorry for the men of the tribe of Benjamin, because Yahweh had set the other tribes against them. ¹⁶ The Israelite leaders said, “We have killed all the married women of the tribe of Benjamin. Where can we get women to be wives of the men who are still alive? ¹⁷

These men must have wives to give birth to children, in order that their families of Benjamin will continue. If that does not happen, all the people of one of the tribes of Israel will all die out, and the tribe will be destroyed. ¹⁸ But we cannot allow our daughters to marry these men, because we solemnly declared that Yahweh will curse anyone who gives one of his daughters to become a wife of any man of the tribe of Benjamin.” ¹⁹ Then they had an idea. They said, “Every year there is a festival to honor Yahweh at Shiloh, which is north of Bethel and east of the road that extends from Bethel to Shechem, and it is south of the city of Lebonah.”

²⁰ So the Israelite leaders told the men of the tribe of Benjamin, “When it is the time for that festival, go to Shiloh and hide in the vineyards. ²¹ Keep watching for the young women to come out of the city to dance. When they come out, run out of the vineyards. Each of you can seize one of the young women of Shiloh. Then you can all return to your homes with those women. ²² If their fathers or brothers come to us and complain about what you have done, we will say to them, ‘Act kindly toward the men of the tribe of Benjamin. When we fought them, we did not leave any women alive to become their wives, and you did not give those young women to the men from the tribe of Benjamin. They stole them. So you will not be guilty, even though you said that you would not give any of your daughters to marry one of them.’”

²³ So that is what the men of the tribe of Benjamin did. They went to Shiloh at the time of the festival. And when the young women were dancing, each man caught one of them and took her away and married her. Then they took their wives back to the land that God had given to them. They rebuilt their cities that had

been burned down, and they lived there.

²⁴ The other Israelites went to their home in the areas where their tribes and clans lived, the areas that God had allotted to them.

²⁵ At that time, the Israelite people did not have a king. Everyone did what was right according to his own opinion.

RUTH

Chapter 1

¹ During the time that judges ruled Israel, there was a famine in that country. There was a man who lived in Israel named Elimelek who left Israel and went to live for a while in the country of Moab. He went with his wife, Naomi, and his two sons, Mahlon and Kilion. ² Elimelek was from the clan of Ephrath that was living in the town of Bethlehem, in the region of Judah. They came to Moab and stayed there.

³ Then Elimelek died, and Naomi had only her two sons with her. ⁴ They married women from Moab. One of them was named Orpah and the other one was named Ruth. But after they had lived in that area for about ten years, ⁵ Mahlon and Kilion also died. So then Naomi was left alone without her sons or husband.

⁶ Then Naomi heard while still in Moab that Yahweh had helped his people and that now there was plenty of food in Israel. So she got ready to return to Bethlehem with her two daughters-in-law. ⁷ They left the place where they had been living and started to travel back to the land of Judah. ⁸ As they were walking, Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Each of you should turn around and go back to your mother's home. May Yahweh be as kind to you as you have been to me and our loved ones who have died. ⁹ I hope that he will allow each of you to have another husband in whose home you will be secure." Then she kissed each of them, and they cried aloud. ¹⁰ They each said, "No, we want to return with you to your relatives."

¹¹ But Naomi said, "No, my daughters, return home. It will not do any good for you

to come with me! It is not possible for me to have more sons who could become your husbands. ¹² You should go back. It is too late for me to have another husband. Even if I got married today and had more sons, ¹³ would you remain unmarried until they grew up? No, my daughters! It makes me even more sad than you are, because Yahweh has sent me so much trouble."

¹⁴ Then Ruth and Orpah started crying again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye and left, but Ruth refused to leave Naomi. ¹⁵ Naomi said to her, "Look! Your sister-in-law is going back to her relatives and to her gods! Go back with her!"

¹⁶ But Ruth replied, "No! Please do not ask me to go back and leave you! Where you go, I will go. Where you stay, I will stay. Your relatives will be my relatives, and I will worship the God you worship. ¹⁷ Where you die, I will die. Where they bury you, they will bury me. May Yahweh punish me severely if I ever leave you. We will never be separated until one of us dies." ¹⁸ When Naomi realized that Ruth was very determined to go with her, she stopped urging her to return home.

¹⁹ So the two women continued walking until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived there, everyone in the town was very happy to see them. The women of the town exclaimed, "It is hard to believe that this is Naomi!" ²⁰ Naomi said to them, "You should not call me Naomi any more, because it means 'pleasant.' Instead, call me Mara, because it means 'bitter.' God Almighty has made my life very bitter. ²¹ When I left here my life was full because I had a family. But Yahweh has brought me back here empty, without my family. Do not call me Naomi. Yahweh has punished me. Almighty God has caused a great tragedy to happen to me."

²² So that is how Naomi returned home

along with her daughter-in-law Ruth, the woman from Moab. And it happened that when they arrived in Bethlehem, the barley harvest was just beginning.

Chapter 2

¹ There was a man named Boaz who lived in Bethlehem. He was a relative of Naomi's dead husband, Elimelek. He was also rich and influential.

² One day Ruth said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the stalks of grain that the harvesters leave behind. I will go behind any harvester who gives me permission." Naomi replied, "Go ahead, my daughter." ³ So Ruth went out to the fields and began to pick up the grain left behind by the men who were harvesting. And it turned out that she was working in a field that belonged to Boaz, the relative of her father-in-law, Elimelek!

⁴ Just then, Boaz returned from town. He greeted the harvesters, saying, "May Yahweh be with you!" They replied, "May Yahweh bless you!"

⁵ Then Boaz saw Ruth, and asked the foreman, "Who is that young woman related to?" ⁶ The foreman replied, "She is the woman from Moab who returned from there with her mother-in-law Naomi." ⁷ She said to me, 'Please let me pick up some grain. I will only walk behind the men who are harvesting the grain and gather what they leave.' I gave her permission, and she has been working in the field from this morning until now. She has only taken a short rest, when she rested in the shelter."

⁸ Then Boaz went over to Ruth and said to her, "Young lady, listen to me. You do not need to go to any other field to gather grain. You should stay here with my ser-

vant girls. ⁹ Watch where the men are harvesting, and follow along behind my servant girls. I have told the men who are harvesting not to bother you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get some water to drink from the jars that the men have filled."

¹⁰ When he said that, she knelt before him, with her face touching the ground. She exclaimed, "Why are you being so kind to me? I did not think you would pay any attention to me since I am a foreigner!" ¹¹ Boaz replied, "People have told me about everything you have done for your mother-in-law since your husband died. They told me that you left your parents and your homeland, and you came here to live among people whom you did not know. ¹² I pray that Yahweh will repay you for what you have done. May you receive full payment for your actions from the God of Israel, because he is the one you have come to and he will protect you!"

¹³ She replied, "Sir, I hope I will continue to please you. You have comforted me with your kindness, even though I am not even one of your servant girls."

¹⁴ When it was time to eat, Boaz said to her, "Come over here and get some food. Take this bread and dip it in the vinegar and eat it." Then when she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain. She ate all that she wanted and had some left over. ¹⁵ As she stood up to go back to work, Boaz ordered his workers, "Even if she gathers some grain near the bundles of grain that have been cut, do not try to stop her. ¹⁶ Instead, make sure that you pull out some stalks of grain from the bundles and leave them on the ground for her to pick up, and do not scold her."

¹⁷ So Ruth gathered grain in the field until evening. Then she threshed the barley that she had gathered, to separate the kernels from the stalks, and the barley filled

a large basket. ¹⁸ She carried it back to town and showed her mother-in-law how much she had gathered. She also gave her mother-in-law the grain that was left over from her lunch. ¹⁹ Her mother-in-law asked her, "Where did you gather all this grain today? In whose field exactly did you work? May God do good to the man who was so kind to you." Then Ruth told her about where she had been working. She said, "The name of that field's owner is Boaz." ²⁰ Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May Yahweh bless him! He has not stopped acting kindly toward us, who are still living, and to our husbands who have died." Then she added, "That man is a close relative of Elimelek; in fact, he is one of those responsible for taking care of us."

²¹ Then Ruth said, "He also said to me, 'Stay with my workers until they have completed bringing in all my grain from the field.'"

²² Naomi replied, "My daughter, it will be good for you to go to his field with his servant girls, because if you go to someone else's field, someone might harm you."

²³ So Ruth worked alongside of Boaz's servant girls. She gathered stalks of grain until the workers had finished harvesting both the barley and the wheat. During that time she continued to live with Naomi.

Chapter 3

¹ One day, Naomi said to Ruth, "My daughter, I think that I should try to arrange for you to have a home and a husband who will provide for you. ² Boaz is a close relative of ours, and he has been very kind by letting you gather grain with his servant girls. Listen carefully. Tonight he will be at the place where they thresh the barley.

He will be separating the grain from the chaff. ³ Bathe yourself and put on some perfume. Put on your best clothes. Then go down to the place where they thresh the grain. But do not let him know that you are there until he is finished eating and drinking. ⁴ When he has finished eating, notice where he lies down to sleep. Then when he is asleep, go over to him, uncover his feet, and lie close to his feet. When he wakes up, he will tell you what to do."

⁵ Ruth replied, "I will do everything that you have told me to do." ⁶ So she went down to the place where they thresh the grain. There she did everything that her mother-in-law had told her to do.

⁷ When Boaz finished eating and drinking, he was feeling good. Then he went over to the far end of the pile of grain. He lay down there and went to sleep. Then Ruth approached him quietly. She took the covering off his feet and lay down there. ⁸ In the middle of the night, he woke up suddenly. He sat up and realized that a woman was lying at his feet. ⁹ He asked her, "Who are you?" She replied, "I am your servant, Ruth. Since you are the one responsible for my dead husband's family, spread the corner of your cloak over me."

¹⁰ Boaz replied, "May Yahweh bless you, my dear! You acted kindly toward your mother-in-law previously, and now you are acting even more kindly toward me by not chasing after a young man to marry, whether rich or poor. ¹¹ Now, my dear, I will do everything that you ask. Do not be afraid, because all the people in this town know that you are an honorable woman. ¹² But there is one problem. Although it is true that I am a close relative of yours, there is another man who is an even closer relative than I am, one who stands closer to your mother-in-law than I do, and therefore he is really the one who

is responsible for you. ¹³ You stay here for the rest of the night. Tomorrow morning I will tell this man about you. If he says that he will take responsibility for you, fine, we will let him marry you. But if he is not willing to do that, I solemnly promise that as surely as Yahweh lives, I will marry you and take care of you. So stay here until it is morning.”

¹⁴ So she lay at his feet until morning. But she got up and left before it was light enough that people would be able to recognize her, because Boaz said, “It would be best if no one knows that a woman was here.” ¹⁵ He also said to her, “Bring to me your cloak and spread it out.” When she did that, he poured into it a generous amount of barley and put it on her back. Then he went into town.

¹⁶ When Ruth arrived home, her mother-in-law asked her, “Is that you, my daughter?” Then Ruth told her everything that Boaz had done for her and what he had said. ¹⁷ She also said to Naomi, “He gave me all this barley, saying, ‘I do not want you to return to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’” ¹⁸ Then Naomi said, “My daughter, just wait here until we see what happens. I am sure that Boaz will surely take care of this matter today.”

Chapter 4

¹ Meanwhile, Boaz went up to the meeting place at the gate leading into the town and sat down there. Before long, the close relative that Boaz had mentioned came along. Boaz said to him, “My cousin, come over here and sit down.” So the man went and sat down. ² Boaz then gathered ten of the elders of the town and asked them to join them. So they sat down. ³ Then Boaz said to his relative, “As you know, Naomi has returned from Moab. Now she

wants to sell her right to the piece of land that belonged to our relative Elimelek. ⁴ I thought that I should tell you about that, and suggest that you buy it, while these elders who are sitting here are listening. If you are willing to buy the property, do that. But if you do not want to buy it, tell me, so that I will know. I am suggesting this to you because you are the one who has the first right to buy it, and if you do not buy it, I am next in line.” The man replied, “I will buy it!” ⁵ Then Boaz told him, “When you buy the land from Naomi, you will also need to marry Ruth, our relative’s widow from Moab, in order that she may have a son to inherit the property and carry on the name of her dead husband.” ⁶ Then the nearer relative said, “If that is so, I do not want to buy the property, because then my own children would not inherit the property. I give you the right to buy the property instead of me!”

⁷ At that time, it was the custom in Israel that when two people agreed to redeem or exchange anything between them, one man would take off one of his sandals and give it to the other man. That was the way they finalized transactions in Israel. ⁸ So the relative said to Boaz, “You buy the field yourself!” And he took off one of his sandals and gave it to Boaz.

⁹ Then Boaz said to the elders and to all the other people who were there, “Today you have all seen that I have bought from Naomi all the property that belonged to Elimelek, Mahlon, and Kilion. ¹⁰ I am also taking Ruth, the woman from Moab, Mahlon’s widow, to be my wife. This is in order that she may give birth to a son who will inherit the property. In this way he will carry on the family name among his relatives and here in his hometown. Today you all are witnesses of what I have done.”

¹¹ All the elders and the others who were

sitting at the town gate agreed and said, "Yes, we are witnesses." One of them added, "May Yahweh allow this woman, who will be coming into your home, to be like Rachel and Leah, the two who bore our ancestors and started our people, Israel. We hope that you will become rich in the clan of Ephrathah, and become famous here in Bethlehem. ¹² May your family be like the family of your ancestor Perez son of Judah, and Tamar, because of the many descendants that Yahweh will give to you and this young woman."

¹³ So Boaz took Ruth to be his wife and slept with her. Yahweh enabled her to become pregnant, and she gave birth to a son. ¹⁴ The women of Bethlehem said to Naomi, "Praise Yahweh! Now he has given you a grandson who will be the one who will have the responsibility to take care of you. May he become famous throughout Israel. ¹⁵ He will make you feel young again, and he will take care of you when you become old, because your daughter-in-law, who loves you, has given birth to him. She has been better to you than if you had seven sons."

¹⁶ Then Naomi took the baby and put him on her lap, and became a second mother for him. ¹⁷ The women who were living nearby said, "It is as though Naomi now has a son!" And they named him Obed. Later, Obed became the father of Jesse, who became the father of David.

¹⁸⁻²² Here is a list of the descendants of Perez: Perez's son was Hezron. Hezron's son was Ram. Ram's son was Amminadab. Amminadab's son was Nahshon. Nahshon's son was Salmon. Salmon's son was Boaz. Boaz's son was Obed. Obed's son was Jesse. Jesse's son was David.

1 SAMUEL

Chapter 1

¹ There was a man named Elkanah, a descendant of Zuph, who lived in the city of Ramah in the hill country, where the people of the tribe of Ephraim lived. His father was Jeroham, his grandfather was Elihu, and his great-grandfather was Tohu. He belonged to the clan of Zuph. ² He had two wives: Hannah and Peninnah. Now Peninnah had several children, but Hannah had no children.

³ Once every year Elkanah went up with his family from Ramah to the city of Shiloh. He would go there to worship Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, and offer sacrifices to him. The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, helped their father to do the work as priests of Yahweh there. ⁴ Each time Elkanah offered sacrifices there, he would give some of the meat to Peninnah and some to each of her sons and daughters. ⁵ But he gave a larger amount of meat to Hannah because he loved her very much, even though Yahweh had not permitted her to give birth to any children. ⁶ But his other wife, Peninnah, would mock Hannah to make her feel miserable, reminding her Yahweh had not allowed her to bear children. ⁷ This happened every year. When they went up to the temple of Yahweh at Shiloh, Peninnah always ridiculed Hannah so much that Hannah cried and would not eat. ⁸ Then Elkanah would say to her, "Hannah, why are you crying? Why are you eating nothing? You are so sad! Surely it is better for you to have me as your husband than to have even ten sons!"

⁹ One year, after they had finished eating and drinking at Shiloh, Hannah stood up to pray. Eli the priest was nearby, sitting

on a chair by the doorway of the sacred tent of Yahweh. ¹⁰ Hannah was very distressed, and she cried very sorrowfully as she prayed to Yahweh. ¹¹ She made a solemn promise, saying, "O Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, if you will look at me and see how I miserable I am, and think kindly about me and allow me to give birth to a son, then I will dedicate him to you for the rest of his life. And to show that he is dedicated to you, no one will ever be allowed to cut his hair."

¹² As she was praying like that to Yahweh, Eli the priest saw Hannah's lips moving as she was praying. ¹³ But Hannah was only praying silently; she was not making any sound. So Eli thought that she was drunk. ¹⁴ He said to her, "How long will you continue to get drunk? Get rid of your wine!"

¹⁵ Hannah replied, "Sir, I am not drunk! I have not been drinking wine or any other alcoholic drink. I feel very miserable and I have been telling Yahweh about how I feel. ¹⁶ Do not think that I am a worthless woman. I have been praying like this because I am so ashamed and upset."

¹⁷ Eli replied, "I wish that things may go well for you. I desire that God, the one we Israelite people worship, may give you what you asked of him."

¹⁸ She replied, "I want you to think highly about me." Then she returned to her family and after she ate something, she was sad no more.

¹⁹ Early the next morning, Elkanah and his family got up and worshiped Yahweh again, and then they returned to their home at Ramah. Then Elkanah slept with Hannah, and Yahweh answered her prayer. ²⁰ She became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, which sounds like the words in the Hebrew language that mean "heard by God," because she said, "Yahweh heard

me when I requested a son from him.”

²¹ The following year, Elkanah went up to Shiloh with his family to make the kind of sacrifice he made each year, and also to give a special offering to God that he had promised to give him previously. ²² But Hannah did not go with them. She said to her husband, “After I have weaned the baby, I will take him to Shiloh and present him to Yahweh, and he will stay there for the rest of his life.”

²³ Elkanah said, “Do what you think is best. Stay here until you have weaned him. What I desire is that Yahweh may enable you to do what you have promised.” So Hannah stayed at home and nursed her son until she weaned him.

²⁴ After she weaned him, even though Samuel was very young, she took him to the house of Yahweh that was at Shiloh. She took along with her and her son a three year old bull, about twenty liters of flour, and a container of wine. ²⁵ After Hannah and Elkanah had slaughtered the bull and offered it to Yahweh on the altar, they brought the boy to Eli. ²⁶ Then Hannah said to him, “Sir, do you remember me? I am the woman who prayed as I stood here beside you several years ago. ²⁷ I prayed that Yahweh would enable me to give birth to a child, and this is that child! ²⁸ So now I am presenting him to Yahweh. He will belong to Yahweh as long as he lives.” Then Elkanah and his family worshiped Yahweh there.

Chapter 2

¹ Then Hannah prayed, saying,

”In my inner being I rejoice in what you, Yahweh, have done.

I am strong because I belong to you.

I laugh at my enemies

because you, Yahweh has rescued me from being mocked by them.

² There is no one who is holy like you, Yahweh.

There is no other god like you.

There is no one like you, our God, who can protect us as though you were putting us on top of a huge rock where we can be safe from danger.

³ You people who oppose God, stop boasting!

Yahweh is a God who knows everything,

and he will evaluate everyone’s actions.

So do not speak so arrogantly!

⁴ Yahweh, you break the bows of mighty soldiers,

but you give strength to those who stumble because they are weak.

⁵ Many people who previously had plenty to eat, now have to work for other people to earn money to buy food,

but many who were always hungry are not hungry anymore.

The woman who did not have any children before, now has given birth to many children,

and the woman who had many children before, now is very lonely because they have all died.

⁶ Yahweh, you cause some people to die,

and you restore some people who were almost dead.

For some people, it seems that they will soon go to where dead people go, but you cause them to become healthy again.

⁷ Yahweh, you cause some people to be poor, and you cause some people to be rich,

you humble some people, and you honor some people.

⁸ Sometimes you lift poor people up so that they are no longer sitting in the dust,

and you raise up needy people so that they are no longer sitting on heaps of ashes;

you cause them to sit next to princes;

you cause them to sit on seats where people who are highly honored sit.

Yahweh, you are the one who laid the foundations of the earth,

and you have set the whole world on those foundations.

⁹ You will protect your loyal people,

but you will cause the wicked to die and to descend to the dark place where the dead go.

We do not defeat our enemies by our own strength.

¹⁰ Yahweh, you will break into pieces those who oppose you.

You will cause thunder in the sky to show that you oppose them.

Yahweh, you will judge people everywhere, even those who live in the most remote places on the earth.

You will give strength to the king whom you will appoint, and give him great power over his enemies."

¹¹ Then Elkanah and his family returned to Ramah, but Samuel, the little boy, stayed to help Eli the priest serve Yahweh.

¹² Eli's two sons, who were also priests, were very wicked. They were not faithful to Yahweh. ¹³ The custom was that while the people were boiling the meat from their sacrifices in the huge pot at

the temple, a priest would send his servant, who would come with a large three-pronged fork in his hand. ¹⁴ He would stick the fork into the meat in the pot, and whatever meat fastened onto the fork, he would take and give it to the priest who sent him. ¹⁵ However, before the fat on the meat was cut off and burned as a sacrifice to Yahweh, the servant of Eli's sons would come to the man who was making the sacrifice and say to him, "Give me some meat now to take to the priest for him to roast! He wants raw meat; he does not want boiled meat."

¹⁶ If the man said to the servant, "Let the priests cut off and burn the fat first; then you can take what you want," the servant would reply, "No, give it to me now; if you do not give it to me, I will take it forcefully!"

¹⁷ Yahweh considered that the young sons of Eli were committing a very great sin, because they were treating very disrespectfully the offerings that were being given to Yahweh.

¹⁸ As for Samuel, who was still a very young boy, he continued to do work for Yahweh, wearing a little sacred apron made out of linen, like the high priest wore. ¹⁹ Each year his mother made a new little robe for him and took it to him when she went up to Shiloh with her husband to offer a sacrifice. ²⁰ Then Eli would ask God to bless Elkanah and his wife, and he would say to Elkanah, "I hope that Yahweh will enable your wife to give birth to other children, to take the place of the one whom she dedicated to Yahweh." Then Elkanah and his family would return home. ²¹ Yahweh was indeed very kind to Hannah, for he enabled her to give birth to three other sons and two daughters. Their son Samuel grew up while he was doing work for Yahweh in his temple.

²² Now Eli became very old. He often

heard about all the evil things that his sons were doing to the Israelite people. He heard that they sometimes slept with the women who worked at the entrance to the tent where God spoke to his people. ²³ He said to them, "It is terrible that you do such things! Many people keep telling me about the evil things that you do. ²⁴ My sons, stop it! The reports about you that the people who belong to Yahweh tell others are terrible! ²⁵ If one person sins against another person, God can intercede between them. But if someone sins against Yahweh, who will speak up for him?" But Eli's sons would not listen to what their father said. This was because Yahweh had decided that someone needed to kill them.

²⁶ The boy Samuel continued to grow up, and the things that he did pleased Yahweh and the people. ²⁷ One day, a prophet came to Eli and told him, "This is what Yahweh has told me: 'When your ancestors were slaves of the king of Egypt, I appeared to Aaron. ²⁸ From all the tribes of the Israelite people, I chose him and his male descendants to be priests for me. I appointed them to go up to my altar, to burn incense, to wear a sacred apron as they worked for me. And I declared that they could take and eat some of the meat that the Israelite people burned on the altar. ²⁹ So why do you show disrespect for the sacrifices and offerings that I commanded the people to bring to me? You are honoring your sons more than you are honoring me, by allowing them to get fat from eating the best parts of all the sacrifices that the Israelite people bring to me!'

³⁰ Therefore, this is what Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, declares: 'I definitely promised that Aaron and his descendants would continue to serve me forever. But now I declare this: It will not continue like that! I will honor those who

honor me, but I will despise those who despise me. ³¹ Listen carefully! There will soon be a time when I will cause all the strong young men in your family to die. The result will be that no men in your family will live long enough to become old men. ³² You will be distressed and envious as you see the blessings that I will give to the other people in Israel. And I repeat that no men in your family will ever live long enough to become old men. ³³ There is one of your descendants whom I will spare; I will not prevent him from serving me as a priest. But he will become blind from weeping; he will always be sad and grieving. But all your other descendants will die violently. ³⁴ And your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, will both die on the same day. And that will prove to you that all that I have said will come true.

³⁵ I have chosen another man to be my priest. He is one who will serve me faithfully: He will do everything I want. I will make sure that his descendants will be priests and will always serve me by helping the king whom I will choose. ³⁶ All of your descendants who remain alive will have to go to that priest and ask him to give them money and food, and they will each have to say, "Please allow me to help the other priests, in order that I may earn some money to buy some food.'"

Chapter 3

¹ While he was still a boy, Samuel was serving Yahweh while Eli supervised him. At that time there were very few messages that anyone received from Yahweh, and very few people saw visions that Yahweh gave them.

² By that time Eli's eyes were very weak; he was almost blind. One night he was sleeping in his room, ³ and Samuel was

sleeping in the temple of Yahweh, where the sacred chest was kept. There was a lamp there that represented the presence of God, and it was still burning. ⁴ Just then Yahweh called, "Samuel! Samuel!" Samuel replied, "I am here!"

⁵ Then he got up and ran to Eli. He said to him, "I am here, because you called me!" But Eli replied, "No, I did not call you. Go back to your bed." So Samuel went and lay down again.

⁶ Then Yahweh called again, "Samuel!" So Samuel got up again and went to Eli and said, "I am here, because you called me!" But Eli said, "No, my son, I did not call you. Go back and lie down."

⁷ At that time Samuel had not yet known what it was like for Yahweh to speak to him, because Yahweh had not previously revealed anything to him.

⁸ After Samuel lay down again, Yahweh called him a third time. So again Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "I am here, because you called me!"

Then Eli realized that it was Yahweh who was calling the boy. ⁹ So he said to Samuel, "Go and lie down again. If someone calls you again, say 'Speak to me, Yahweh, because I am listening!'" So Samuel went and lay down again. ¹⁰ Then Yahweh came and stood and called as he had done the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak to me, because I am listening!"

¹¹ Then Yahweh said to Samuel, "Listen carefully. I am about to do something here in Israel that will shock everyone who hears about it. ¹² When that happens, I will punish Eli and his family. I will do to them everything that I said that I would do. ¹³ His sons have shown great disrespect for me by the disgraceful things they have done, and Eli did not keep them back from doing it. So I told

him that I would punish his family forever. ¹⁴ I solemnly promised to Eli's family, 'You will never be able to avoid the consequences for your sin, even if you give me sacrifices or offerings.'"

¹⁵ Samuel lay down again until morning. Then he got up and opened the doors of the building as usual. He was afraid to tell Eli about the vision that Yahweh had given him. ¹⁶ But Eli called him and said, "Samuel, my son!" Samuel answered, "I am here!"

¹⁷ Eli asked him, "What was it that Yahweh told you? Do not conceal it! I want God to punish you severely if you do not tell me everything that he said to you."

¹⁸ So Samuel told him everything. He did not refuse to tell him anything. Then Eli said, "He is Yahweh. I am willing for him to do what he thinks is best."

¹⁹ As Samuel grew up, Yahweh helped him; he made everything that Samuel predicted to come true. ²⁰ So all the people of Israel, from the northern end of the country to the southern end, realized that Samuel was truly a prophet of Yahweh. ²¹ Yahweh continued to appear to Samuel in Shiloh and give messages to him.

Chapter 4

¹ Samuel told to all the people of Israel the messages that God gave him.

At that time the Israelite army went to fight against the army of the Philistine people. The Israelite army set up their tents at Ebenezer, and the Philistine army set up their tents at Aphek. ² The Philistine army attacked the Israelite army, and as the battle continued, the Philistines defeated the Israelites and killed about four thousand of their soldiers. ³ When the remaining Israelite soldiers returned to

their camp, the Israelite elders said, “Why did Yahweh allow the Philistine army to defeat us today? We should bring the sacred chest here from Shiloh, in order that Yahweh will go with us when we go to the battle again, so that that our enemies will not defeat us again!”

⁴ So the soldiers sent some men to Shiloh, and those men brought back the sacred chest, the chest of Yahweh, who sat on a throne between the statues of winged creatures that were on top of the chest. The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, went with them.

⁵ When the Israelite people saw the men bringing the sacred chest into their camp, they were so happy that they shouted loudly. They shouted so loudly that the ground shook! ⁶ The Philistines asked, “What are the people in the Hebrew camp shouting about?” Someone told them that they were shouting because the sacred chest of Yahweh had been brought to them. ⁷ Then they became very afraid. They said, “Their God has come into their camp to help them! We are in big trouble now! Nothing like this has happened to us before! ⁸ No one can save us now! This is the God who struck the people of Egypt with many plagues before the Israelites left Egypt and traveled through the desert. ⁹ You Philistine men, be courageous! Fight very hard! If you do not do that, they will defeat us, and then you will become their slaves, just as they have been our slaves previously!”

¹⁰ So the Philistine men fought very hard, and they defeated the Israelites. They killed thirty thousand Israelite soldiers, and the other Israelite soldiers fled and ran away to their tents. ¹¹ The Philistines captured the sacred chest, and they killed Eli’s two sons, Hophni and Phinehas.

¹² On that same day, one man of the tribe descended from Benjamin ran from the

place where the armies were fighting. He tore his clothes and threw soil on his head to show that he was very sad. He arrived at Shiloh late that afternoon. ¹³ Eli was waiting beside the road. He wanted to hear news about the battle, and he was also very anxious to know if anything bad had happened to God’s sacred chest. When the messenger arrived and told people what had happened, everyone in the town started to cry loudly.

¹⁴ Eli asked, “Why are they making all that noise?” The messenger ran over to Eli and told him the news.

¹⁵ At that time, Eli was ninety-eight years old, and he was blind. ¹⁶ The messenger said to Eli, “I have just come from where the armies were fighting. I left there earlier today.” Eli asked, “What happened?”

¹⁷ The man replied, “The Philistines defeated our army. They killed thousands of our soldiers, and the others ran away. The Philistines killed your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. They also captured God’s sacred chest.”

¹⁸ Eli was very old, and he was very fat; and when he heard what had happened to the sacred chest, he fell backward from his seat beside the city gate. His neck was broken and he died. He had led the Israelite people for forty years.

¹⁹ The wife of Eli’s son Phinehas was pregnant, and it was almost time for her to give birth to her baby. When she heard that God’s sacred chest had been captured and that her husband and her father-in-law were dead, her labor pains suddenly began and were too much for her. She quickly gave birth to a boy, but she began to die. ²⁰ As she was dying, the women who were helping her tried to encourage her by saying to her, “You have given birth to a son!” But she did not pay any attention to what they said.

²¹ She named the boy Ichabod, which means “no glory,” because she said, “God’s glory has departed from Israel.” She said that because God’s sacred chest had been captured and because her husband and her father-in-law had died. ²² She said, “God’s glory has left Israel, because God’s sacred chest has been captured!” And then she died.

Chapter 5

¹ After the army of the Philistia people group captured God’s sacred chest in the town of Ebenezer, they took it to Ashdod, one of their largest cities. ² They carried it into the temple of their god Dagon and placed it alongside a statue of Dagon. ³ But early the next morning, when the people of Ashdod went to see it, they saw that the statue had fallen on its face in front of Yahweh’s sacred chest! So they set the statue up in its place again. ⁴ But the following morning, they saw that it had fallen down in front of the sacred chest again. But this time, it was as if someone had cut the statue’s head and hands off; they were lying in the doorway. Only its body remained in one piece. ⁵ That is the reason that ever since that time, the priests of Dagon and everyone else who enters the temple of Dagon in Ashdod do not step on the doorsill where the hands and head of Dagon had fallen.

⁶ Then Yahweh made the people of Ashdod suffer very much with tumors. Many sickened and died, both in the city and in the surrounding region. ⁷ The people of Ashdod realized why this was happening, and they cried out, “The God of the Israelites is punishing us and our god Dagon. So we cannot allow the sacred chest of the God of the Israelites to remain here!” ⁸ They summoned the five kings of

the Philistia people group and asked them, “What should we do with the sacred chest of the God of the Israelites?”

The kings replied, “Take the sacred chest to the city of Gath.” So they moved it to Gath. ⁹ But after they took it to Gath, Yahweh powerfully struck the people of that city also, with the result that many men, including young men and old men, got tumors on their skins. Then the people became very afraid. ¹⁰ So they took the sacred chest to the city of Ekron.

But when the men carried the sacred chest into Ekron, the people there cried out, “Why are you bringing the sacred chest of the God of the Israelites into our city? By doing that you will cause us and the rest of our people to die!” ¹¹ So the people of Ekron also summoned the Philistine kings. When they came, the people said to them, “Take this sacred chest of the god of the Israelites back to its own place! If you do not do that quickly, we will all die!” The people were terrified because they knew that God was starting to punish them severely. ¹² Some of the people in Ekron had already died, and the rest of the people were suffering because of tumors on their skins. So they all cried out to their gods to help them.

Chapter 6

¹ The people of Philistia kept the God’s sacred chest in their area for seven months.

² Then they summoned their priests and their diviners. They asked them, “What should we do with the sacred chest of Yahweh? Tell us how we should send it back to its own land.”

³ Those men replied, “Send with it an offering to show Yahweh that you know that you are guilty for capturing the chest, in order that the plague will stop. If you do

that, and then if you are healed, you will know that he is the one who caused the plague to strike you. And you will know why you have been suffering until now.”

⁴ The people of Philistia asked, “What kind of offering should we send?”

The men replied, “Make five gold models of the tumors on your skin, and five gold models of rats. Make five of each because that will be the same number as the number of your kings, and because the plague has struck both you people and your five kings. ⁵ Make models that represent the rats and the tumors that are ruining your land. Make them in order to honor the god of the Israelite people. If you do that, perhaps Yahweh will stop punishing you, your gods, and your land. ⁶ Do not be stubborn as Pharaoh and the Egyptians were. Remember that Yahweh finally made them suffer more than they could bear, and that they finally allowed the Israelites to leave their land.

⁷ So you must build a new cart. Then get two cows that have very recently given birth to calves. They must be cows that have never been hitched to a cart. Hitch those cows to the new cart, and take the calves away from their mothers. ⁸ Put their god’s sacred chest on the cart. Also put in the cart the five gold models of the tumors on your skin and the five gold models of rats. Put them in a small box alongside the sacred chest. They will be an offering to show that you know that you deserved to be punished for capturing the sacred chest. Then send the cows down the road, pulling the cart. ⁹ Watch the cart as the cows pull it. If they pull it to the town of Bethshemesh in Israel, we will know that it was their god who brought this plague on us. But if they do not take it there, we will know that it was not the god of the Israelites who has punished us. We will know that it happened by chance.”

¹⁰ So the people did what the priests and diviners told them to do. They made a cart, and hitched two cows to it. They took the calves from their mothers. ¹¹ They put in the cart Yahweh’s sacred chest and the box with the models of the gold rats and the tumors. ¹² Then the cows started walking, and they went straight toward Bethshemesh. They stayed on the road, and were mooing all the time. They did not turn to the left or to the right. The five kings of the region of Philistia followed the cows until they reached the edge of Bethshemesh.

¹³ At that time, the people of Bethshemesh were harvesting wheat in the valley outside the city. When the cows came along the road, they looked up and saw the sacred chest. They were extremely happy to see it. ¹⁴⁻¹⁵ The cows pulled the cart into the field of a man named Joshua, and they stopped alongside a large rock. Several men from the tribe of Levi lifted from the cart the sacred chest and the box containing the gold models of the rats and the tumors, and put them all on the large rock. Then the people smashed the cart and kindled a fire with the wood from which the cart had been made. They slaughtered the cows and burned their bodies on the fire to be an offering for Yahweh that would be completely burned. That day the people of Bethshemesh offered to Yahweh many sacrifices that were completely burned, and other sacrifices. ¹⁶ The five kings from the region of Philistia watched all this, and then they returned to Ekron, that same day.

¹⁷ The five gold models of tumors that they sent to be an offering to Yahweh to show that they knew that they deserved to be punished were gifts from those five kings who were rulers of the cities of Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron. ¹⁸ The models of the five gold rats were gifts

from the people of those five cities and the surrounding towns. The large rock at Bethshemesh, on which the men of the tribe of Levi set the sacred chest, is still there in the field that belonged to Joshua. When people see it, they remember what happened there.

¹⁹ But some men from Bethshemesh looked into Yahweh's sacred chest, and because of that, Yahweh caused 50,070 of them to die. Then the people mourned very much because Yahweh punished those men like that. ²⁰ They said, "Who can stand before Yahweh, our holy God? Where can we send away this sacred chest?"

²¹ They sent messengers to the people of the city of Kiriath Jearim to tell them, "The people of Philistia have returned Yahweh's sacred chest to us! Come here and take it to your city!"

Chapter 7

¹ When the men of Kiriath Jearim received the message, they came to Bethshemesh and took the sacred chest of Yahweh. They took it to the house of Abinadab, which was on a hillside. They set apart Abinadab's son Eleazar to take care of the chest.

² The sacred chest stayed in Kiriath Jearim for a long time. It stayed there for twenty years. During that time all the people of Israel mourned because it seemed that Yahweh had abandoned them, and they wanted to turn to him for help again.

³ Then Samuel said to all the Israelite people, "If you truly want to honor Yahweh again, you must get rid of your statues of the goddess Ashtoreth and the idols the Philistine people." ⁴ So the Israelites got rid of all their statues of the gods Baal and

Ashtoreth, and they began to worship only Yahweh.

⁵ Then Samuel told them, "All you Israelite people must gather with me at Mizpah. Then I will pray to Yahweh for you." ⁶ So they gathered at Mizpah, where Samuel acted as leader for the people of Israel. They had a big ceremony there. They drew water from a well, and poured the water on the ground while Yahweh watched. To show that they were sorry for having worshiped idols, they did not eat any food on that day, and they confessed that they had sinned against Yahweh.

⁷ When the kings of the region of Philistia heard that the Israelite people had gathered at Mizpah, they led their armies there to attack the Israelites. When the Israelites found out that the Philistine army was approaching them, they became very afraid. ⁸ They told Samuel, "Pray to Yahweh to rescue us from the Philistine army, and do not stop pleading with him!" ⁹ So Samuel took a very young lamb and killed it and offered it to Yahweh to be a sacrifice that was completely burned on the altar. Then he prayed and pleaded that Yahweh would help the Israelites, and Yahweh did help them.

¹⁰ While Samuel was burning the offering, the Philistine army came near to attack the Israelites. But Yahweh caused it to thunder very loudly. The men of the Philistine army became very frightened, and then they panicked. So the Israelites were able to drive them back completely.

¹¹ The Israelite men ran out of Mizpah and chased the Philistine soldiers almost to the town of Beth Kar. They killed many Philistine soldiers who were trying to run away.

¹² After that happened, Samuel took a large stone and set it up between the towns of Mizpah and Shen. He named the stone "Ebenezer," which means "stone

of help,” because he said “Yahweh has helped us until the present time.”¹³ So the Philistine people were defeated, and for a long time they did not enter the Israelite land to attack them again. During the time that Samuel was alive, Yahweh powerfully protected the Israelite people from being attacked by the Philistine army.

¹⁴ The Israelite army was able to capture again the Israelite towns between Ekron and Gath that the Philistine army had captured before. The Israelites were also able to take again the other areas around those cities that the Philistine army had taken from the Israelites previously. And there was peace between the Israelites and the Amor people group.

¹⁵ Samuel continued to be the leader of the Israelite people until he died. ¹⁶ Every year he traveled among the cities of Bethel and Gilgal and Mizpah. In those cities he listened to disputes between people and made decisions about them. ¹⁷ After he made decisions in each of those cities, he returned to his home at Ramah, and he would listen to people’s disputes there, also, and make decisions about them. He built an altar at Ramah to offer sacrifices to Yahweh.

Chapter 8

¹ When Samuel became old, he appointed his two sons, Joel and Abijah, to lead the people of Israel. ² They judged people’s disputes in the town of Beersheba. ³ But they were not like their father. They wanted only to get a lot of money. They accepted bribes, and they did not make honest decisions about people’s disputes.

⁴ Finally, the Israelite leaders met in the town of Ramah to discuss the matter with Samuel. ⁵ They said to him, “Listen! You

are now old, and your sons are not like you. Appoint a king to rule over us, like the kings that other countries have!”

⁶ Samuel was very unhappy with them for requesting that, so he prayed to Yahweh about it. ⁷ Yahweh replied, “Do what they have requested you to do. But do not think that you are the one whom they are really rejecting. I have been their king, and I am the one they are really rejecting. ⁸ Ever since I brought them out of Egypt, they have rejected me, and they have worshiped other gods. And now they are also rejecting you in the same way. ⁹ Do what they are asking you to do. But warn them about how their kings will act toward them!”

¹⁰ So Samuel told those people what Yahweh had said. ¹¹ He said, “If a king rules over you, this is what he will do to you: He will force many of your sons to join the army. He will make some of them run in front of your chariots to clear things out of the way. ¹² Some of them will be commanders of his soldiers, but others will work for him like slaves. He will force some of them to plow his fields and then later harvest his crops. He will force others to make his weapons and equipment for his chariots. ¹³ The king will take some of your daughters from you and force them to make perfumes for him and cook food for him and bake bread for him. ¹⁴ He will take your best fields and vineyards and olive tree groves, and give them to his own officials. ¹⁵ He will take a tenth of your harvests and distribute it among the officers and servants who work in his palace. ¹⁶ He will take from you your male and female servants, your best cattle and donkeys, and force them to work for him. ¹⁷ He will take one tenth of your sheep and goats. And you will become his slaves! ¹⁸ When that time comes, you will complain loudly to the king, the king that you your-

selves have chosen, but Yahweh will not pay attention to you.”

¹⁹ But the people refused to pay attention to what Samuel said. They said, “We do not care about what you say! We want a king! ²⁰ We want to be like the other nations. We want a king to rule us and to lead our soldiers when they go to fight.”

²¹ When Samuel told Yahweh what the people had said, ²² Yahweh replied, “Do what they are telling you to do. Give them a king!” So Samuel agreed, and then he sent the people home.

Chapter 9

¹ Now there was a rich and influential man, whose name was Kish. He belonged to the tribe descended from Benjamin. Kish was son of Abiel and the grandson of Zeror. He was from the family of Bekorath and from the clan of Aphiah. ² Kish had a son whose name was Saul. He was more handsome than any of the other Israelite men, and he was a head taller than any of the other Israelite men.

³ One day, some of Kish’s female donkeys wandered off. So Kish told Saul, “Take one of my servants with you, and go and search for the donkeys!” ⁴ So Saul did that. He took a servant, and they walked through the hill country where the descendants of Ephraim lived, and then they went through the regions of Shalishah and Shaalim, and then they went through all the region belonging to the tribe of Benjamin, but they could not find the donkeys.

⁵ Finally, they came to the region of Zuph. Then Saul said to the servant, “Let us go back home. If we do not do that, my father will stop worrying about the donkeys and start worrying about us.”

⁶ But the servant said, “I have another idea. There is one of God’s prophets who lives in this town. People respect him very much, because everything he predicts comes true. Let us go and talk to him. Perhaps he can tell us where we can go to find the donkeys.”

⁷ Saul replied to the servant, “If we go to talk with him, we should give a gift to him, but what can we give to him? We have no more food in our sacks. Do we have anything else to give to him?”

⁸ The servant replied, “Look at this! I have a small piece of silver. I can give this to him, and then he will tell us where to go to find the donkeys.” ⁹⁻¹¹ Saul said, “Very good, let us go talk to him.” So they went to the town where the prophet lived. As they were going up the hill into the town, they met some young women who were coming out of the town to get some water from a well. One of them asked the women, “Is the seer in the town today?” They said that because previously, if people in Israel wanted a message from God, they would say, “Let us go to the seer,” and people who now are called prophets were at that time called seers, or “those who see visions from God.” ¹² The women replied, “Yes, he is in the town. In fact, he is walking on the road ahead of you. He arrived in the town today because the people are going to offer a sacrifice on the altar where the people gather to worship God. ¹³ If you go quickly, you will have time to talk to him before he goes there. The people who have been invited will not start eating until he arrives there and blesses the sacrifice.”

¹⁴ So Saul and the servant entered the town. As they went through the gates, they saw Samuel as he was coming toward them; he was on his way to where people were going to offer sacrifices.

¹⁵ On the previous day, Yahweh had told

Samuel, ¹⁶ “At this time tomorrow, I will send to you a man from the land where the descendants of Benjamin live. Pour olive oil on his head to indicate that he will be the leader of my Israelite people. I have seen that my people are suffering because the Philistine people are oppressing them, and I have heard my people as they have called out to me for help. The man whom you anoint will rescue my people from the power of the Philistine people.”

¹⁷ When Samuel saw Saul, Yahweh said to him, “This is the man I told you about yesterday! He is the one who will rule my people!”

¹⁸ Saul saw Samuel at the town gate, but he did not know that it was Samuel. He went over to him and asked him, “Can you tell me, where is the house of the man who sees visions from God?”

¹⁹ Samuel replied, “I am that man. Go ahead of me with your servant to the place where the people make sacrifices. Both of you will eat with me today. Tomorrow morning I will tell you what you are wanting to know, and then I will send you home. ²⁰ Also, do not worry anymore about those donkeys that wandered away three days ago. Someone has found them.”

²¹ Saul replied, “I am from the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest of all tribes! And my family is the least important family in our tribe! So why are you talking to me like this, about the Israelite people wanting me and my family?”

²² Then Samuel brought Saul and the servant into the big dining room, and told them to sit at the head of the table, indicating that he was honoring them more than he was honoring the thirty people who had been invited. ²³ Then Samuel told the cook, “Bring to me the special piece of meat that I told you to set aside.”

²⁴ So the cook brought the leg and the meat that was on it; he set it in front of Saul. Samuel said to Saul, “Start eating it. I told the cook to save this for you, so that you could eat it at this time, when all these people whom I invited are here.” So Saul and Samuel ate together.

²⁵ After they finished eating, they returned to the town. Then Samuel took Saul up to the flat roof of his house, and talked with him there.

²⁶ As the sun was rising the next morning, Samuel called up to Saul, “Get up! It is time for me to send you on the road back home.” So Samuel got up, and later Samuel and Saul left the house together.

²⁷ When they got to the edge of the town, Samuel told Saul to send his servant ahead. After the servant left, Samuel said to Saul, “Stay here for a few minutes, in order that I can give you a message I received from God.”

Chapter 10

¹ Then Samuel took a small jar of olive oil and poured some of it on Saul’s head. Then he kissed Saul on the cheek, and told him, “I am doing this because Yahweh has chosen you to be the leader of his Israelite people. ² When you leave me today, and when you arrive near Rachel’s tomb at Zelzah, in the region of the tribe of Benjamin, you will meet two men. They will say to you, ‘The donkeys have been found, but now your father is worrying about you, and he is asking people if they have seen you.’

³ When you arrive at the large oak tree at the town of Tabor, you will see three men coming toward you. They will be on their way to worship God at Bethel. One of them will be leading three young goats,

one will be carrying three loaves of bread, and one will be carrying a container of wine. ⁴ They will greet you, and they will offer you two of the loaves of bread. Accept them.

⁵ When you arrive at the hill where people worship God near the town of Gibeah, where there is a camp where the Philistine soldiers stay, you will meet a group of prophets who will be coming down from the altar on top of the hill. There will be people in front of them who will be playing various musical instruments: A harp, a tambourine, a flute, and a lyre. And all of them will be shouting out messages from God. ⁶ At that time the Spirit of Yahweh will come upon you, and you also will shout out in the same way. You will be changed, so that you will become like a different person. ⁷ After those things occur, do whatever you think is right to do, because God is with you.

⁸ Then go ahead of me, down to the city of Gilgal, and wait for me for seven days. Then I will join you there to burn sacrifices and offer other sacrifices to enable you to continue to have fellowship with God. When I arrive there, I will tell you what other things you should do."

⁹ As Saul started to leave there, God changed Saul's inner being. And all the things that Samuel had predicted happened on that day. ¹⁰ When Saul and his servant arrived at Gibeah, they saw some prophets who were speaking messages that came directly from God. As the prophets were approaching Saul and his servant, God's Spirit came upon Saul powerfully, and he also began to shout out messages from God. ¹¹ When people who had known Saul previously heard him doing what the prophets were doing, they said to each other, "What has happened to this son of Kish? Is he now really one of the prophets?"

¹² One of the men who lived there replied, "It does not matter who the parents of these other prophets are. What matters is that, amazingly, Saul is speaking messages from God." And that is why, when people are very skeptical about some report, they think about what happened to Saul and say, "Is Saul really one of the prophets?" ¹³ When Saul finished speaking the messages that God gave him, he went to the place where the people offered sacrifices.

¹⁴ Later, Saul's uncle saw him there, and asked him, "Where did you go?" Saul replied, "We went to look for the donkeys. When we could not find them, we came here to ask Samuel if he could tell us where they were."

¹⁵ Saul's uncle replied, "What did Samuel tell you?"

¹⁶ Saul replied, "He assured us that someone had found the donkeys." But he did not tell his uncle what Samuel had said about him becoming the king of Israel.

¹⁷ Later Samuel summoned the people of Israel to gather at Mizpah to hear a message from Yahweh. ¹⁸ After they arrived, he said to them, "This is what Yahweh, the God we Israelite people worship, says: 'I brought you Israelite people out of Egypt. I rescued your ancestors from the power of the rulers of Egypt and from all the other kings who oppressed them. ¹⁹ I am the one who saves you from all your troubles and difficulties. But you have shown that you do not want to worship me. Instead, you have asked me to select a man to rule you as king. So now, your tribal and clan leaders must gather in my presence.'"

²⁰ When those representatives came near to Samuel, God indicated that he had chosen someone from the tribe descended from Benjamin. ²¹ Then Samuel told rep-

representatives of the tribe of Benjamin to come forward, and God indicated that from that tribe he had chosen someone from the family of Matri, and then God indicated that from the family of Matri he had chosen Saul son of Kish. But when they looked for Saul, they could not find him. ²² So they asked Yahweh, "Has someone else been chosen, perhaps?" Yahweh replied, "The man is hiding among the army equipment."

²³ So they quickly went there and found Saul, and brought him in front of all the people. They could see that truly he was a head taller than anyone else. ²⁴ Then Samuel said to all the people there, "This is the king whom Yahweh has chosen for you. Truly, there is no one else like him in all Israel!" All the people shouted, "May this king live a long time!"

²⁵ Then Samuel told the people what things that the king would force them to do, and all the things the king was required to do. He wrote all those things in a scroll, and then he put it in the place of the temple where Yahweh was. Then Samuel sent all the people home.

²⁶ When Saul returned to his home in the town of Gibeah, a group of courageous men decided to continually accompany Saul. They did that because God motivated them to do that. ²⁷ But some worthless men said, "How can this man save us from our enemies?" They despised him and refused to give him any gifts to show that they would be loyal to him. But Saul did not say anything to rebuke them.

Chapter 11

¹ About a month later, King Nahash of Ammon led his army across the Jordan River, and they surrounded the city of Jabesh in the region of Gilead. But all the men of

Jabesh appointed someone who said to Nahash, "Make an agreement with us not to kill us, and then we will let you rule us."

² Nahash replied, "I will do that if you do one thing. Allow us to gouge out all the right eyes of your people. By doing that we will cause the people in other countries to despise all you Israelite people."

³ The leaders of Jabesh replied, "Do not attack us for the next seven days. During that time, we will send messengers throughout Israel to tell them what you are demanding. If no one will help us, then we will surrender to you."

⁴ So the leaders of Jabesh sent messengers throughout Israel. When the messengers came to Gibeah, which was the city where Saul lived, and they told the people there about the situation, everyone started to cry. ⁵ At that time, Saul was plowing in the field. When he returned home, he asked, "Why are all the people crying?" So they told him what the messengers from Jabesh had reported.

⁶ Then God's Spirit came powerfully upon Saul, and he became very angry because of what Nahash wanted to do. ⁷ He took two of his oxen and killed them and cut them into pieces. Then he sent messengers carrying those pieces throughout Israel to tell people this message: "Saul says that he cut this ox in pieces, and that he will do the same thing to the oxen of anyone who refuses to come with him and Samuel to fight the army from Ammon!" Then Yahweh caused all the people of Israel to be afraid of what Saul might do to them if they did not go and help Saul. So the men all gathered together. ⁸ When Saul counted them at Bezek, he saw that there were 300,000 Israelite men there, as well as thirty thousand men from the tribe of Judah.

⁹ So Saul sent messengers back to the peo-

ple at Jabesh to tell them, "We will rescue you by the time the weather is hot tomorrow morning." The messengers went and told the people of Jabesh, who became very happy when they heard the news.¹⁰ Then the men of Jabesh told Nahash, "Tomorrow we will surrender to you, and then you can do to us whatever you want to."

¹¹ But before the sun rose the next morning, Saul and his army arrived. He divided them into three groups. They rushed into the camp of the soldiers from Ammon, and attacked them. By noontime they had killed most of them, and those who were not killed scattered. Each of them who ran away ran away alone.

¹² Then the people of Jabesh said to Samuel, "Where are those men who said that they did not want Saul to be our king? Bring them here, and we will kill them!"

¹³ But Saul replied, "No, we are not going to execute anyone today, because this is the day that Yahweh has saved us Israelite people. It is a day to rejoice, not to kill anyone."

¹⁴ Then Samuel said to the people, "Let us all go to Gilgal, and there we will again proclaim that Saul is our king."¹⁵ So they went to Gilgal. There, knowing that Yahweh was watching, they proclaimed that Saul was their king. Then they offered sacrifices to enable them to continue to have fellowship with Yahweh. And Saul and all the other Israelite people were very happy.

Chapter 12

¹ Then Samuel said this to all the Israelite people: "I have done everything that you told me to do, and I have given a king to rule you.² My own sons are grown up and

with you now, but I have appointed Saul instead of one of them, and he is now your leader. I am now old, and my hair is gray. I have been your leader ever since I was a boy.³ Now tell me, while Yahweh is listening, and while the king whom he has chosen is listening, whose ox or donkey have I stolen during all those years? Whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed badly? From whom have I accepted a bribe, in order that I would ignore the evil things he had done? If I have done any of these things, tell me, and I will pay back what I owe."

⁴ They replied, "No, you have never cheated anyone or oppressed anyone or accepted a bribe from anyone."

⁵ Then Samuel said, "Today Yahweh can testify, and the king whom you chose can testify, that I have not taken a bribe from anyone." They replied, "Yes, Yahweh can say that he knows that is true."

⁶ Samuel continued by saying, "Yahweh is the one who appointed Moses and Aaron to lead our ancestors. He is the one who brought them out of Egypt. And he is the one who will testify that what I am saying is true."⁷ Now while Yahweh is listening, stand here quietly while I accuse you and tell you that your requesting a king instead of trusting Yahweh to lead you was wrong. I will do that by reminding you of all the great miracles that Yahweh performed for you and your ancestors.

⁸ Many years after our ancestor Jacob went to Egypt, his descendants pleaded to Yahweh to help them. So Yahweh sent Moses and Aaron to them, and they led our ancestors out of Egypt, and eventually they settled in this land.

⁹ But our ancestors soon forgot about Yahweh, their God. So he allowed Sisera, the commander of the army from Hazor, to defeat them. He also allowed the

Philistines and the army of the king of Moab to fight our ancestors and defeat them. ¹⁰ Then our ancestors pleaded with Yahweh again to help them. They admitted, 'Yahweh, we have sinned, and we have forsaken you. We have worshiped idols that represent the god Baal and the goddess Ashtoreth. But if you rescue us from our enemies, we will worship you only.' ¹¹ So Yahweh sent men such as Gideon, Barak, Jephthah, and me to save you. And as a result, you did not have to worry about any enemies attacking you.

¹² But now, when King Nahash of Ammon came with his army to attack you, you were afraid. So you came to me, and said, 'We want a king to rule us,' even though Yahweh was already your king! ¹³ So now, look, here is the king whom you have chosen. You asked for a king, and Yahweh has now appointed a king for you. ¹⁴ If you honor Yahweh and if you serve him, and if you listen to what he says and obey what he commands, and if you and the king who rules over you do what Yahweh your God wants you to do, things will go well for you all. ¹⁵ But if you do not listen to what Yahweh says, if you disobey what he commands, then he will punish you, just as he punished our ancestors.

¹⁶ Now stand here quietly and see the great thing that Yahweh is about to do.

¹⁷ You know that it does not rain at this time of the year, during the time when you harvest wheat. But I will ask Yahweh to send thunder and lightning and rain today. When he does that, you will realize that Yahweh considers that you have done a very wicked thing by requesting a king."

¹⁸ Then Samuel prayed to Yahweh, and Yahweh caused it to thunder and lightning and rain. So all the people became very afraid of Yahweh and of Samuel.

¹⁹ They cried out to Samuel, "Pray for us! We have added to our previous sins by

requesting a king! Pray to Yahweh, your God, in order that we will not die because of having done that!"

²⁰ Samuel replied, "Do not be afraid! You have done this evil thing, but do not stop doing the things that Yahweh wants you to do. Instead, serve Yahweh with your whole inner being. ²¹ Do not abandon Yahweh and worship useless idols. They cannot help you or save you from your enemies, because they are truly useless. ²² Yahweh decided to make us his people. So he will not abandon us people whom he has chosen, because he would injure his own reputation of being completely faithful if he did that. ²³ But as for me, I have solemnly promised that I will not sin against Yahweh by ceasing to pray for you. And I will continue to teach you what things are good and right for you to do. ²⁴ But you must honor Yahweh and serve him with your whole inner being. Never forget all the great things that he has done for you. ²⁵ If you keep doing wicked things, he will get rid of you and your king!"

Chapter 13

¹ Saul was thirty years old when he began to reign. He ruled for forty years.

² Some years after he became king, he chose three thousand men from the Israelite army to go with him to fight the Philistines. Then he sent the other soldiers back home. Of the men he chose, two thousand stayed with Saul at Micmash and in the hill country near Bethel, and a thousand stayed with Saul's son Jonathan at Gibeah, in the area of the tribe of Benjamin.

³ Jonathan and the men who were with him attacked the Philistine soldiers who were camped at Geba. The other

Philistines heard about that. So Saul realized that the army of Philistia would probably come to fight the Israelites again. So Saul sent messengers to blow trumpets throughout Israel to gather the people together and proclaim to them, "All you Hebrews need to hear that now the Philistines will start a war with us!" ⁴ The messengers told the rest of the army to gather together with Saul at Gilgal. And all the people in Israel heard the news. People were saying, "Saul's army has attacked the Philistine camp, with the result that now the Philistines hate us Israelites very much."

⁵ The Philistines gathered together and were given equipment to fight the Israelites. The Philistines had three thousand chariots and six thousand chariot drivers. Their soldiers seemed to be as many as grains of sand on the seashore. They went up and set up their tents at Micmash, to the east of Beth Aven, that is, Bethel. ⁶ The Philistines attacked the Israelites very strongly, and the Israelite soldiers realized that they were in a very bad situation. So many of the Israelite soldiers hid in caves and holes in the ground, or among the rocks, or in pits, or in wells. ⁷ Some of them crossed the Jordan River and went to the area where the region of the tribe of Gad and to the region of Gilead.

But Saul stayed at Gilgal. All the soldiers who were with him were shaking because they were so afraid. ⁸ Saul waited seven days, which was the number of days that Samuel had told him to wait for him. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal during that time, so many of the men in Saul's army began to leave him and run away. ⁹ So Saul said to the soldiers, "Bring to me an animal to be completely burned on the altar and one for the offering to enable us to continue to have fellowship with God."

So the men did that. ¹⁰ And just as he was finished burning these offerings, Samuel arrived. Saul went to greet him.

¹¹ Samuel saw what Saul had done, and he said to Saul, "Why have you done this?" Saul replied, "I saw that my men were leaving me and running away, and that you did not come here during the time that you said that you would come, and that the Philistine army was gathering together at Micmash."

¹² So I thought, 'The Philistine army is going to attack us here at Gilgal, and I have not yet asked Yahweh to bless us.' So I felt it was necessary to offer the burnt offerings to seek God's blessings."

¹³ Samuel replied, "What you did was very foolish! You have not obeyed what Yahweh, your God, commanded about sacrifices. If you had obeyed him, God would have allowed you and your descendants to rule Israel for a long time. ¹⁴ But now because of what you have done, you will die, and after you die, none of your descendants will continue to rule. Yahweh is seeking a man to be king who be just the kind of person that he wants him to be, so that he can appoint him to be the leader of his people. Yahweh will do this because you have not obeyed what he commanded."

¹⁵ Then Samuel left Gilgal and went up to Gibeah. Saul stayed at Gilgal with his soldiers. There were only about six hundred of them left who did not run away.

¹⁶ Saul and his son Jonathan and the soldiers who were with them went to the city of Geba in the area of the tribe of Benjamin and set up their tents there. The Philistine army set up their tents at Micmash. ¹⁷ Three groups of Philistia soldiers soon left the place where their army was staying, and went and made raids on Israelite towns. One group went north to-

ward the city of Ophrah in the region of Shual. ¹⁸ One group went west to the city of Beth Horon. The third group went toward the Israelite border, above Zeboim Valley, near the wilderness.

¹⁹ At that time, there were no men in Israel who were blacksmiths. The people of Philistia would not permit the Israelites to have men who could do that, because they were afraid that they would make iron swords and spears for the Hebrews to use. ²⁰ So whenever the Israelites needed to sharpen the blades of their plows, or picks, or axes, or sickles, they were forced to take those things to a Philistine man who could sharpen those things. ²¹ They needed to pay about eight grams of silver for the sharpening of their plow blades and their picks. They needed to pay about four grams of silver for the sharpening of their axes or sickles, or to straighten the goads used to drive the oxen.

²² So because the Israelites could not make swords and spears out of iron, at the time when the Israelites fought against the army of Philistia. Saul and Jonathan were the only Israelite men who had swords. None of the others had a sword. They had only bows and arrows and some kinds of other weapons.

²³ Before the battle started, some Philistine men went to the mountain pass outside Micmash to guard it.

Chapter 14

¹ One day, Jonathan said to the young man who carried his weapons, "Come with me; we will go over to where the Philistine soldiers have put up their tents." So they went, but Jonathan did not tell his father what they were going to do.

² On that day, Saul and the six hundred

soldiers who were with him were sitting around a pomegranate tree at a place where the people threshed grain, near Gibeah. ³ Ahijah the priest was also there, one of those who wore the sacred apron. Ahijah son of Ahitub, who was a brother of Ichabod. Ichabod and Ahitub were the sons of Phinehas son of Eli, who had been Yahweh's priest at Shiloh.

Now no one knew that Jonathan had left the Israelite camp.

⁴ Jonathan planned that he and the young man would go through a narrow pass to get to where the Philistine army was. The cliff on one side of the pass was named Bozez, and the other cliff was named Seneh. ⁵ One cliff faced north toward Michmash, and the cliff on the other side faced south toward the town of Geba.

⁶ Jonathan said to the young man who carried his weapons, "Come with me. We will go to where those pagans have set up their tents. Perhaps Yahweh will help us. It does not matter whether we are only two men or many people; nothing can stop Yahweh from enabling us to defeat them."

⁷ The young man who was carrying Jonathan's weapons said, "Do what you think is the best thing for us to do. I will be helping you."

⁸ Then Jonathan said, "Very well, come with me. We will cross the valley to where the Philistine army is, and allow them to see us. ⁹ If they then say to us, 'You two stay there until we come down to you,' we will stay there and not go up to them. ¹⁰ But if they say to us, 'Come up here,' that will show us that Yahweh will enable us to defeat them. Then we will go up and fight them."

¹¹ When the two of them crossed the valley, the Philistine soldiers saw them coming. They said, "Look! The Hebrews are crawling out of the holes in which they

have been hiding!”¹² Then the Philistine soldiers who were closest to Jonathan and the young man who carried his weapons said, “Come up here, and we will teach you something about how to fight!”

Jonathan said to the young man who was with him, “Come behind me and climb up, because Yahweh is going to help us to defeat them!”¹³ So Jonathan climbed up, using his hands and his feet because it was very steep. The young man climbed up following him. As Jonathan climbed, he struck and killed many Philistine soldiers, and the young man who was with him killed many more as he followed behind Jonathan.¹⁴ In that first battle the two of them killed about twenty Philistine soldiers in an area that was a half-hectare.

¹⁵ Then all the other Philistine soldiers, the ones in the camp and the ones who had been attacking the Israelite towns, ones who were out in the field much closer, panicked. Then God caused the ground to shake, and they all became terrified afraid.

¹⁶ Saul’s lookouts were in the town of Gibeah in the region of the tribe of Benjamin. They saw that the soldiers of the Philistine army were running away in all directions.¹⁷ Saul realized that some of his soldiers must have attacked the Philistine army. So he said to the soldiers who were with him, “Check to see if any of our men are not here.” So they checked, and found out that Jonathan and the man who carried his weapons were gone.

¹⁸ So Saul said to Ahijah the priest, “Bring the sacred chest here.” For the Israelite people had been carrying the sacred chest with them.¹⁹ But while Saul was talking to the priest, he saw that the Philistine soldiers were becoming more panicked. So Saul said to Ahijah, “Do not bring the sacred chest at this time.”

²⁰ Then Saul gathered his men and they went toward the battle. They found that the Philistine soldiers were so confused that they were striking each other with their swords.²¹ Before that, some of the Hebrew men had deserted their army and gone to join with the Philistine army. But now those men revolted and joined with Saul and Jonathan and the other Israelite soldiers.²² Some of the Israelite soldiers had previously run away and hidden in the mountains where the tribe of Ephraim lived. But when they heard that the Philistine soldiers were running away, they came down and joined the other Israelite soldiers and pursued the Philistine soldiers.²³ So Yahweh rescued the Israelites on that day. The Israelite soldiers continued to pursue their enemies beyond the town of Beth Aven.

²⁴ Before Saul’s soldiers went to the battle, Saul declared to them solemnly, “I do not want any of you to eat any food before this evening, before we have defeated all our enemies. If anyone eats anything, Yahweh will curse because they were very hungry.

²⁵ The Israelite army went into the forest, and they found honeycombs on the ground, but they did not eat any honey.²⁶ They were afraid to eat any, because they had solemnly promised that they would not eat any food.²⁷ But Jonathan did not hear that his father had bound the people by a solemn promise. Jonathan had left the camp very early in the morning and when he saw a honeycomb, he dipped the end of his walking stick into it and ate some honey. After he ate the honey, he felt stronger.

²⁸ But one of the Israelite soldiers saw him and said to him, “Your father solemnly declared to us that Yahweh would curse anyone who ate any food today. So now we are very tired and weak from being hungry because we obeyed him.”²⁹ Jonathan

exclaimed, "My father had caused trouble for all of us! See how refreshed I am after eating a little honey! ³⁰ If he had permitted all of us to eat from the food we took from our enemies while we were pursuing them, we would have been able to kill many more of their soldiers!"

³¹ The Israelites pursued and killed Philistine soldiers all that day, from Micmash town west to Aijalon. But they continued to become more weak from being hungry. ³² They had taken many sheep and cattle that the Philistine soldiers had abandoned. Now, because they were extremely hungry, they butchered some of those animals and ate the meat without draining the blood from the animals. ³³ One of the soldiers told Saul, "Look! The men are sinning against Yahweh by eating meat that still has blood in it!"

Saul replied to the men who were near him, "They have disobeyed Yahweh! Roll a large stone over here!"

³⁴ After they did that, he said to those men, "Go and tell all the soldiers that each of them must bring an ox or a sheep to me, and kill it here on this stone, and drain the blood before he eats any of the meat. They should not sin against Yahweh by eating meat from some animal without draining its blood." So that night all the soldiers brought animals and slaughtered them there. Then Saul built an altar to worship Yahweh. ³⁵ That was the first time that he built an altar for Yahweh.

³⁶ Then Saul said to the Israelite soldiers, "Let us chase the Philistine soldiers tonight. We can attack them all night. We will not allow any of them to escape alive." The Israelite soldiers answered, "We will do whatever you think is the best thing for us to do."

But the priest said, "We should ask Yahweh what he thinks we should do." ³⁷

So Saul asked God, "Should we chase the Philistine soldiers? Will you enable us to defeat them?" But God did not answer Saul that day.

³⁸ Then Saul summoned all the leaders of his army. He said to them, "I am sure that God has not answered me because someone has sinned. We must find out what sin someone has committed. ³⁹ Yahweh has rescued us from the Philistine army. Just as surely as Yahweh is alive, whoever has sinned must be executed. Even if it is my son Jonathan who has sinned, he must be executed."

His men knew who was guilty, but none of them said anything to Saul. ⁴⁰ Then Saul said to all the Israelite soldiers, "You stand on one side. My son Jonathan and I will stand on the other side."

His men replied, "Do whatever you think is best." ⁴¹ Then Saul prayed to Yahweh, the Israelites' God, "Tell me who is guilty and who is not guilty." Then the priest cast lots, and they indicated that it was either Jonathan or Saul who was the guilty one, and that the other men were not guilty. ⁴² Then Saul said to the priest, "Throw the stones again to indicate which of us two is guilty." So he did, and the stones indicated that Jonathan was the guilty one.

⁴³ Then Saul said to Jonathan, "Tell me what you have done that was wrong."

Jonathan replied, "I ate a little bit of honey. It was only a little bit that was on the end of my stick. Do I deserve to be executed because of doing that?" ⁴⁴ Saul replied, "Yes, you must be executed! I hope that God will strike me and kill me if you are not executed for having done that!"

⁴⁵ But the Israelite soldiers said to Saul, "Jonathan has won a great victory for all us Israelites. Should he be executed for eating some honey? Certainly not! Just as

surely as Yahweh lives, we will not allow you to injure him in any manner, because today God helped Jonathan to kill many soldiers of the Philistine army!”

So by saying that the Israelite soldiers rescued Jonathan, and he was not executed.

⁴⁶ Then Saul ordered his soldiers to stop pursuing the Philistine army, so the Philistine soldiers returned to their homes.

⁴⁷ After Saul became the ruler, he fought against enemies on every side. He fought against Moab, the Ammonites, Edom, the kings of Zobah, and the Philistines. Wherever the Israelite army fought, they defeated their enemies. ⁴⁸ Saul’s army fought bravely and defeated the very tall descendants of Amalek. His army rescued the Israelites from those who had plundered them.

⁴⁹ Saul’s sons were Jonathan, Ishbosheth, and Malki-Shua. He also had two daughters, Merab and her younger sister Michal.

⁵⁰ Saul’s wife was Ahinoam, the daughter of Ahimaaz. The commander of Saul’s army was Abner son of Saul’s uncle Ner. ⁵¹ Saul’s father Kish and Abner’s father Ner were both sons of Abiel.

⁵² All the time that Saul was alive, his army fought against the Philistine army. And whenever Saul saw a young man who was brave and strong, he forced him to join his army.

Chapter 15

¹ One day Samuel said to Saul, “Yahweh sent me to appoint you to be the king of the Israelite people. So now listen to this message from Yahweh: ² Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has declared this: ‘I am going to punish the descendants of Amalek for attacking the Israelite people after the Israelites left

Egypt. ³ So now go with your army and attack the Amalek people group. Destroy them completely—destroy them and everything that belongs to them—the men and women, their children and infants, their cattle and sheep and camels and donkeys. Do not spare any of them!”

⁴ So Saul summoned the army, and they gathered at Telaim town. There were 200,000 soldiers. Ten thousand of them were from Judah, and the others were from the other Israelite tribes. ⁵ Then Saul went with his army to a town where some of the Amalek people group lived. The army prepared to attack them suddenly by hiding in the valley. ⁶ Then Saul sent this message to the Kenite people group who lived in that area: “You acted kindly toward all our Israelite ancestors when they left Egypt. But we are going to kill all of the Amalek people group, because they opposed our ancestors. So move away from where the Amalek people group live. If you do not move away, you will be killed when they are killed.” So when the Kenite people group heard that, they immediately left that area.

⁷ Then Saul’s army slaughtered the Amalek people group, from the town of Havilah in the east to the town of Shur in the west. Shur was at the border between Israel and Egypt. ⁸ Saul’s army captured Agag, the king of the Amalek people group, but they killed everyone else. ⁹ They not only spared Agag, but they also took the best sheep and goats and cattle. They took everything that was good. They destroyed only the animals that they considered to be worthless.

¹⁰ Then Yahweh said to Samuel, ¹¹ “I am sorry that I appointed Saul to be your king, because he has stopped worshipping me. He has not obeyed what I commanded him to do.” Samuel was very disturbed when he heard that, and he cried out to

Yahweh all that night.

¹² Early the next morning, Samuel got up and went to talk with Saul. But someone told Samuel, "Saul went to the city of Carmel, where he has set up a monument to honor himself. Now he has left there and gone down to Gilgal."

¹³ When Samuel arrived at Gilgal and came to Saul, Saul said, "I wish that Yahweh may bless you! I have obeyed what Yahweh told me to do."

¹⁴ But Samuel replied, "If that is true, why is it that I hear cattle mooing and I hear sheep bleating?"

¹⁵ Saul replied, "The soldiers took them from the Amalek people group. They saved the best sheep and cattle, in order to offer them as sacrifices to Yahweh, your God. But we have completely destroyed all the others."

¹⁶ Samuel said to Saul, "Stop talking! Allow me to tell you what Yahweh said to me last night."

Saul replied, "Tell me what he said." ¹⁷ Samuel said, "Previously you did not think that you were important. But now you have become the leader of the tribes of Israel. Yahweh appointed you to be their king. ¹⁸ And Yahweh sent you to do something for him. He said to you, 'Go and get rid of all those sinful people, the Amalek people group. Attack them and kill all of them.' ¹⁹ So why did you not obey Yahweh? Why did you take the plunder for yourself instead of destroying it? You have done what Yahweh says is evil, and he knows it!"

²⁰ Saul replied to Samuel, "I did what Yahweh sent me to do! I brought back King Agag, but we killed everyone else! ²¹ My men brought back only the best sheep and cattle and other things, in order to sacrifice them to Yahweh your God here at Gilgal."

²² But Samuel replied,

"Which do you think pleases Yahweh more, animals that are completely burned on the altar and other sacrifices,

or people obeying him ?

It is better to obey Yahweh than to offer sacrifices to him.

It is better to pay attention to what he says than to burn the fat of rams, which God said should be sacrificed to him.

²³ To rebel against God is as sinful as doing sorcery,

and being stubborn is as sinful as worshipping idols.

So, because you disobeyed what Yahweh told you to do,

he has declared that you will no longer be king."

²⁴ Then Saul said to Samuel, "Yes, I have sinned. I disobeyed what you told me to do, which is what Yahweh commanded. I did that because I was afraid of what my men would say if I did not do what they wanted. So I did what they demanded. ²⁵ But now, please forgive me for having sinned. And come back with me to where the people are in order that I may worship Yahweh."

²⁶ But Samuel replied, "No, I will not go back with you. You have rejected what Yahweh commanded you to do. So he has rejected you, and declared that you will no longer be the king of Israel. So I do not want to talk anymore with you, either."

²⁷ As Samuel turned to leave, Saul tried to stop him by grabbing the edge of Samuel's robe, and it tore. ²⁸ Samuel said to him, "Today Yahweh has torn away from you the kingdom of Israel. He will appoint someone else to be king, someone who is a better man than you are. ²⁹ And since the one who is the glorious God of the Israelite

people does not lie, he will not change his mind. Humans sometimes change their minds, but God does not do that, because he is not a human.”

³⁰ Then Saul pleaded again. He said, “I know that I have sinned. But please honor me in front of the leaders of the Israelite people and in front of all the other Israelite people by coming back to them with me in order that I may worship Yahweh your God.” ³¹ So Samuel finally agreed to do that, and they went together back to where the people were, and Saul worshiped Yahweh there.

³² Then Samuel said, “Bring King Agag to me.” So they brought Agag to him. Agag was brought before him, and he was locked in chains. He thought, “Surely the bitterness of death is past!”

³³ But Samuel said to him,

“You have killed the sons of many women with your sword,

so now your mother will no longer have a son.”

And Samuel cut Agag into pieces with his sword, there at Gilgal, where the Israelites worshiped Yahweh.

³⁴ Then Samuel left there and returned to his home in Ramah, and Saul went to his home in Gibeah. ³⁵ Samuel never saw Saul again, but he was very sad about what Saul had done. And Yahweh was very sorry that he had appointed Saul to be the king of Israel.

Chapter 16

¹ Finally, Yahweh said to Samuel, “I have decided that I will not allow Saul to continue to be the king. So you should not keep feeling sad about what he has done. Put some olive oil in a small container and

go to Bethlehem to anoint someone with the oil, and appoint him to be king. I am sending you there to a man named Jesse, because I have chosen one of his sons to be the king of Israel.”

² But Samuel said, “I am afraid to go. If Saul hears that I have appointed someone else to be king, he will kill me.” Yahweh answered, “Take with you a female cow that has not calved, and say to people that you have come to kill it and offer it as a sacrifice to me.

³ Invite Jesse to come to the sacrifice. When he comes, I will show you what you should do. And I will show you which of his sons I have chosen to be the king. Then you should anoint him with the olive oil to be the king.”

⁴ Samuel did what Yahweh told him to do. He went to Bethlehem. When the town leaders came to him, they trembled, because they were worried that Samuel had come to rebuke them about something. One of them asked him, “Have you come to speak peacefully to us?”

⁵ Samuel replied, “Yes. I have come peacefully, to make a sacrifice to Yahweh. Set yourself apart for the honor of Yahweh, and then come with me to where they will offer the sacrifice.” Then Samuel set apart Jesse to do what honors God, along with his sons, and then he invited them to the sacrifice.

⁶ When they arrived there, Samuel looked at Jesse’s oldest son Eliab, and thought, “Surely this is the one whom Yahweh has appointed be king!”

⁷ But Yahweh said to Samuel, “Do not think that he is the one whom I have chosen because of his being handsome and very tall, because I have not chosen him. I do not evaluate people as people do. You people evaluate people by their appearance, but I evaluate people by what is in

their inner beings.”

⁸ Then Jesse told his next oldest son Abinadab to step forward and walk in front of Samuel. But when he did that, Samuel said, “Yahweh has not chosen this one, either.” ⁹ Then Jesse told his next oldest son Shammah to step forward. He stepped forward, but Samuel said, “Yahweh has not chosen this one, either.” ¹⁰ Similarly, Jesse told his other four sons to walk in front of Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse, “Yahweh has not chosen any of these sons of yours.” ¹¹ Then Samuel asked Jesse, “Do you have any other sons?” Jesse replied, “My youngest son is not here; he is out in the fields taking care of the sheep.” Samuel said, “Send someone to bring him here! We will not sit down to eat until he gets here.”

¹² So Jesse sent someone to bring David there. And when David arrived, Samuel saw that he was handsome and healthy, and had bright eyes. Then Yahweh said, “This is the one whom I have chosen; anoint him to be king.”

¹³ So as David stood there in front of his older brothers, Samuel took the container of oil that he had brought and poured some of it on David’s head to set him apart to serve God. After they all ate, Samuel left there and returned to Ramah. But Yahweh’s Spirit came on David powerfully, and stayed with David for the rest of his life.

¹⁴ But Yahweh’s Spirit left Saul. Instead of his Spirit staying with Saul, Yahweh sent an evil spirit to Saul to terrify him repeatedly.

¹⁵ One of his servants said to him, “It is evident that an evil spirit sent by God is terrifying you.” ¹⁶ So we suggest that you allow us your servants here to search for a man who plays the harp well. He can play the harp whenever the evil spirit bothers you.

Then you will calm down and you will be well again.”

¹⁷ Saul replied, “Fine, find for me a man who can play the harp well, and bring him to me.”

¹⁸ One of his servants said to him, “A man named Jesse, in the city of Bethlehem, has a son who plays the harp very well. Furthermore, he is a brave man, and is a capable soldier. He is handsome and he always speaks wisely. And Yahweh always protects him.”

¹⁹ So Saul sent some messengers to Jesse. He told them to say to Jesse, “Send your son David to me, the one who takes care of sheep.” ²⁰ So after they went and told that to Jesse, he agreed and got a young goat, a container of wine, a donkey on which he put some loaves of bread and gave them to David to take to Saul as a present.

²¹ Then David went to Saul and started to work for him. Saul liked David very much, and he became the man who carried Saul’s weapons when Saul went to fight in battles. ²² Then Saul sent a messenger to go to Jesse and tell him, “I am pleased with David. Please let him stay here and work for me.”

²³ Jesse agreed, and after that, whenever the evil spirit whom God sent tormented Saul, David played the harp. Then Saul would become calm, and the evil spirit would leave him.

Chapter 17

¹ The Philistines gathered their army to fight the Israelite army. They gathered together near Sokoh, in the area where the descendants of Judah lived. They set up their tents at Ephes Dammim, which is between Sokoh and Azekah. ² Saul gathered the Israelite army near Elah Valley,

and they set up their tents. Then they all took their places, ready to fight the Philistines. ³ So the Philistine and Israelite armies faced each other. They were on two hills, with a valley between them.

⁴ Then Goliath, from the city of Gath, came out from the Philistine camp. He was a great warrior, three meters tall. ⁵ He wore a helmet made of bronze to protect his head, and he wore a coat made of metal plates to protect his body. The metal coat weighed about fifty-five kilograms. ⁶ He wore bronze guards on his legs. He had a small bronze spear fastened on his back. ⁷ He also had a big spear. It had a cord on it to enable him to throw it better. Its iron head weighed about seven kilograms. A soldier carrying Goliath's huge shield walked in front of him.

⁸ Goliath stood there and shouted to the Israelite army, "I can see you are lined up for battle, but you will not fight me. You can see that I am a Philistine soldier who is ready to fight, but you are just the slaves of Saul. Choose one man who can fight for all of you and send him down here to me! ⁹ If he fights with me and kills me, then my fellow Philistines will all be your slaves. But if I defeat him and kill him, then you Israelites will all be our slaves. ¹⁰ None of you Israelite men can defeat me! Send me a man who will fight with me!" ¹¹ When Saul and all the Israelite soldiers heard that, they were very terrified.

¹² Now David son of Jesse was from the clan of Ephrath. He lived in Bethlehem, in the region of the tribe of Judah. Jesse had eight sons. When Saul was king, Jesse had already become a very old man. ¹³ Jesse's three oldest sons, Eliab and Abinadab and Shammah, had gone with Saul to fight the Philistines. ¹⁴ David was Jesse's youngest son. While his three oldest brothers were with Saul, ¹⁵ David went back and forth. Sometimes he went to Saul's camp, and

sometimes he stayed in Bethlehem to take care of his father's sheep.

¹⁶ For forty days Goliath came out from the Philistine camp and stood there mocking the Israelite army. He kept telling the Israelites to choose one man to fight with him. He did this twice each day, in the morning and in the evening.

¹⁷ One day, Jesse said to David, "Here is a sack of roasted grain and ten loaves of bread. Take these quickly to your older brothers. ¹⁸ And here are ten large chunks of cheese. Take them to their commander. And see how things are going with your older brothers. Then if they are safe, bring back something to show they are all right.

¹⁹ Your brothers are with Saul and all the other Israelite soldiers, camped alongside Elah Valley, preparing to fight the Philistines." ²⁰ So David arranged for another shepherd to take care of the sheep. Early the next morning he took the food and went to the Israelite camp, as Jesse told him to do. He arrived there just as the Israelite soldiers were forming their ranks and going out to the battlefield. As they went, they were shouting a war cry.

²¹ The Philistine army and the Israelite army stood on the hillsides, facing each other, ready for the battle. ²² David gave the food to the man who was taking care of the war equipment. He told him to take care of the food that he brought, and then he went and greeted his older brothers. ²³ While he was talking with them, he saw Goliath coming out from among the Philistine soldiers, shouting to the Israelites, challenging them to send a man to fight him. David heard what Goliath was saying. ²⁴ When all the Israelite soldiers saw Goliath, they were terrified and started to run away. ²⁵ They were saying to each other, "Look at him coming up toward us! And listen to him as he defies us

Israelites! The king says that he will give a big reward to whoever kills this man. He also says that he will give his daughter to that man for him to marry her, and that he will no longer require that man's family to pay taxes."

²⁶ David talked to some of the men who were standing near him. He said, "This Philistine—this uncircumcised man—should not be mocking the all-powerful God. What will be given to the person who kills this Philistine and stops him from shaming us Israelites?"

²⁷ The men told him the same thing that the other men had said, about what the king would do for anyone who killed Goliath.

²⁸ But when David's oldest brother Eliab heard David talking to the men, he was angry. He said to David, "Why have you come down here? Is someone taking care of those few sheep that you left in the desert? I know you are just a troublemaking boy! You just want to watch the battle!"

²⁹ David replied, "Have I done something wrong? I was merely asking a question!"

³⁰ Then he walked over to another man and asked him the same question, but the man gave him the same answer. Each time he asked someone, he received the same answer. ³¹ Finally, someone told King Saul what David had asked, and Saul sent someone to bring David to him.

³² David told King Saul, "No one should worry because of that Philistine man. I will go and fight with him!"

³³ Saul said to David, "You are only a young man, and he has been a very powerful soldier all his life. So you are not able to go and fight with him!"

³⁴ David replied, "I have been taking care of my father's sheep for many years.

Whenever a lion or a bear came and carried away a lamb, ³⁵ I went after it and attacked it and rescued the lamb from the animal's mouth. Then I grabbed the animal by its jaw and struck it and killed it. ³⁶ I have killed both lions and bears. And I will do the same to this heathen Philistine, because he has defied the army of the all-powerful God! ³⁷ Yahweh has rescued me from paws of lions and bears, and he will rescue me from this Philistine!" Then Saul said to David, "All right, go and fight him, and I hope that Yahweh will help you!"

³⁸ Then Saul gave to David his own clothes that he always wore in battles, and he gave him a bronze helmet and a coat made of metal plates. ³⁹ David put these things on. Then he fastened his sword over them and tried to walk. But he could not walk, because he was not accustomed to wearing those things. So David said to Saul, "I cannot fight wearing all these things, because I am not accustomed to wearing them!" So he took them off.

⁴⁰ Then he took his walking staff; then he chose five smooth stones out of a streambed. He put them in the pouch of his shoulder bag. Then he put his sling in his hand and started walking toward Goliath.

⁴¹ Goliath walked toward David, with the soldier who was carrying his shield walking in front of him. When he got near David, ⁴² he looked at David closely. He saw that David had a handsome face and healthy body, but that he was only a young man. So he sneered at David. ⁴³ He said to David, "Are you coming to me with a stick because you think that I am a dog?" Then he called out to his gods to harm David. ⁴⁴ He said to David, "Come here to me, and I will kill you and give your dead body to the birds and wild animals to eat!"

⁴⁵ David replied, "You are coming to me

with a sword and a spear and a small spear. But I am coming to you in the name of Yahweh, commander of the angel armies. He is the God whom the army of Israel worships, and he is the God whom you have defied. ⁴⁶ Today Yahweh will enable me to defeat you. I will strike you down and cut off your head. And we Israelites will kill many Philistine soldiers and give their bodies to the birds and wild animals to eat. And everyone in the world will hear about it and know that we Israelite people worship an all-powerful God. ⁴⁷ And everyone here will know that Yahweh can rescue people without a sword or a spear. Yahweh always wins his battles, and he will enable us to defeat all of you Philistines.”

⁴⁸ As Goliath came closer to attack David, David ran quickly toward him. ⁴⁹ He put his hand into his shoulder bag and took out one stone. He put in his sling and hurled it toward Goliath. The stone hit Goliath in the forehead and cracked his skull, and he fell facedown to the ground.

⁵⁰⁻⁵¹ Then David ran and stood over Goliath. He pulled Goliath’s sword from its sheath and killed him with it, and then cut off his head. In that way David defeated the Philistine without having his own sword. He used only a sling and a stone!

When the other Philistines saw that their great warrior was dead, they ran away. ⁵² The Israelite men shouted and ran after them. They pursued them all the way to the city of Gath and to the gates of the city of Ekron. They struck them down as they went, with the result that dead Philistines were lying on the road all the way from Shaaraim to Gath and Ekron. ⁵³ When the Israelites returned from chasing the Philistines, they plundered the Philistine camp. ⁵⁴ David later took the head of Goliath to Jerusalem, but he kept Goliath’s

weapons in his own tent.

⁵⁵ As Saul watched David going toward Goliath, he said to Abner, the commander of his army, “Abner, whose son is that young man?” Abner replied, “As sure as you are alive, I do not know.”

⁵⁶ Then the king said, “Find out whose son he is!”

⁵⁷ Later, as David returned from killing Goliath, Abner took him to Saul. David was carrying Goliath’s head.

⁵⁸ Saul asked him, “Young man, whose son are you?” David replied, “Sir, I am the son of your servant Jesse, who lives in Bethlehem.”

Chapter 18

¹ After David finished talking with Saul, he met Saul’s son, Jonathan. Jonathan immediately liked David; in fact, he began to love him. ² From that day, Saul kept David with him to serve him; he did not let him return home. ³ Because he loved David so much, Jonathan made a solemn agreement with David. They promised each other that they would always be friends. ⁴ Jonathan took off his own outer robe and gave it to David. He also gave David his soldier’s tunic, his sword, his bow and arrows, and his belt.

⁵ David went wherever Saul sent him. And whatever Saul told him to do, David did it very successfully. As a result, Saul appointed David as a commander in the army. All the officers and other men in the army approved of that.

⁶ But when the men in the army were returning home after David had killed Goliath, Israelite women came out from many cities and towns. They greeted King Saul while they were singing and dancing

very joyfully, playing tambourines and lyres. ⁷ As they danced, they sang this song:

"Saul has killed a thousand enemy soldiers,

But David has killed ten thousand of them."

⁸ When Saul heard them singing that, he did not like it. He became very angry. He said to himself, "They are saying that David killed ten thousand men, but that I have killed only one thousand. Soon they will want to make him their king!" ⁹ From that time, Saul watched David very closely because he was suspicious that David would try to become king.

¹⁰ The next day, an evil spirit sent by God suddenly took control of Saul. He began to act like a madman, inside his house. David was playing the lyre for him, as he did every day. Saul was holding a spear in his hand, ¹¹ and he hurled it at David, thinking, "I will fasten David to the wall with the spear!" He did that two times, but David jumped aside both times.

¹² Because it became evident that Yahweh had abandoned Saul but that he was helping David, Saul was afraid of David. ¹³ So he appointed David as a commander of a thousand soldiers and sent David away from him, hoping that David would be killed in a battle. But when David led his soldiers in their battles, ¹⁴ he always had great success, because Yahweh was helping him. ¹⁵ When Saul heard that David and his soldiers were very successful, he became more afraid of David. ¹⁶ But all the people of Israel and of Judah loved David, because he led the soldiers very successfully in the battles.

¹⁷ One day Saul said to David, "I am ready to give you my oldest daughter, Merab, to be your wife. I will do that if you serve me bravely by fighting battles for Yahweh

against the Philistines." He said that because he thought, "I will not try to get rid of David by myself. I will allow the Philistines to do that."

¹⁸ But David said to Saul, "I am not a very important person, and my family is not very important. Also my clan is not a very important Israelite clan. So I do not deserve to become your son-in-law." ¹⁹ So, when it was time for Merab to be given to David to become his wife, instead, Saul gave her to a man named Adriel, from Meholah.

²⁰ However, Saul's other daughter, Michal, fell in love with David. When they told Saul about that, he was pleased. ²¹ He thought, "I will give Michal to him, in order that she may trap him, and the Philistines will be able to kill him." So he said to David, "You can marry Michal," and by saying that, he indicated for the second time that David would become his son-in-law.

²² Saul told his servants, "Talk to David privately, and say to him, 'Listen, the king is pleased with you, and all of us his servants love you. So now we think that you should marry Michal and become the king's son-in-law.'"

²³ So they said that to David. But David said, "It would be a great honor to become the king's son-in-law. But I do not think that I should do that, because I am only a poor and insignificant man."

²⁴ Saul's servant told him what David had said. ²⁵ Saul replied, "Go and say to David, 'In order for the king to allow you to marry Michal, he wants you to kill one hundred Philistines and to cut off their foreskins and bring the foreskins to him to prove that you have killed them. In that way he will get revenge on his enemies.'"

But what Saul really wanted was that the Philistines would kill David while he was

trying to kill them.

²⁶ When the servants told that to David, he was very pleased that he could become the king's son-in-law by doing that. The king had said how many days he would allow for David to do that. ²⁷ But before that time ended, David and his men went and killed, not one hundred, but two hundred Philistines! He brought their foreskins to Saul, and counted them while Saul was watching, in order to prove that he had fulfilled what the king required so that he could become Saul's son-in-law. So then Saul was obligated to allow David to marry his daughter Michal.

²⁸ But when Saul realized that Yahweh was helping David, and that his daughter loved David, ²⁹ he became more afraid of David. So as long as Saul lived, he was David's enemy.

³⁰ The Philistine armies repeatedly came to fight the Israelites, but every time they fought, David and his soldiers were more successful than any of Saul's other army commanders. As a result, David became very famous.

Chapter 19

¹ Then Saul urged all his servants and his son Jonathan to kill David. But Jonathan liked David very much. ² So he warned David, "My father Saul is seeking for a way to kill you. So be careful. Tomorrow morning go and find a place to hide in the field. ³ I will ask my father to go out there with me. While we are out there, I will talk to him about you. Then I will tell you everything that he tells me." So David did what Jonathan told him to do.

⁴ The next morning, Jonathan spoke with his father, saying many good things about David. He said, "You should never do any-

thing to harm your servant David! He has never done anything to harm you! Everything that he has done has helped you very much. ⁵ He was in danger of being killed when he fought against Goliath, the great soldier of the Philistine army. By enabling David to kill him, Yahweh won a great victory for all the people of Israel. You were very happy when you saw that. Why would you want to do anything now to harm David? There is no reason for you to kill him, because he has not done anything wrong!"

⁶ Saul listened to what Jonathan said. Then Saul said, "I solemnly promise that just as surely as Yahweh is alive, I will not kill David."

⁷ Afterward, Jonathan summoned David and told him what he and Saul had said. Then Jonathan brought David to Saul, and David served Saul as he had done before.

⁸ One day a war started again, and David led his soldiers to fight against the Philistine army. David's army attacked them very furiously, with the result that the Philistine army ran away.

⁹ But one day when Saul was sitting in his house, an evil spirit sent from Yahweh suddenly came upon Saul. David was playing his harp for Saul. ¹⁰ Saul hurled his spear at David to try to fasten him to the wall. David dodged, and the spear did not hit him. The spear stuck in the wall, but David ran out into the darkness and escaped.

¹¹ Then Saul sent messengers to David's house. He told them to watch the house and to kill David while he was leaving the house the following morning. But David's wife Michal saw them and warned him, saying, "To save your life, you must run away tonight, because if you do not do that, you will be killed tomorrow!" ¹² So she enabled David to climb out through a

window, and he ran away and escaped. ¹³ Then Michal took an idol that was in the house and put it in the bed. She covered it with some of David's clothes, and put some goat's hair on the head of the idol.

¹⁴ When the messengers came to the house the next morning, she told them that David was sick and could not get out of bed.

¹⁵ When they reported that to Saul, he told them to go back to David's house. He said to them, "Bring him to me lying on his bed, in order that I can kill him!" ¹⁶ But when those men entered David's house, they saw that there was only an idol in the bed, with goat's hair on its head.

¹⁷ When they reported that to Saul, Saul summoned Michal and said to her, "Why did you trick me like that? You allowed my enemy to escape!"

Michal replied to Saul, "David told me that if I did not help him to escape, he would kill me!"

¹⁸ After David had escaped from Saul, he went to Samuel, who was at his home in Ramah. He told Samuel everything that Saul had done to try to kill him. Then David and Samuel went to Naioth, which was nearby, and they stayed there.

¹⁹ Someone told Saul that David was in Naioth, ²⁰ so Saul sent some messengers to capture him. When those messengers arrived in Ramah, they met some men who were shouting messages from Yahweh, and Samuel was there as their leader. When Saul's messengers met them, the Spirit of God came upon Saul's men, and they also shouted in the same way. ²¹ When Saul heard about that, he sent more messengers, but they also started to shout out messages from Yahweh. ²² Finally, Saul also went to Ramah. When he arrived at the well at a place named Seku, he asked people there, "Where are Samuel

and David?"

The people replied, "They are at Naioth near the city of Ramah." ²³ While Saul was walking toward Naioth, the Spirit of God also came upon him. While he walked on, he shouted messages from Yahweh until he came to Naioth. ²⁴ There he took off his outer clothes, and he spoke messages from God in front of Samuel. He lay on the ground doing that all day and all night. That is the reason that when people see someone doing something that is very unexpected, they say, "Is Saul also a prophet?"

Chapter 20

¹ David ran away from Naioth. He went to Jonathan and asked him, "What have I done to displease your father? What did I do that was wrong? Why is he trying to kill me?"

² Jonathan replied, "My father is certainly not trying to kill you! He always tells me before he does anything that he is planning. He tells me about important things and unimportant things that he plans to do. Why would he refuse to tell me if he were planning to kill you? So what you are saying cannot be true."

³ Then David solemnly declared this to Jonathan: "Your father knows very well that you and I are very good friends, so he says to himself, 'I will not tell Jonathan what I am going to do. If I tell Jonathan, he will be upset, and then he will tell David.' But just as surely as Yahweh is alive and you are alive, I am only one step away from being killed."

⁴ Jonathan said to David, "I will do whatever you tell me to do."

⁵ David replied, "Tomorrow we will celebrate the festival of the new moon. I al-

ways eat with the king at that festival. But tomorrow I will hide in the field, and I will stay there for one night. I will stay there until the evening of the day after tomorrow. ⁶ If your father asks why I am not there at the festival, say to him, 'David requested me to allow him to go to his home in Bethlehem, where his family will offer the sacrifice that they offer every year.' ⁷ If your father says 'Very well', then I know I will be safe. But if he becomes extremely angry, you will know that he is determined to harm me. ⁸ Please be kind to me. Yahweh heard you when you made a solemn agreement with me that you and I will always be good friends. But if I deserve to be punished, you should kill me yourself, rather than allow your father to punish me."

⁹ Jonathan replied, "I will never do that! If I ever find out that my father is determined to harm you, I will certainly tell you."

¹⁰ David asked him, "How will I find out if your father answers you harshly?" ¹¹ Jonathan replied, "Come with me. We will go out into the field." So they went together out into the field.

¹² There Jonathan said to David, "I promise this while Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, is listening: At this time the day after tomorrow, I will find out what my father is thinking about you. If he is saying good things about you, I will certainly send a message to you to tell that to you. ¹³ But if he is planning to hurt you, I hope that Yahweh will punish me very severely if I do not tell you in advance and help you flee, so that you might go away in safety. I hope that Yahweh will be with you and help you like he has helped my father. ¹⁴ But while I am still alive, please act kindly toward me because of the oath that we both swore in Yahweh's sight; do not kill me when you

become king. ¹⁵ But if I die, never stop acting kindly toward my family for the sake of our oath, even after Yahweh has gotten rid of all your enemies all over the earth."

¹⁶ So Jonathan made a solemn agreement with David and his descendants. And he said, "I hope that Yahweh will get rid of all your enemies." ¹⁷ And Jonathan requested David to repeat his solemn promise to be his close friend, because Jonathan loved David as much as he loved himself.

¹⁸ Then Jonathan said, "Tomorrow we will celebrate the festival of the new moon. When you are not sitting at your place when we eat, my father will miss you. ¹⁹ The day after tomorrow, in the evening go to the place where you hid before. Wait by the pile of stones. ²⁰ I will come out and shoot three arrows as though I were trying to shoot at a target. The arrows will hit the ground close to the pile of stones. ²¹ Then I will send a boy to bring the arrows back to me. If you hear me say to him, 'They are closer to me,' then just as surely as Yahweh is alive, you will know that everything is fine, and that you will not be killed. ²² But if I tell him, 'The arrows are farther away,' you will know that you must leave immediately, because Yahweh wants you to run away. ²³ I hope that Yahweh will watch you and me and enable us to never forget what we have promised each other."

²⁴ So David went and hid in the field. When the festival of the new moon started, the king sat down to eat. ²⁵ He sat where he usually sat, close to the wall. Jonathan sat across from him, and Abner the army commander sat next to Saul. But no one was sitting in the place where David usually sat. ²⁶ On that day, Saul did not say anything about David, because he was thinking, "Something must have happened that caused David to become

unacceptable to worship God.” ²⁷ But the next day, when David was not sitting at the place where he usually sat, Saul asked Jonathan, “Why has that son of Jesse not been here to eat with us yesterday and today?”

²⁸ Jonathan replied, “David earnestly requested me that I permit him to go to Bethlehem. ²⁹ He said, ‘Please allow me to go, because our family is going to offer a sacrifice. My older brother insisted that I be there. So please allow me to go to be with my older brothers.’ I allowed David to go, and that is the reason that he is not here eating with you.”

³⁰ Saul was furious! He said to Jonathan, “I know that you are being loyal to that son of Jesse. But you will cause shame to come to yourself and to your mother. ³¹ As long as Jesse’s son is living, you will never become the king, and you will never rule over this kingdom! So now, summon David, and bring him to me. He must be executed!”

³² Jonathan asked his father, “Why should David be executed? What wrong has he done?” ³³ Then Saul threw his spear at Jonathan in order to kill him, but the spear did not hit him. So Jonathan knew that his father really wanted to kill David.

³⁴ Jonathan was very angry, and he left the room. On that second day of the festival he refused to eat anything. He was disgusted about what his father had done, and he was worried about David.

³⁵ The following morning Jonathan went out to the field to give a message to David, as he had agreed that he would do. He took a young boy with him. ³⁶ Jonathan said to the boy, “Run and find the arrows that I shoot.” The boy started running, and Jonathan shot an arrow ahead of the boy. ³⁷ The boy ran to the place where the arrow hit the ground, but Jonathan

called out, “The arrow is further away!”

³⁸ Then he shouted to the boy, “Go quickly; do not wait! Do not stop!” The boy picked up the arrow and brought it back to Jonathan. ³⁹ But the boy did not understand the meaning of what Jonathan had said; only Jonathan and David knew. ⁴⁰ Then Jonathan gave his bow and arrows to the boy and told him, “Go back to the town.”

⁴¹ When the boy left, David came out from behind the pile of stones, where he had been hiding. He went to Jonathan and bowed in front of Jonathan three times, with his face touching the ground. Then David and Jonathan kissed each other on the cheek, and they cried together. But David cried more than Jonathan.

⁴² Jonathan said to David, “May things go well for you as you go. Yahweh has heard what we solemnly promised to always do for each other, and what we said that our descendants must do for each other.” Then David left, and Jonathan went back to the town.

Chapter 21

¹ David fled from there and went to the city of Nob to see Ahimelech the priest. Ahimelech trembled when he saw David because he was afraid that something bad had happened. He said to David, “Why are you alone? Why have no men come with you?”

² David deceived Ahimelech by replying, “The king sent me. But he does not want anyone to know anything about what he sent me to do. I have told my men where they should meet me. ³ Now I want to know, do you have any food here for me to eat? Could you give me five loaves of bread, or whatever other food that you can find?”

⁴ The priest answered David, "There is no ordinary bread here, but I have some of the sacred bread that was placed before Yahweh. Your men may eat it if they have not slept with women recently."

⁵ David replied, "They have not been near women for many days. I do not allow my men to defile themselves by sleeping with women while they are preparing to fight in battles. They must continue to keep themselves acceptable to God when they are on ordinary trips, and today they have certainly kept themselves acceptable to God because now we are doing something very special." ⁶ Now the only bread that the priest had was the bread on display before God, the bread that had been placed in Yahweh's presence in the sacred tent. So the priest gave David some of that bread. On that day the priest had taken those loaves from the table and replaced them with fresh loaves.

⁷ It happened that Doeg, from the Edom people group, was there on that day to make himself acceptable to Yahweh, and he saw what Ahimelech did. He was one of Saul's officials and the leader of Saul's shepherds.

⁸ David asked Ahimelech, "Do you have a spear or a sword that I can use? The king appointed us to do this task and told us to leave immediately, so I did not have time to bring any weapons."

⁹ Ahimelech replied, "I have only the sword that belonged to Goliath the giant from the Philisti people group whom you killed in Elah Valley. It is wrapped in a cloth, and is behind the sacred apron in the sacred tent. If you want it, take it, because I have no other weapon here."

David replied, "Truly, there is no other sword that is as good as that one! Give it to me." ¹⁰ So Ahimelech gave it to him, and David left there. He and his men and went

to the city of Gath in the region of Philistia, to stay with King Achish. ¹¹ But the officers of King Achish did not approve of David's coming. They said to King Achish, "This man David is just as powerful as the king of his land. Our enemies, the Israelite people, honored him by dancing and singing,

'Saul has killed thousands of his enemies,

but David has killed tens of thousands of them!'"

¹² David heard what those men were saying, so he was afraid of what King Achish might do to him. ¹³ So he pretended that he was insane. He started scratching on the gates of the city and allowing his saliva to run down his beard.

¹⁴ Then King Achish said to his men, "Look at this man! He is acting like an insane man! Why have you brought him to me?"

¹⁵ Have you brought him because I do not already have enough insane men here in my house?"

Chapter 22

¹ David and his men left Gath and went east to hide in a cave on a hill near the town of Adullam. Soon his older brothers and all his other relatives came and stayed with him there. ² Then other men came there. Some were men who had caused trouble, some were men who owed money, and some were men who were unhappy for any reason. They continued to come until there were four hundred men there, and David was their leader.

³ Later they left there and went east to the city of Mizpah in the land of Moab. There David asked the king of Moab, "Please allow my father and mother to live here with you until I know what God is going

to do for me.” ⁴ The king gave him permission, so David’s parents stayed with the king of Moab all the time that David and the men who were with him were hiding in that area.

⁵ One day the prophet Gad told David, “Leave your hideout here and return to Judah.” So David and his men went to the Hereth Forest in Judah.

⁶ One day, someone told Saul that David and his men had arrived in Judah. On that day, Saul was sitting underneath the tamarisk tree on a hill near the town of Gibeah. He was holding his spear and was surrounded by his army officers. ⁷ He shouted to them, “You men of the tribe of Benjamin, listen to me! Do you think that the son of Jesse will give all of you fields and vineyards if he becomes your king? Will he appoint all of you to become generals and captains in his army? ⁸ Is that why you have all conspired against me, as he is doing today? Not one of you informed me that my own son had sworn friendship with him! Not one of you has had any pity on me or told me that my son has encouraged the son of Jesse to revolt against me, to hide out from me!”

⁹ Doeg, a man from the Edom people group, was standing there with Saul’s officers. He said to Saul, “When I was at Nob, I saw that son of Jesse talking to Ahimelech the priest. ¹⁰ Ahimelech asked Yahweh what David should do. Then Ahimelech gave to David some food and the sword of Goliath, that Philistine giant.”

¹¹ Then Saul summoned Ahimelech and all Ahimelech’s relatives who were priests at Nob. So they all came to the king. ¹² Saul said to Ahimelech, “You son of Ahitub, listen to me!”

Ahimelech answered, “Yes, sir!” ¹³ Saul said, “Why are you and Jesse’s son conspiring to get rid of me? You gave him some

bread and a sword. You requested God to tell David what he should do. David has rebelled against me, and right now he is hiding somewhere, waiting to attack me.”

¹⁴ Ahimelech replied, “I do not understand why you are saying that, because David, your son-in-law, the captain of your bodyguards, is very loyal to you. No one is more loyal to you than David! Everyone in your household respects him very much. ¹⁵ Furthermore, this was certainly not the first time that I requested God to say what he wanted David to do. And it is not right for you to accuse me or any of my relatives of trying to get rid of you, because I do not know anything about anyone wanting to do that.”

¹⁶ The king then shouted, “Ahimelech, you and your all your relatives are going to be executed right now!”

¹⁷ Then he commanded his bodyguards, “Kill these priests of Yahweh, because they are allies of David, and they are conspiring with David against me! They knew that David was trying to run away from me, but they did not tell me!”

But Saul’s bodyguards refused to kill Yahweh’s priests.

¹⁸ Then the king said to Doeg, “You kill them!” So Doeg, the man from the Edom people group, went out and struck them down with his sword. On that day he killed eighty-five men who were able to wear the sacred aprons because they were all God’s priests. ¹⁹ He also went and killed many people in Nob, the city where the priests lived. He killed men, women, children, babies, cattle, donkeys, and sheep there.

²⁰ But Abiathar, Ahimelech’s son, escaped. He ran away and joined David and the men who were with him. ²¹ He told David that Saul had commanded Doeg to kill Yahweh’s priests. ²² Then David said to him,

"That man from the Edom people group, Doeg, was there at Nob on the day that I was there. I knew that he would surely tell Saul what happened. So it is my fault that your father and all of his family have been killed. ²³ You stay with me, and do not be afraid. The man who wants to kill you wants to kill me also, but you will be safe if you stay with me."

Chapter 23

¹ One day someone told David, "You need to know that the Philistine army is attacking the town of Keilah and that they are stealing grain from where men are threshing it." ² David asked Yahweh, "Should my men and I go to fight against those men from the Philistia people group?"

Yahweh answered, "Yes, go. Attack them, and rescue the people of Keilah." ³ But David's men said to him, "We are afraid that Saul will attack us here in Judah. We will be more afraid if we go to Keilah where the Philistine army is!"

⁴ So David asked Yahweh again if they should go to Keilah. Yahweh answered, "Yes, go down to Keilah. I will help you to defeat the Philistines." ⁵ So David and his men went to Keilah. They fought against the Philistines and captured many of their cattle. David and his men killed many of the Philistine men and rescued the people of Keilah.

⁶ Abiathar son of Ahimelech, fled to be with David at Keilah, and he brought a sacred apron with him to use to determine what God wanted him to do.

⁷ Soon Saul found out that David was at Keilah. So he said, "That is good! God is enabling me to capture him! He has trapped himself in that town, because it has high walls with gates around it."

⁸ So Saul summoned his army, and they prepared to go down to Keilah to attack David and his men.

⁹ But David found out that Saul was planning for his army to attack him. So he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring here the sacred apron." ¹⁰ So when Abiathar brought it, David prayed, "Yahweh, God of us Israelites, I have heard that Saul is planning to come here with his army and destroy Keilah because I am here. ¹¹ Will Saul come down here to Keilah, as people reported to me? Will the leaders of Keilah enable Saul to capture me? Yahweh, God of us Israelites, please tell me!"

Yahweh answered, "Yes, Saul will come down." ¹² Then David asked, "Will the leaders of Keilah enable Saul's army to capture me and my men if we stay here?"

By means of the stones in the sacred vest, Yahweh replied, "Yes, they will." ¹³ So David and his six hundred men left Keilah. They continued to move from one place to another, wherever they thought that Saul would not find them. And when Saul found out that David had escaped from Keilah, he did not go there.

¹⁴ David and his men stayed in hiding places in the desert and in the hills of the wilderness of Ziph. Every day Saul sent men to search for David, but Yahweh did not allow them to capture David.

¹⁵ While David and his men were at a place named Horesh in the wilderness of Ziph, he found out that Saul was coming there to kill him. ¹⁶ But Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and encouraged him to continue to trust in God. ¹⁷ Jonathan told him, "Do not be afraid, because my father will not be able to harm you. Some day you will be the king of Israel, and I will be the second most important man in Israel. My father Saul also knows that." ¹⁸ Then the two

of them repeated their solemn promise that Yahweh had heard them make previously, that they would always be loyal to each other. Then Jonathan went home, but David stayed at Horesh.

¹⁹ Some people from Ziph went to Saul when he was at Gibeah, and they told him, "David and his men are hiding in our land! They are hiding in places at Horesh on the hill of Hakilah, south of a place named Jeshimon. ²⁰ So, O king, come down there any time that you want to. It is our duty to capture him and put him in your hands."

²¹ Saul replied, "I hope that Yahweh will bless you for telling that to me. ²² Go back and find out more about him. Find out exactly where he is staying, and find out who has seen him there. People tell me that he is very clever, so we need to be clever also to be able to capture him. ²³ Find out all the places where he and his men hide. Then come back and tell me everything that you have found out. Then I will take my army and go there with you. If David is in any of the clans of Judah, we will search for him and find him!"

²⁴ So those people went back to Ziph before Saul went there. At that time David and his men were in the desert of Maon, south of Jeshimon. ²⁵ Saul and his soldiers went to search for David, but David heard about that. So he and his men went further south to a rocky hill in the wilderness of Maon. When Saul heard about that, he and his men followed David and his men to the wilderness of Maon.

²⁶ Saul and his soldiers were walking along one side of the hill, and David and his men were on the other side. David and his men were hurrying to escape from Saul's soldiers, because Saul and his soldiers were coming much closer. ²⁷ But then a messenger came to Saul and said to him, "Come quickly! The Philistine army is attacking the people in our land!" ²⁸ So

Saul stopped pursuing David, and he and his soldiers went to fight against the Philistine army. That is the reason that people call that place the Rock of Escape. ²⁹ David and his men also left that place and went to places to hide safely at Engedi.

Chapter 24

¹ After Saul and his soldiers returned home after fighting against the Philistine army, someone reported to Saul that David and his men had gone into the wilderness near EnGedi. ² When Saul heard that, he chose three thousand men from various areas in Israel, and they went to search for David and his men at the Rocks of Wild Goats.

³ At a place where the road was alongside some sheep pens, Saul left the road and entered a cave to relieve himself. He did not know that David and his men were hiding further inside that same cave! ⁴ David's men saw Saul and whispered to David, "Today is the day that Yahweh spoke about when he said, 'I will enable you to defeat your enemy.' You can do to him whatever you want to!" So David crept toward the entrance of the cave and cut off with his knife a small piece of Saul's robe. ⁵ And then he returned to his men.

But David felt guilty for having cut off a piece of Saul's robe. ⁶ He said to his men, "I should not have done that to the king! I hope that Yahweh will never allow me to attack the one whom God has appointed, because Yahweh is the one who chose him to be the king." ⁷ By saying that, David restrained his men and did not allow them to kill Saul.

⁸ After Saul left the cave and started to walk on the road again, David came out of the cave and shouted to Saul, "King Saul!" Saul turned around and looked,

and David bowed down with his face touching the ground. ⁹ Then he said to Saul, "Why do you pay attention to people when they say 'David wants to harm you'?" ¹⁰ Today you can see with your own eyes that what they say is not true. Yahweh put you in a place where I and my men could have killed you when you were in this cave. Some of my men told me that I should do that, but I did not allow them to do that. I said to them, 'I will not harm my master, because he is the king whom Yahweh appointed.' ¹¹ Your majesty, look at this piece of your robe that is in my hand! I cut it from your robe, but I did not kill you. So now you should be able to understand that I am not planning to do anything evil to you. I have not done anything wrong to you, but you are searching for me to kill me. ¹² I desire that Yahweh may punish you for the wrong things that you have done to me. But I will never try to harm you. ¹³ There is a proverb that has the words, 'Evil things are done by evil people.' But I am not evil, so I will not do evil things to you.

¹⁴ You are the king of Israel. So why are you pursuing me? What is it you are chasing? I am nothing more than a dead dog or a flea. ¹⁵ I hope that Yahweh will decide who is right in this matter, you or I? And when he decides in my favor, I hope he will defend me and save me from your power."

¹⁶ When David finished saying that to Saul, Saul called out to him and asked, "My son David, is that your voice that I am hearing?" Then he cried loudly. ¹⁷ He said, "You are a better man than I am. You have done something very good to me when I tried to do something very bad to you. ¹⁸ When Yahweh put me in a place in that cave where you could have easily killed me, you did not do that. ¹⁹ No one lets his enemy go free after he finds him. But

you have done this. I hope that Yahweh will reward you for your acting kindly toward me today. ²⁰ I know that some day you will surely become the king, and that your kingdom will prosper as you rule the Israelite people. ²¹ Now while Yahweh is listening, solemnly me that you will not kill my family and get rid of all my descendants."

²² David solemnly promised Saul that he would not harm Saul's family. Then Saul went back home, and David and his men went back up into the place where they had been hiding.

Chapter 25

¹ Soon after that, Samuel died, and all the Israelite people gathered and mourned for him. They buried his body outside his home in Ramah.

Then David and his men moved to the wilderness of Paran. ² In the town of Maon there was a very rich man. This man kept his property and livestock in a town nearby that is called Carmel. He had much property and livestock and he owned three thousand sheep and one thousand goats. Carmel is where he sheared his sheep. ³ His name was Nabal; he was a descendant of Caleb. His wife Abigail was a wise and beautiful woman, but Nabal was very cruel and treated people very unkindly.

⁴ One day while David and his men were in the desert, someone told him that Nabal was cutting the wool from his sheep. ⁵ So David told ten of his men, "Go to Nabal at Carmel and greet him for me. ⁶ Then tell him this message from me: 'I wish that things may go well for you and your family and for everything that you possess.

⁷ I heard people say that you are cutting

the wool from your sheep. Previously, when your shepherds were among us, we did not harm them. All the time that your shepherds were among us at Camel, we did not steal any sheep from them. ⁸ You can ask your servants if this is true, and they will tell you that it is true. We have come here at a time when you are celebrating, so I ask you to please be kind to us and give these men whatever extra food you have, for me, David, and my men to eat.”

⁹ When David’s men arrived where Nabal was, they gave David’s message to him, and they waited for him to reply. But Nabal spoke harshly to them. ¹⁰ He said to them, “Who does this man, this son of Jesse, think that he is? There are many slaves who are running away from their masters at the present time, and it seems to me that he is just one of them. ¹¹ I give bread and water to the men who are cutting the wool from my sheep, and I give them meat from animals that I have slaughtered. Why should I take some of those things and give them to a group of outlaws?”

¹² Then David’s men returned and told him what Nabal had said. ¹³ When David heard this, he told his men, “We are going to kill Nabal; fasten your swords!” So he fastened on his sword, and about four hundred men fastened their swords and went with him. There were two hundred of his men who stayed with their supplies.

¹⁴ One of Nabal’s servants found out what David and his men were planning to do, so he went to Nabal’s wife Abigail and said to her, “David sent some messengers from the desert to greet our master Nabal, but Nabal only yelled at them. ¹⁵ All the time that we were in the fields close to them, those men of David were very kind to us. They did not harm us. They did not steal

anything from us. ¹⁶ They protected us during the daytime and during the night. They were like a wall around us to protect us while we were taking care of our sheep. ¹⁷ So now you should think about it and decide what you can do. If you do not do something, terrible things will happen to our master and to all his family. Nabal is an extremely wicked man, so he will not listen to anyone who tries to tell him what to do.”

¹⁸ When Abigail heard that, she very quickly gathered two hundred loaves of bread, and also got two leather bags full of wine, the meat from five sheep, a bushel of roasted grain, a hundred packs of raisins, and two hundred packs of dried figs. She put all those things on donkeys. ¹⁹ Then she told her servants, “Go ahead of me. I will follow you.” But she did not tell her husband what she was going to do.

²⁰ Abigail rode on her donkey and came down to the place in the hills where David and his men were staying. Suddenly David and his men met her. ²¹ David had been saying to his men, “It was useless for us to protect that man and all his possessions here in this wilderness. We did not steal anything that belonged to him, but he has acted badly toward me in return for our good actions toward him. ²² I hope that God will strike me and kill me if he or even one male person belonging to him is still alive tomorrow morning!”

²³ When Abigail saw David, she quickly got down from her donkey and bowed before him, with her face touching the ground. ²⁴ Then she prostrated herself at David’s feet and said to him, “Sir, I deserve to be punished for what my husband has done. Please listen to what I say to you. ²⁵ Please do not pay attention to what this worthless man Nabal has said. His name means ‘fool,’ and he surely is a foolish man. But I, who am willing to be

your servant, did not see the messengers whom you sent to him. ²⁶ Yahweh has prevented you from getting revenge on anyone and killing anyone. I hope that just as surely as Yahweh lives and as surely as you live, your enemies will be cursed like Nabal is. ²⁷ I have brought a gift for you and for the men who are with you. ²⁸ Please forgive me if I have done anything wrong to you. Yahweh will surely reward you by allowing many of your descendants to become kings of Israel, because you are fighting the battles that Yahweh wants you to fight. And I know that throughout all your life you have not done anything wrong. ²⁹ Even when those who are trying to kill you pursue you, you are safe because Yahweh your God takes care of you. You will be protected like a bundle that is safely tied up. But your enemies will disappear like stones that are hurled from a sling. ³⁰ Yahweh has promised to do good things for you, and he will do what he has promised. And he will cause you to become the ruler of the Israelite people. ³¹ When that happens, do not kill any people in his household. Then you will not think that you deserve to be punished for having punished and killed innocent people. And when Yahweh enables you to become king, please do not forget to be kind to me."

³² David replied to Abigail, "I praise Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, because he sent you to talk with me. ³³ I hope today God may help you because you have wisely kept me from killing people today, and from paying back evil for evil. ³⁴ Just as surely as Yahweh the God whom we Israelites worship is alive, he has prevented me from harming you. If you had not come quickly to talk to me, neither Nabal nor even one of Nabal's men or boys would be still alive tomorrow morning."

³⁵ Then David accepted the gifts that Abi-

gail had brought to him. He said to her, "I hope that things may go well for you. I have heard what you said, and I will do what you have requested."

³⁶ When Abigail returned to Nabal, he was in his house, having a big celebration like kings have. He was very drunk and feeling very happy. So Abigail did not say anything to him that night about her meeting with David. ³⁷ The next morning, when he was no longer drunk, she told him everything that had happened when she talked with David. Immediately, he had a stroke and could move no longer. ³⁸ About ten days later Yahweh struck him again, and he died.

³⁹ After David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "I praise Yahweh! Nabal insulted me, but Yahweh has shown that I have been right. He has prevented me from doing anything wrong. And he has punished Nabal for the wrong that he did."

Then David sent messengers to Abigail, to ask her if she would become his wife. ⁴⁰ His servants went to Carmel and said to Abigail, "David sent us to take you to become his wife." ⁴¹ Abigail bowed down with her face touching the ground. Then she told the messengers to tell David, "I am happy to become your wife. I will be your servant. And I am willing to wash the feet of your servants." ⁴² Abigail quickly got on her donkey and went with David's messengers. Five of her female servants went with her. When she arrived where David was, she became his wife. ⁴³

David had previously married Ahinoam, a woman from Jezreel near Carmel. So both Abigail and Ahinoam were now David's wives. ⁴⁴ King Saul's daughter Michal was also David's wife, but Saul had given her to Laish's son Paltiel, who was in the town of Gallim.

Chapter 26

¹ One day some of the people of Ziph town went to Saul while he was at Gibeah, and they said to him, "David is hiding in a cave on the hill of Hakilah, east of the town of Jeshimon."

² So Saul chose three thousand of the best Israelite soldiers and went with them to the wilderness of Ziph to search for David.

³ Saul and his men set up their tents close to the road on the hill of Hakilah, east of the town of Jeshimon, but David and his men stayed in the wilderness. When David heard that Saul was searching for him, ⁴ he sent some spies to find out if it was true that Saul had come to Hakilah.

⁵ Then that evening David went to the place where Saul had set up his tent. From a distance he saw where Saul and his army commander, Abner, were sleeping. Saul was sleeping with all his army sleeping around him.

⁶ David went back to where his men were and talked to Ahimelech, who was from the Heth people group, and Joab's brother Abishai, whose mother was David's older sister Zeruiah. He asked them, "Who will go with me down into the camp where Saul is?"

Abishai replied, "I will go with you." ⁷ So that night David and Abishai crept into Saul's camp. They saw that Saul was asleep. His spear was stuck in the ground near his head. Saul was asleep in the middle of the camp. Abner and the other soldiers were sleeping around Saul.

⁸ Abishai whispered to David, "Today Yahweh has enabled us to kill your enemy! Allow me to fasten Saul to the ground by thrusting my spear into him. It will be necessary for me to strike him only once. I will not need to strike him twice."

⁹ But David whispered to Abishai, "No, do not kill Saul. Yahweh has appointed him to be king, so Yahweh will surely punish anyone who kills him. ¹⁰ Just as surely as Yahweh is alive, he himself will punish Saul. Perhaps Yahweh will strike him when it is Saul's time to die, or perhaps Saul will be killed in a battle. ¹¹ But I hope that Yahweh will prevent me from harming the king whom he has appointed. Let us take Saul's spear and water jug that are near his head. Then let us get out of here!"

¹² So David took the spear and the jug, and he and Abishai left. No one saw them or knew what they were doing, and no one woke up, because Yahweh had caused them to be sound asleep.

¹³ David and Abishai went across the valley and climbed to the top of the hill, a long way from Saul's camp.

¹⁴ Then David shouted to Abner, "Abner, can you hear me?"

Abner replied "Who are you, waking up the king by calling out to him?" ¹⁵

David replied, "I am sure that you are the greatest man in Israel ! So why did you not guard your master, the king? Someone came into your camp in order to kill your master, the king. ¹⁶ You have done a very poor job of guarding Saul. So just as surely as Yahweh is alive, you and your men should be executed! You have not guarded your master whom Yahweh appointed to be the king. Where are the king's spear and the water jug that were close to his head?"

¹⁷ Saul woke up and recognized that it was David's voice. He called out, saying, "My son David, is that your voice?"

David replied, "Yes, your majesty it is my voice."

¹⁸ Then David added, "Sir, why are you pursuing me? I have done nothing wrong!"

¹⁹ Your majesty, listen to me! If Yahweh

has caused you to be angry with me, I want him to accept a sacrifice from me. But if it is people who have caused you to be angry with me, I hope that Yahweh will curse them. They have forced me to leave the land that Yahweh gave to me. They have told me, 'Go somewhere else and worship other gods!' ²⁰ Now do not force me to die away from the land and presence of Yahweh. You, the king, are looking for me, but I am as good as a flea or a wild bird that someone hunts in the hills."

²¹ Then Saul said, "David, my son, I have sinned by trying to kill you. So come back home. Today you have considered my life to be very valuable and so you have not killed me. So I will not try to harm you. I have made a big mistake and have acted foolishly."

²² David replied, "I will leave your spear here. Send one of your young men here to get it. ²³ Yahweh rewards us for the things that we do that are right and for being loyal to him. Even when Yahweh placed me where I could easily have killed you, I refused to do that, because you are the one whom Yahweh has appointed to be the king. ²⁴ Just as I considered your life to be valuable and spared your life today, I hope that Yahweh will consider my life to be valuable and spare my life and save me from all my troubles."

²⁵ Then Saul said to David, "My son David, I pray that Yahweh may bless you. May you do great things very successfully."

Then David returned to his men, and Saul went back home.

Chapter 27

¹ But David thought, "Some day Saul will capture me if I stay around here. So the

best thing that I can do is to escape and go to the region of Philistia. If I do that, Saul will stop searching for me here in Israel, and I will be safe."

² So David and his six hundred men left Israel and went to see Maok's son Achish, who was king of the city of Gath in the region of Philistia. ³ David and his men and their families started to live there in Gath, the city where King Achish lived. David's two wives were with him—Ahinoam from Jezreel, and Nabal's widow Abigail, from Carmel. ⁴ When Saul heard that David had run away and was living in Gath, he stopped searching for David.

⁵ One day David said to Achish, "If you are pleased with us, give us a place in one of the small villages where we can stay. There is no need for us to stay in the city where you are the king."

⁶ Achish liked what David suggested. So that day Achish gave to David the town of Ziklag. As a result, Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah since that time.

⁷ David and his men lived in the region of Philistia for sixteen months. ⁸ During that time, David and his men raided the people who lived in the areas where the Geshur, Girzi, and Amalek people groups lived. Those people had lived there from long before. That area extended south to Shur and to the border of Egypt. ⁹ Whenever David's men attacked them, they killed all the men and women, and they took all the people's sheep and cattle and donkeys and camels, and even their clothes. Then they would bring those things back home, and David would go to talk to Achish.

¹⁰ Each time Achish would ask David, "Where did you go raiding today?" Sometimes David would say that they had gone to the southern part of Judah, and sometimes he would say that they had gone to where the Jerahmeelites lived in the south,

or that he had fought against the Kenites who lived in the south. ¹¹ David's men never brought back to Gath any man or woman who was still alive. David thought, "If we do not kill everyone, some of them who are still alive they will go and tell Achish the truth about what we really did." David did that all the time that he and his men lived in the region of Philistia. ¹² So Achish believed what David told him; he thought, "Because of what David has done, his own people, the Israelites, must now hate him very much. So he will have to stay here and serve me forever."

Chapter 28

¹ Some time later, the people of Philistia gathered their army to attack the Israelites again. King Achish told David, "I am expecting that you and your men will join with my men to attack the Israelites."

² David replied, "We will go with you, and then you will see for yourself what we can do!"

Achish said, "Very well, I will appoint you to be my permanent bodyguard."

³ Now while Samuel was still alive, Saul did some things that pleased Yahweh. One of the good things that Saul did was to expel from Israel all the people who were fortune tellers or who talked to the spirits of dead people. But Samuel had died, and all the Israelite people had mourned for him. Then they had buried him in Ramah, his hometown.

⁴ The army of Philistia gathered and set up their tents at the city of Shunem, in the north of Israel. Saul gathered the Israelite army and set up their tents at Gilboa in the eastern part of the same valley. ⁵ When Saul saw the army of Philistia, he became so afraid that his heart pounded.

⁶ He prayed to Yahweh, but Yahweh did not answer him. Yahweh did not tell Saul what he should do by giving him a dream, or by having the priest throw the marked stones in his sacred pouch, or by giving a message about Saul to any prophet. ⁷ Then Saul said to his servants, "Find for me a woman who talks to the spirits of dead people, in order that I can ask her what will happen." His servants replied, "There is a woman in the town of Endor who does that."

⁸ So Saul took off the clothes that showed that he was the king, and he put on ordinary clothes to disguise himself. Then he and two of his men went during the night to talk to that woman. Saul said to her, "I want you to talk to a spirit of someone who has died. Cause to appear the person whose name I will give to you."

⁹ But the woman replied, "You surely know what Saul has done. He expelled from this land all the people who talk to spirits of dead people and all fortune tellers. I think that you are trying to trap me, in order that I will be executed for doing something that is not permitted."

¹⁰ Saul replied, solemnly asking Yahweh to listen to what he was saying, "Just as surely as Yahweh is alive, you will not be punished for doing this."

¹¹ Then the woman said, "Whom do you want me to cause to appear?"

Saul replied, "Cause Samuel to appear."

¹² So the woman did that. But when she saw Samuel, she screamed. She said, "You have tricked me ! You are Saul! You will execute me for doing this!"

¹³ Saul said to her, "Do not be afraid. What do you see?"

The woman said, "I see a god coming up out of the ground." ¹⁴ Saul said, "What does he look like?"

The woman replied, "An old man wearing a robe is appearing."

Then Saul knew that it was Samuel. So he bowed down with his face touching the ground. ¹⁵ Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you bothered me by causing me to appear?"

Saul said, "I am very worried. The army of Philistia is about to attack my army, and God has abandoned me. He does not answer my questions anymore. He does not give me dreams to tell me what to do or give messages to prophets to tell me what to do. That is the reason that I came to see you. So you tell me what I should do!"

¹⁶ Samuel said, "Yahweh has abandoned you and has become your enemy. So why do you ask me what you should do?" ¹⁷ He has done what he told me previously that he would do to you. He has torn the kingdom away from you, and he is giving it to someone who is another Israelite—David. ¹⁸ You did not obey Yahweh. Yahweh was very angry with the Amalek people group. You did not kill all of their animals, with the result that you did not show that he was very angry with them. That is the reason that he is refusing to answer you today. ¹⁹ Yahweh will enable the Philistine army to defeat you and all the other Israelite soldiers. And tomorrow you and your sons will be with me in the place where spirits of dead people are. Yahweh will cause the whole Israelite army to be defeated by the Philistine army." After Samuel said that, he disappeared.

²⁰ Saul immediately fell flat on the ground. He was so afraid because of what Samuel had said that he lost all his strength. He was also very weak because he had not eaten anything all that day and night.

²¹ The woman saw that he was very worried. She said to him, "Listen to me! I have done what you requested me to do. I could be executed for doing that." ²² So now

please pay attention to what I say. Allow me to give you some food, in order that you will eat it and get enough strength to go back to your army."

²³ But Saul refused. He said, "No, I will not eat anything." Then Saul's servants also urged him to eat something, and finally he listened to them. He got up from the ground and sat on the bed.

²⁴ The woman had a fat calf close to her house. She quickly slaughtered it and cooked it. She took some flour and mixed it with olive oil, and baked it without putting in any yeast. ²⁵ She placed the food in front of Saul and his servants, and they ate some of it. Then that same night they got up and left.

Chapter 29

¹ The Philistine army gathered at the Valley of Aphek. The Israelites set up their tents at the city of Jezreel, which was in the same valley. ² The kings of Philistia divided their men into groups; some groups had one hundred soldiers and some groups had one thousand soldiers. David and his men were marching behind, with King Achish. ³ But the Philistine commanders asked, "What are these Hebrews doing here, marching with us to battle?"

Achish replied, "Their leader is David. He previously worked for King Saul of Israel, but now he has been living near me for more than a year. During all the time since he left Saul, I have not seen that he has any faults." ⁴ But the Philistine army commanders were angry with Achish for allowing David's army to be going with them. They said to him, "Send David and his men back to the city that you gave to him! We do not want him to go with us into the battle. If he goes with us, we will have an enemy in our own midst! He

would please Saul by killing our own soldiers! ⁵ Have you forgotten that David is the one about whom the Israelites dance and sing, saying,

'Saul has killed a thousand of our enemies,

but David has killed ten thousand of them?'"

⁶ So Achish summoned David, and said to him, "Just as surely as Yahweh is alive, you have been loyal to me. I would like very much for you to fight along with my army. Since the day that you came to me, I have not found that you have any faults. But the other kings do not trust you. ⁷ So all of you go back home, and I hope to do anything that the other kings of Philistia will not be pleased with."

⁸ David replied, "What wrong have I done? Since the day that I first came to you until today, have I done anything that you think is evil? Your majesty, why will you not allow me to go and fight against your enemies?"

⁹ Achish replied, "I know I can trust you as much as I could trust an angel from God. But the commanders of my army have said, 'We will not allow David and his men to go with us into the battle.' ¹⁰ So early tomorrow morning you and your men must leave. Get up as soon as it gets light and leave."

¹¹ So David and his men got up early the following morning and returned to the area where the Philistine people lived. But the Philistine army went up to the city of Jezreel.

Chapter 30

¹ Three days later, when David and his men arrived at Ziklag, they discovered

that men of the Amalek people group had raided Ziklag and some towns in the southern Judean wilderness. They had destroyed Ziklag and burned down all the buildings. ² They had captured the women and the children and everyone else, and had taken them away. But they had not killed anyone.

³ When David and his men came to Ziklag, they saw that the town had been burned, and that their wives and sons and daughters had been captured and taken away. ⁴ David and his men cried loudly, until they were so weak that they could not cry anymore. ⁵ David's two wives, Ahinoam and Abigail, had also been taken away. ⁶ David's men were threatening to kill him by throwing stones at him, because they were very angry because their sons and daughters had been taken away. David was very distressed, but Yahweh his God gave him strength.

⁷ Then David did not know what to do, so he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring to me the sacred apron and the sacred vest." So Abiathar brought them, ⁸ and David asked Yahweh, "Should I and my men pursue the men who took our families? Will we be able to catch up to them?"

Yahweh answered by means of the stones in the sacred vest: "Yes, pursue them. You will catch up to them, and you will be able to rescue your families." ⁹ So David and the six hundred men who were with him left, and they came to the ravine of Besor. Some of his men stayed there with some of their supplies. ¹⁰ David and four hundred men continued to pursue the men who captured their families. The other two hundred men stayed there at the ravine, because they were so exhausted that they could not cross the ravine.

¹¹ As David and the four hundred men were going, they saw a man from Egypt in a field; so they took him to David. They

gave the man some water to drink and some food to eat. ¹² They also gave him a piece of fig cake and two clusters of raisins. The man had not had anything to eat or drink for three days and nights, but after he ate and drank he felt refreshed.

¹³ David asked him, "Who is your master? And where do you come from?"

He replied, "I am from Egypt. I am a slave of a man from the Amalek people group. Three days ago my master left me here, because I was sick and I was not able to go with them. ¹⁴ We had raided the southern Judean wilderness of the Kerethites, and some other towns in Judah, and the southern Judean wilderness of the Calebites. We also burned Ziklag."

¹⁵ David asked him, "Can you lead us to this group of raiders?"

He replied, "Yes, I will do that if you ask God to listen while you promise that you will not kill me or give me back to my master. If you promise that, I will take you to them." ¹⁶ David agreed to do that, so the man from Egypt led David and his men to where the men from the Amalek people group were. Those men were lying on the ground, eating and drinking and celebrating because they had captured many things from the regions of Philistia and Judah. ¹⁷ David and his men fought against them from sunset that day until the evening of the following day. Four hundred of them escaped and rode away on camels, but none of the others escaped. ¹⁸ David rescued his two wives, and he and his men got back everything else that the men of the Amalek people group had taken. ¹⁹ Nothing was missing. They took all their people back to Ziklag—young people and old people, their wives, their sons and their daughters. They also recovered all the other things that the men of the Amalek people group had taken from Ziklag. ²⁰ They took with them the sheep

and cattle that had been captured, and his men caused these animals to go in front of the rest of the cattle; they said, "These are animals that we captured in the battle; they belong to David!"

²¹ David and his men got back to where the other two hundred men were waiting, the men who did not go with David because they were very exhausted. They had stayed at the ravine of Besor. When they saw David and his men coming, they went out to greet them. And David greeted them also.

²² But some of the men who had gone with David, men who were evil and troublemakers, said, "These two hundred men did not go with us. So we should not give to them any of the things that we recovered. Each of them should take only his wife and children and go back to their homes."

²³ David replied, "No, my fellow Israelites, that would not be right. Yahweh has protected us and enabled us to defeat the enemies who attacked our town. ²⁴ Who will pay attention to you if you say things like that? The men who stayed here with our supplies will get the same amount that the men who went into the battle will get. They will all receive the same amount." ²⁵ David made that to be a law for the Israelite people, and that is still a law in Israel.

²⁶ When David and all the others arrived in Ziklag, David sent to his friends who were leaders in Judah some of the things that they had captured from the Amalek people group. He said to them, "Here is a present for you. These are things that we took from Yahweh's enemies."

²⁷ Here is a list of the cities and towns to whose leaders David sent gifts: Bethel, Ramoth in the southern part of Judah, Jattir, ²⁸ Aroer, Siphmoth, Eshtemoa. ²⁹ Also

Rakal, the cities where the descendants of Jehrameel and the cities where the Kenite people group live,³⁰ Hormah, Bor Ashan, Athak,³¹ Hebron, and all the other places where David and his men had often gone.

Chapter 31

¹ Later, the Philistines again fought against the Israelites. The Israelites ran away from them, and many Israelites were killed on Mount Gilboa. ² The Philistines caught up with Saul and his three sons, and they killed three of his sons, Jonathan and Abinadab and Malki-Shua. ³ The fighting was very fierce around Saul. When the Philistine archers caught up with Saul, they wounded him badly with their arrows.

⁴ Saul said to the man who was carrying his weapons, "Take out your sword and kill me with it, in order that these heathen Philistines will not be able to thrust their swords into me and make fun of me while I am dying."

But the man who was carrying Saul's weapons was terrified, and refused to do that. So Saul took his own sword and fell on it. The sword pierced his body, and he died. ⁵ When the man carrying his weapons saw that Saul was dead, he also threw himself on his own sword and died. ⁶ So Saul, three of his sons, and the man who carried Saul's weapons, all died on that same day.

⁷ When the Israelite people on the north side of the Valley of Jezreel and on the east side of the Jordan River heard that the Israelite army had run away and that Saul and his sons had died, they left their towns and ran away. Then the Philistines came and occupied their cities.

⁸ The next day, when the Philistines came

to take away the weapons of the dead Israelite soldiers, they found the bodies of Saul and his three sons on Mount Gilboa. ⁹ They cut off Saul's head and took his weapons. Then they sent messengers throughout their land to proclaim the news in the temples, where they kept their idols, and to the other people, that their army had defeated the Israelites. ¹⁰ They put Saul's weapons in the temple of their goddess Asherah. They also fastened the bodies of Saul and his sons to the wall that surrounded the city of Beth Shan.

¹¹ When the people who lived in Jabesh in the region of Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul's corpse, ¹² all their bravest soldiers walked all night to Beth Shan. They took the corpses of Saul and his sons down from the city wall, and they took them back to Jabesh and burned the corpses there. ¹³ They took the bones and buried them under a big tamarisk tree. Then they fasted for seven days.

2 SAMUEL

Chapter 1

¹ After Saul died, David and the men who were with him returned to the town of Ziklag after defeating the descendants of Amalek. They stayed in Ziklag for two days. ² On the third day, a man unexpectedly arrived there who had been in Saul's army. He had torn his clothes and put dust on his head to show that he was grieving. He came to David and prostrated himself on the ground in front of David to show respect for him.

³ David asked him, "Where have you come from?" The man replied, "From the Israelite army."

⁴ David asked him, "What happened? Tell me about the battle!" The man replied, "Our soldiers ran away. Many of them were killed. And Saul and his son Jonathan are dead."

⁵ David said to the young man, "How do you know that Saul and Jonathan are dead?"

⁶ The young man replied, "I was on Mount Gilboa where the fighting was. I saw Saul; he was leaning on his spear. The enemy chariots and their drivers were coming very close to him. ⁷ Saul turned around and saw me, and he called out to me. I answered him and said, 'What do you want me to do?'"

⁸ He replied, 'Who are you?' I replied, 'I am a descendant of Amalek.'

⁹ Then he said to me, 'Come over here and kill me. I am in very much pain.'

¹⁰ So I went to him and killed him, because I saw that he was wounded very badly and would not continue to live. I took

the crown from his head and his armband, which I have brought to you, my master."

¹¹ Then David took hold of his clothing and he tore it apart, and all the men who were with him tore their clothes apart as well. ¹² They tore their clothing because they were very sad and they refused to eat anything until evening because they remembered that Saul and his son Jonathan had died, and that so many of the people of Yahweh had died, and they were sad because of the great dangers the descendants of Israel had gone through, and because so many of them died in battle.

¹³ But David asked the young man who had told him about the battle, "Where are you from?" He replied, "My father is a descendant of Amalek, but we live in Israel."

¹⁴ David asked him, "Why were you not afraid that you would be punished if you killed Saul, whom Yahweh made king?" ¹⁵⁻¹⁶ You yourself said, 'I killed the man whom Yahweh appointed to be the king.' So you have made yourself guilty; you deserve to die!" Then David summoned one of his soldiers and said to him, "Kill him!" So the soldier killed him.

¹⁷ Then David composed this sad song about Saul and Jonathan, ¹⁸ and he ordered the men with him to teach it to the people of Judah. The song is called "The Bow," and it has been written down in the Book of Jashar:

¹⁹ "You Israelite people, your glorious leaders have been killed on the mountains!

It is very sad that these mighty men have died!

²⁰ Do not tell it to our enemies in the region of Philistia.

Do not tell the people who live in the city of Gath.

Do not proclaim it in the streets of the city of Ashkelon, or their women would celebrate.

Do not allow those pagan women to rejoice.

²¹ I hope there will be no rain or dew ever again on the mountains of Gilboa

and that no grain will grow in the fields there,

because it was there that the shield of Saul, the mighty king, fell to the ground.

Now there is no one to rub olive oil on Saul's shield.

²² Jonathan's arrows were his servants who always pierced his enemies and drew their blood.

and Saul's sword was his servant who always struck his enemies.

²³ Saul and Jonathan were loved; they pleased many people.

They were together while they lived and when they died.

In battle they were swifter than eagles and stronger than lions.

²⁴ You women in Israel, weep about Saul.

He provided beautiful scarlet clothes for you

and gave you gold ornaments to put on.

²⁵ It is very sad that my brother Jonathan has died

He was a mighty soldiers, and his enemies killed him on the mountain.

²⁶ Jonathan, my dear friend, I grieve for you.

You were very dear to me.

You loved me in a wonderful manner.

It was even better than the way that a woman loves her husband and her children.

²⁷ It is very sad that these mighty men have died,

and that their weapons are now no more!

Chapter 2

¹ Some time after that, David asked Yahweh, "Should I go up to one of the towns in Judah?" Yahweh replied, "Yes, go up there." Then David asked, "To which town should I go?" Yahweh replied, "To Hebron."

² So David went up there, taking his two wives, Ahinoam who was from the city of Jezreel, and Abigail, the widow of Nabal, who was from the city of Carmel. ³ He also took the men who had been with him, together with their families. They all started to live in the city of Hebron and its surrounding villages. ⁴ Then the men of Judah came to Hebron, and one of them poured olive oil on David's head to show they were appointing him to be the king of the tribe of Judah.

When David found out that the people of the city of Jabesh in the region of Gilead had buried Saul's body, ⁵ he sent messengers to the men of Jabesh to tell them, "I desire that Yahweh will bless you for having buried Saul. By doing this, you have shown that you were loyal to him. ⁶ Now I also desire that Yahweh will faithfully love you and be loyal to you. And I will do good things for you because of what you have done for Saul. ⁷ Now, although Saul your king is dead, be strong and courageous, like the people of Judah, who have appointed me to be their king."

⁸ However, Ner's son Abner, the commander of Saul's army, took Saul's son Ishbosheth and went across the Jordan River to the city of Mahanaim. ⁹ There Abner proclaimed that Ishbosheth was now the king ruling the regions of Gilead and Jezreel, and the tribes of Asher, Ephraim, and Benjamin. That meant that he was the king of most of Israel.

¹⁰ Ishbosheth was forty years old when he started to rule over the Israelite people. He ruled them for two years. But the tribe of Judah was loyal to David. ¹¹ David ruled them for seven and a half years while he was living in Hebron.

¹² One day Abner and the officials of Ishbosheth went from Mahanaim across the Jordan River to the city of Gibeon. ¹³ Joab, whose mother was Zeruah, and some of David's officials went from Hebron to Gibeon, and they met at the pool of water there. They all sat down, one group on one side of the pool and the other group on the other side.

¹⁴ Abner said to Joab, "Let us tell some of our young men to fight each other!" Joab replied, "Very well!"

¹⁵ So twelve men from the tribe of Benjamin fought for Ishbosheth, against twelve of David's soldiers. ¹⁶ Each of them grabbed the head of the man against whom he was fighting, and thrust his sword into that man's side. The result was that all twenty-four of them fell down dead. So that area in Gibeon is now called "Field of Swords."

¹⁷ Then the others started to fight also. It was a very fierce battle. Abner and the men of Israel were defeated by David's soldiers.

¹⁸ Zeruah's three sons were there on that day: Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. Asahel was able to run very fast. He could run as fast as a wild gazelle. ¹⁹ Asahel started to

pursue Abner. He ran straight toward Abner, without stopping. ²⁰ Abner looked behind him, and said, "Is that you, Asahel?" Asahel replied, "Yes!"

²¹ Abner shouted, "Stop chasing me; go after someone else!" But Asahel would not stop pursuing Abner.

²² So Abner yelled at him again, "Stop chasing me! Why should I kill you? How could I face your brother Joab and explain your death to him?"

²³ But Asahel refused to stop pursuing Abner. So Abner suddenly turned and thrust the butt end of his spear into Asahel's stomach. Because he thrust it very strongly, that end of the spear went through his body and came out at Asahel's back, and he fell to the ground, dead. All the other soldiers who came to the place where his body was lying stopped and stood there, stunned at Asahel's body.

²⁴ But Joab and Abishai continued to pursue Abner. At sunset they came to the hill of Ammah, which is east of Giah, along the road to the wilderness near Gibeon. ²⁵ The men from the tribe of Benjamin gathered around Abner in a line of battle and stood at the top of a hill.

²⁶ Then Abner called out to Joab, saying, "Are we going to continue to fight forever? Do you not realize that if we continue fighting the result will be very bad? We are all descendants of Jacob, so we should stop fighting each other! How long will it be until you tell your soldiers to stop pursuing us?"

²⁷ Joab replied, "Just as surely as God lives, if you had not said that, my soldiers would have continued pursuing your men until tomorrow morning!"

²⁸ So Joab blew a trumpet to signal that they should stop fighting. So all his men stopped pursuing the soldiers of Israel.

²⁹ That night Abner and his soldiers went through the plain along the Jordan River. They crossed the Jordan and marched all the next morning, and they finally arrived back at Mahanaim.

³⁰ Joab and his soldiers gathered together after they stopped chasing Abner. Then Joab found out that in addition to Asahel, only nineteen of them had been killed in the battle. ³¹ But David's soldiers had killed 360 of Abner's men, all from the tribe of Benjamin. ³² Some of Joab's soldiers took Asahel's body and buried it in the tomb where his father had been buried, in Bethlehem. Then they marched all during the night, and at dawn they arrived back home at Hebron.

Chapter 3

¹ After that, a long war developed between those who wanted Saul's son to be their king and those who wanted David to be their king. But more and more people began to want David, while fewer and fewer wanted Saul's son.

² David's wives gave birth to six sons at Hebron. The oldest was Amnon, whose mother was Ahinoam from the city of Jezreel.

³ The next son was Kileab, whose mother was Abigail, the widow of Nabal, from the city of Carmel.

The next son was Absalom, whose mother was Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, the king of the region of Geshur.

⁴ The next son was Adionijah, whose mother was Haggith.

The next son was Shephatiah, whose mother was Abital.

⁵ The youngest son was Ithream, whose mother was Eglah, another one of

David's wives.

These sons of David were all born in Hebron.

⁶ During the conflict between those who wanted Saul's son to rule over them and those who wanted David to rule over them, Abner was becoming more influential among those who wanted Saul's son to be the king. ⁷ Saul had as one of his wives a slave woman named Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah. But one day Abner slept with her. So Ishbosheth said to Abner, "Why have you slept with my father's slave wife?"

⁸ Abner became very angry about what Ishbosheth said to him. He said to Ishbosheth, "Do you think that I am a worthless dog from Judah? From the beginning I have been loyal to Saul your father, to his brothers, and to his friends. And I have kept David's army from defeating you. So now why are you criticizing me about what I have done with some woman?" ⁹⁻¹⁰ Yahweh solemnly promised that he would not allow Saul and his descendants to continue to rule. He promised that he would cause David to rule over all the tribes of Israel and Judah, from the city of Dan far in the north to the city of Beersheba far in the south. So I hope that God will kill me if I do not enable that to happen!" ¹¹ Ishbosheth was very afraid of Abner, so he did not say anything to reply to Abner.

¹² Then Abner sent messengers to David when he was at Hebron to say to him, "Either you or I should be the ruler of this entire nation, but not Ishbosheth. However, if you make an agreement with me, I will help you by encouraging all the people of Israel to ask for you to be their king." ¹³ David sent back this reply, "Good! I am willing to make an agreement with you. But before that happens, there is one thing that you must do. When you come to see me, you must bring my wife Michal, Saul's

daughter.” ¹⁴ Then David sent messengers to Ishbosheth to say to him, “I killed one hundred men from Philistia and cut off their foreskins to give to Saul to pay for Michal to be my wife. So now give her back to me!”

¹⁵ So Ishbosheth sent some men to take Michal from her husband Paltiel. But when they took her, her husband followed them all the way to the city of Bahurim, crying as he went. ¹⁶ Then Abner turned and said to him, “Go back home!” so he did.

¹⁷ Abner went to the Israelite leaders and talked with them. He said, “You have wanted David to be your king for a long time. ¹⁸ So now you have an opportunity for this to happen. Keep in mind that Yahweh promised this, ‘With the help of David, who serves me well, I will rescue my people from the power of all their other enemies’.” ¹⁹ Abner also spoke to the people of the tribe of Benjamin. Then he went to Hebron to tell David what all the people of Israel and the people of the tribe of Benjamin had agreed to do.

²⁰ When Abner came with twenty of his soldiers to see David at Hebron, David made a feast for all of them. ²¹ Afterwards, Abner said to David, “Sir, I will now go and encourage all the people of Israel to accept you to be their king, as you have desired.” Then Abner left, peacefully.

²² Soon after that, Joab and some of David’s other soldiers returned to Hebron after raiding one of their enemy’s villages, bringing with them a lot of things that they had captured. But Abner was not there at Hebron, because David had already sent him safely away. ²³ When Joab and the soldiers who were with him arrived, someone told him that Abner had come there and talked with the king, and that the king allowed Abner to go away

safely.

²⁴ So Joab went to the king and said, “Why have you done that? Listen to me! Abner is your enemy, but when he came to you, you allowed him to leave! ²⁵ Do you not know that he came to you to deceive you and to find out everything that you are doing, and all the places that you go to?”

²⁶ After Joab left David, he sent some messengers to get Abner. They found him at the well of Sirah and brought him back to Hebron, but David did not know that they had done this. ²⁷ So when Abner returned to Hebron, Joab met him at the city gate, and took him into a side room as though he wanted to speak with him privately. Then he stabbed Abner in the stomach with his knife. In that way he murdered Abner because Abner had killed Joab’s brother Asahel.

²⁸ Later, after David heard what had happened, he said, “Yahweh knows that I and the people of my kingdom are not at all responsible for Abner. ²⁹ I hope that there will always be someone in his family who has sores, or someone who is a leper, or some man who is forced to do women’s work, or someone who is killed in a battle, or someone who does not have enough food to eat!”

³⁰ That is how Joab and his brother Abishai murdered Abner, because he had killed their brother Asahel in the battle at Gibeon.

³¹ Then David said to Joab and to all Joab’s soldiers, “Tear your clothes and put on coarse cloth to show that you are sad, and mourn for Abner!” And at the funeral, King David walked behind the men who were carrying the coffin. ³² They buried Abner’s body at Hebron. And at the grave, the king cried loudly, and all the other people also cried.

³³ David sang this sad song to lament for

Abner:

"It is not right that Abner should have died in disgrace!

³⁴ No one tied his hands or put chains on his feet, as they do to criminals.

No, he was murdered by wicked men!"

³⁵ Then many people came to David to tell him to eat some food before sunset, but David refused. He said, "I hope that God will kill me if I eat any food before the sun goes down!" ³⁶ All the people saw what David did, and they were pleased. Truly, everything that the king did pleased the people.

³⁷ So all the people realized that the king had not wanted Abner to be killed. ³⁸ The king said to his officials, "Do you not realize that a leader and a great man has died today in Israel? ³⁹ Even though Yahweh appointed me to be the king, today I feel weak. These two sons of Zeruiah, Joab and Abishai, are very violent. I cannot control them. So I hope that Yahweh will punish them severely in return for this wicked deed that they have done!"

Chapter 4

¹ When Saul's son Ishbosheth heard that Abner had been killed at Hebron, he became very discouraged, and all the Israelite people with him. ² Ishbosheth had two officers who were leaders of groups of soldiers. They were brothers with the names of Baanah and Recab; they were sons of Rimmon from the town of Beeroth in the tribe of Benjamin. Now Beeroth is in the area that had been assigned to the tribe of Benjamin. ³ But the original inhabitants of Beeroth had fled to the town of Gittaim, where they still live.

⁴ Saul's son Jonathan had a son named Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth was five

years old when Saul and Jonathan died in the battle. When people brought that news from Jezreel, Mephibosheth's nursemaid picked him up and ran away, but she ran very fast and she dropped him, and he became crippled in his legs.

⁵ One day, Recab and Baanah left their home to go to Ishbosheth's house. They arrived there about noontime, when Ishbosheth was taking his midday nap. ⁶ The woman who was serving as the doorkeeper was sifting wheat; but she became sleepy and then fell asleep. So Recab and his brother Baanah were able to creep in quietly.

⁷ They entered Ishbosheth's bedroom, where he was sleeping. They killed him with their swords and cut off his head. They carried his head and walked all night through the plain along the Jordan. ⁸ They took the head of Ishbosheth to David at Hebron. They said to him, "Here is the head of Ishbosheth, the son of your enemy Saul, who tried to kill you. Your Majesty, today Yahweh has allowed you to get revenge on Saul and his descendants!"

⁹ But David replied to them, "Just as surely as Yahweh lives—and he is the one who has rescued me from all trouble, I will tell you this: ¹⁰ When a messenger came to Ziklag and told me 'Saul is dead!' (and he thought that the news that he was bringing to me was good news), I told one of my soldiers to kill him. That was the reward I gave to him for his news! ¹¹ So because you two evil men have murdered a man who did nothing wrong—and you killed him when he was sleeping on his bed in his own house, I will do something worse to you. I will surely get revenge on you two for murdering him, and wipe you off from the earth!"

¹² Then David gave a command to his soldiers, and they killed the two men, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hung

their bodies on a pole near the pool at Hebron. But they took the head of Ishbosheth and buried it respectfully in the tomb of Abner, there at Hebron.

Chapter 5

¹ Then the leaders of all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said to him, "Listen, we have the same ancestors that you do. ² In the past, when Saul was our king, it was you who led our soldiers into battle. You are the one to whom Yahweh promised, 'You will be the leader of my people. You will be their king.'"

³ So while Yahweh was listening, all those leaders of the people of Israel declared there at Hebron that David would be their king. And David made an with them. They anointed him with olive oil to set him apart to be the king of the Israelites. ⁴ David was thirty years old when he became their king. He ruled them for forty years. ⁵ In Hebron he had ruled over the tribe of Judah for seven and a half years, and in Jerusalem he would rule over all the people of Judah and Israel for thirty-three years.

⁶ One day King David and his soldiers went to Jerusalem to fight against the Jebus people group who lived there. The people there thought that David's army would not be able to capture the city, so they said to David, "Your army will never be able to get inside our city! Even the blind and crippled people can stop you!"

⁷ But David's army did indeed capture the fortress on Mount Zion; later it was known as the city of David. ⁸ On that day, David said to his soldiers, "Those who want to get rid of the Jebus people should go through the water tunnel to enter the city. That is where my enemies are, even my enemies who are 'crippled people and

blind people'." That is why people say, "Those who are 'blind and crippled' are not allowed to go into David's palace."

⁹ After David and his soldiers captured the city with its strong walls around it, he lived there, and they named it the city of David. David and his soldiers built the city around the fortress, starting where the land was filled in on the east side of the hill. ¹⁰ David continued to become more and more powerful because Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, was helping him.

¹¹ One day Hiram, the king of the city of Tyre, sent ambassadors to David to talk about making an agreement between their countries. Hiram agreed to provide cedar trees to make lumber, and he also agreed that he would send carpenters and masons to build a palace for David. ¹² Because Hiram did these things, David realized that Yahweh had truly appointed him to be the king of Israel. He also realized that because Yahweh loved the Israelites and chosen them to belong to himself, he had increased David's own power as king.

¹³ After David moved from Hebron to Jerusalem, he took more slave women to be his wives, and he also married other women. All of those women gave birth to more sons and daughters. ¹⁴ The names of his sons who were born in Jerusalem were Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, ¹⁵ Ibhar, Elishua, Nepheg, Japhia, ¹⁶ Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet.

¹⁷ When the Philistine people heard that David had been made king of Israel, their army went up toward Jerusalem to try to capture David. But David heard that they were coming, so he went down to another fortified place. ¹⁸ The army of Philistia arrived at the Valley of Rephaim southwest of Jerusalem and spread themselves out inside it. ¹⁹ David asked Yahweh, "Should

my men and I attack the Philistine army? Will you enable us to defeat them?" Yahweh replied, "Yes, attack them, because I will certainly enable your army to defeat them."

²⁰ So David and his army went to where the Philistine army was, and there they defeated them. Then David said, "Yahweh has burst through my enemies like a flood." So that place is called Baal Perazim. ²¹ The Philistine men left their idols there, and David and his soldiers took them away.

²² Then the Philistine army returned to the Valley of Rephaim and spread all over the valley once again. ²³ So again David asked Yahweh if his army should attack them. But Yahweh replied, "Do not attack them from here. Tell your men to go around them and attack them from the other side, near the balsam trees. ²⁴ When you hear something in the tops of the balsam trees that sounds like an army marching, attack them. Then you will know that I will have gone ahead of you to enable your army to defeat their army." ²⁵ So David did what Yahweh told him to do, and his army defeated the Philistine army and chased it from the city of Geba all the way west to the city of Gezer.

Chapter 6

¹ Then David chose thirty thousand Israelite men and gathered them together.

² He led them to the place in Judah formerly called Baalah, now called Kiriath Jearim. They went in order to bring the sacred chest to Jerusalem, the chest that had the name of Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, written on it, and that had the figures of the winged creatures on top of it. Between those statues was where Yahweh himself was present, though he

remained unseen. ³ The sacred chest was in the house of Abinadab, on top of a hill. They went there, and put the chest on a new cart. Uzzah and Ahio, Abinadab's two sons, were guiding the oxen that were pulling the cart. ⁴ Uzzah walked alongside the cart, and Ahio walked in front of it. ⁵ David and all the Israelite men were celebrating in God's presence, singing with all their strength and playing wooden lyres and harps, and beating tambourines, and clashing castanets and cymbals.

⁶ But when they came to the place where Nakon threshed grain, the oxen stumbled. So Uzzah put his hand on the sacred chest to steady it. ⁷ Yahweh immediately became very angry with Uzzah, and killed him right there alongside the sacred chest, because he had touched the chest.

⁸ But David was angry because Yahweh had punished Uzzah. So ever since that time, that place has been called Perez Uzzah.

⁹ Then David was afraid of what else Yahweh would do to punish them, so he said, "How can I take the sacred chest with me to Jerusalem?" ¹⁰ So he decided not to take the sacred chest to Jerusalem. Instead, they took it to another place, the house of Obed Edom the Gittite. ¹¹ They left the sacred chest in the house of Obed Edom for three months, and during that time Yahweh blessed him and his family.

¹² Some time later, people told David, "Yahweh has blessed Obed Edom and his family because he is taking care of the sacred chest!" When David heard that, he and some other men went to Obed Edom's house, and very joyfully brought the sacred chest from there to Jerusalem. ¹³ When the men who were carrying the sacred chest had walked six steps, they stopped, and there David killed a bull and a fat calf, and offered them to Yahweh as a sacrifice. ¹⁴ David was wearing

only a linen cloth wrapped around his waist, and was dancing very energetically to honor Yahweh. ¹⁵ David and the Israelite men took the sacred chest up to Jerusalem, shouting loudly and blowing trumpets.

¹⁶ While they were carrying the sacred chest into the city, his wife Michal, Saul's daughter, looked out the window of her house. She saw King David leaping and dancing to honor Yahweh. But she was disgusted with him.

¹⁷ They brought the sacred chest into the tent that David had erected for it. Then David gave to Yahweh offerings to be completely burned on an altar, and other offerings to promise friendship with Yahweh. ¹⁸ When David had finished offering those sacrifices, he asked Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, to bless the people. ¹⁹ He also distributed food to all the people. To each man and woman he gave a loaf of bread, some meat, and a raisin cake. Then they all returned to their homes.

²⁰ When David went home to ask Yahweh to bless his family, his wife Michal came out to meet him. She said to him, "Maybe you, the king of Israel, think that you were acting in an honorable way today, but really, you acted like a fool. You were nearly naked in front of the female servants of your officials!"

²¹ David replied to Michal, "I was doing that to honor Yahweh, who chose me instead of your father and other members of his family, to be the king of the Israelite people, the people who belong to Yahweh. And I will continue to dance to honor Yahweh! ²² Even though you think that what I did was disgraceful, I will continue to act in this way because I am willing to be made a fool in my own eyes. But the female servants whom you were talking about, they will give me honor!"

²³ As a result, Saul's daughter never gave birth to any children.

Chapter 7

¹ The king began to live in his palace. By now Yahweh had caused the enemy people groups to stop attacking Israel. ² One day David said to the prophet Nathan, "It is not right that I am here, living in a beautiful house made of cedar wood, but the chest that contains God's Ten Commandments is kept in a tent!"

³ Then Nathan said to the king, "Yahweh is helping you, so do about the sacred chest whatever you think is right."

⁴ But that night, Yahweh spoke to Nathan:

⁵ "Go and tell my servant, David, that this is what Yahweh says to him: He is not the one who will build a temple for me to live in. ⁶ I have not lived in any building from the day that I brought the Israelites up from Egypt until now. Instead, I have been living in my sacred tent, moving from one place to another with the people. ⁷ Wherever I went with the Israelites as they traveled, I never said to any of the leaders whom I appointed to lead them, 'Why have you not built me a temple made of cedar wood?'

⁸ So tell my servant David that Yahweh, the commander of the angel armies, says that he took him from a pasture and from taking care of sheep, and appointed him to become the ruler of my Israelite people. ⁹ Remind him I have been with him wherever he has gone. I have gotten rid of all his enemies who attacked him. I will make him very famous, as well known as the names of all the greatest men who have ever lived on the earth. ¹⁰⁻¹¹ Formerly, during the time that I appointed leaders for my Israelite people, many vio-

lent groups oppressed them. But this will not happen anymore. I have chosen a place where my people can live peacefully and where no one will disturb them anymore. I will make all their enemies stop attacking them. And I will defeat all their enemies.

Tell David that I declare to him that I, Yahweh, will enable his descendants to rule after him. ¹² When he dies and is buried, I will appoint one of his own sons to be king, and I will make him to be a very powerful king. ¹³ He is the one who will arrange for a temple to be built for me. I will make his rule over Israel to last forever. ¹⁴ I will be like a father to him, and it will be as though he is a son to me. When he does something that is wrong, I will punish him as fathers punish their sons. ¹⁵ But I will never stop faithfully loving him as I stopped loving Saul, whom I removed from being king before David became king. ¹⁶ David's descendants will rule the kingdom of Israel forever. Their rule will never end."

¹⁷ So Nathan told David everything that Yahweh had told him.

¹⁸ When David heard Nathan's message, he went into the sacred tent and sat in Yahweh's presence, and prayed this:

"Yahweh, my God, I am not worthy of all the things that you have done for me, and my family is not worthy either.

¹⁹ And now, O Yahweh my God, in addition to everything else, you have spoken about what will happen to my descendants in the future for many generations.

²⁰ O Yahweh God, what more can I, David, say to you for honoring me? Although you know very well what I am like, Yahweh my God, you have acted toward me as though I were the most important man on the earth! ²¹ You have done all these great things to teach me, and you

have done them just because you wanted to do them and because you decided to do them.

²² O Yahweh my God, you are great. There is no one like you. Only you are God, just as we have always heard. ²³ And there is no other nation in the world like Israel. Israel is the only nation on the earth whose people you went out to rescue, as you rescued them from Egypt. Then you made them belong to you yourself. And for doing all these things, you are now well known throughout the world. As your people advanced through this land, you drove out other people groups who were in Canaan, along with their gods. ²⁴ You caused us Israelites to be your people forever, and you, Yahweh, have become our God!

²⁵ And now, Yahweh my God, I pray that you will cause the things that you promised to me about my descendants to come true and be true forever, and that you will do the things that you said that you would do. ²⁶ When that happens, you will become famous forever, and people will exclaim, 'Yahweh, the commander of angel armies, is the God who rules Israel.' And you will cause that there will forever be descendants of mine who will rule.

²⁷ Yahweh, the God whom we Israelite people worship, you have revealed to me that you will make some of my descendants kings. For that reason, I have been brave enough to pray like this to you. ²⁸ So now, O Yahweh, because you are God, we can trust that you will do what you promise. You have promised these good things to me. ²⁹ So now I ask you that if it pleases you, you will bless my descendants, in order that they may continue to rule forever. Yahweh God, you have promised these things, so I know that if you do these things, you will keep blessing my descendants forever."

Chapter 8

¹ Some time later, David's army attacked the Philistine army and defeated them. They took control over the Philistine city of Gath and its surrounding villages.

² David's army also defeated the army of the Moab people group. David forced their soldiers to lie down on the ground close to each other. His men killed two out of every three of them. The others of the Moab people were forced to accept David as their ruler, and they were forced to give to him every year the payment that he demanded.

³ David's army also defeated the army of Hadadezer son of Rehob, who ruled the region of Zobah in Aram. That happened when he went try to regain power over the area at the upper part of the Euphrates River. ⁴ David's army captured 1,700 of Hadadezer's soldiers who used chariots, and twenty thousand soldiers on foot. They also crippled all but one hundred of the horses, and they would be used to pull chariots.

⁵ When the army of Aram came from the city of Damascus to help King Hadadezer's army, David's soldiers killed twenty-two thousand of them. ⁶ Then David stationed groups of his soldiers in their area, and the people of Aram were forced to accept David to be their ruler, and to give to David's government every year the payment of tribute money that he demanded. And Yahweh enabled David's army to win victories wherever they went.

⁷ King David's soldiers took the gold shields that were carried by Hadadezer's officials, and brought them to Jerusalem.

⁸ They also brought to Jerusalem much bronze that they found in Tebah and Berothai, two cities that King Hadadezer had previously ruled.

⁹ When Tou, the king of the city of Hamath in Aram, heard that David's army had defeated the entire army of King Hadadezer, ¹⁰ he sent his son Joram to greet King David and to congratulate him about his army defeating Hadadezer's army, which Tou's army had fought many times. Joram brought to David many gifts made from gold, silver, and bronze.

¹¹ King David dedicated all those items to Yahweh. He also dedicated the silver and gold that his army had taken from the nations that they had conquered. ¹² They had taken items from the people groups of Edom and Moab, from Ammon, from the Philistine, from the those who descended from Amalek, and from the people whom Hadadezer previously ruled.

¹³ When David returned after defeating the armies of Aram, he became more famous because his army killed eighteen thousand soldiers from the Edom people group in the Valley of Salt near the Dead Sea.

¹⁴ David stationed groups of his soldiers throughout the region of Edom, and forced the people there to accept him to be their king. Yahweh enabled David's army to win battles wherever they went.

¹⁵ David ruled over all the Israelite people, and he always did for them what was fair and just. ¹⁶ Joab was the army commander. Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud, was the man who reported to the people everything that David decided that they should do. ¹⁷ Zadok son of Ahitub and Ahimelech son of Abiathar were the priests. Seraiah was the official secretary; ¹⁸ Benaiah son of Jehoiada was the commander of David's bodyguards, and David's sons were his advisors.

Chapter 9

¹ One day David asked some of his servants, “Is there anyone who is a descendant of Saul to whom I can act kindly?” He asked this because he had loved Jonathan.

² They told him that there was in Jerusalem a man named Ziba who had been a servant of Saul’s family. So David sent messengers to summon Ziba. When he arrived, the king asked him, “Are you Ziba?” He replied, “Yes, your Majesty, I am.”

³ The king asked him, “Is there anyone in Saul’s family to whom I can act kindly, as I promised God that I would do?” Ziba replied, “Yes, there is one son of Jonathan who is still alive. His feet are crippled.”

⁴ The king asked him, “Where is he?” Ziba replied, “He is living in the house of Machir son of Ammiel, in the city of Lo Debar east of the Jordan River.”

⁵ So King David sent messengers to bring Mephibosheth to Jerusalem.

⁶ When Mephibosheth came to David, he knelt down with his face on the ground, to show respect. Then David said, “Mephibosheth!” He replied, “Yes, your Majesty, how may I serve you?”

⁷ David said to him, “Do not be afraid. I will be kind to you because Jonathan your father was my friend. I will give back to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul. And I want you to always eat with me in my house.”

⁸ Mephibosheth bowed in front of David again and said, “Sir, I am as worthless as a dead dog. I do not deserve that you act kindly toward me!”

⁹ Then the king summoned Saul’s servant Ziba and said to him, “Saul was your master, and now I am giving to Mephibosheth everything that belonged to Saul

and his family. ¹⁰ You and your fifteen sons and your twenty servants must plow the land for Mephibosheth’s family and plant crops and harvest them, in order that they will have food to eat. But Mephibosheth will eat with me at my house.”

¹¹ Ziba replied to the king, “Your Majesty, I will do everything that you have commanded me to do.” So after that, Mephibosheth always ate at the king’s table, as though he were one of the king’s sons.

¹² Mephibosheth had a young son named Mika. All of Ziba’s family became servants of Mephibosheth. ¹³ So Mephibosheth, who was still crippled in both of his feet, started to live in Jerusalem, and he always ate at the king’s table.

Chapter 10

¹ Some time later, Nahash, the king of the Ammon people group, died; then his son Hanun became their king. ² David thought to himself, “Nahash was kind to me, so I will be kind to his son.” So David sent some officials there, to tell Hanun that David was sorry that Hanun’s father had died.

When those messengers arrived in the land of Ammon, ³ the Ammonite leaders said to Hanun, “Do you think that it is to honor your father that David has sent these men to say that he is sorry that your father died? We think that he has sent them here to look around the city to determine how his army can conquer us!” ⁴ Hanun believed what they said. So he commanded some soldiers to seize David’s officials and insult them by shaving off one side of their beards, and by cutting off the lower part of their robes, with the result that their buttocks could be seen, and then they sent them away.

⁵ The men were very humiliated, so they did not want to return home. When David found out about what had happened to his officials, he sent someone to tell them, “Stay at Jericho until your beards have grown again, and then return home.”

⁶ Then the Ammonite leaders realized that they had greatly insulted David. So they sent some men to hire some soldiers from other nearby areas to help defend them. They hired twenty thousand soldiers from the regions of Beth Rehob and Zobah northeast of Israel, and twelve thousand soldiers from the region of Tob, and one thousand soldiers from the army of the king of the region of Maacah.

⁷ When David heard about that, he sent Joab with all of the Israelite army to fight against them. ⁸ The Ammonite soldiers came outside their city gate and stood in a line ready for battle. At the same time, the foreign soldiers whom their king had hired grouped themselves in the open fields nearby.

⁹ Joab saw that there were enemy soldiers in front of his troops and behind his troops. So he chose some of the best Israelite soldiers, and put them in positions to fight against the soldiers in the fields. ¹⁰ He told his brother Abishai to command the other soldiers, those who were facing the Ammonite soldiers in front of their city gate. ¹¹ Then Joab said, “If the soldiers from Aram are too strong for us to defeat them, your men must come and help us. But if the Ammonite soldiers are too strong for you, we will come and help your men. ¹² We must be strong and fight hard to defend our people and the cities that belong to our God. I will pray that Yahweh do what he considers to be good.”

¹³ So Joab and his army advanced to attack the army of Aram, and the Aramites ran away from them. ¹⁴ When the Ammonites saw that the Aramites were running away,

they also started to run away from Abishai and his men; they retreated back inside the city. Then Joab and his army left that place and went back to Jerusalem.

¹⁵ After the leaders of the army of Aram saw that the Israelite army had defeated them, they gathered all their troops together. ¹⁶ Their king, Hadadezer, summoned the soldiers of Aram who lived on the east side of the Euphrates River. They gathered at the city of Helam. Their commander was Shobak.

¹⁷ When David heard about that, he gathered all the Israelite soldiers, and they crossed the Jordan River and marched to Helam. There the army of Aram took their positions, and the battle started. ¹⁸ But the Aramites ran away from the Israelite soldiers. David and his army killed seven hundred of their chariot soldiers and forty thousand other soldiers. They also wounded Shobak, their commander, and he died there. ¹⁹ When all the kings whom Hadadezer ruled realized that Israel had defeated them, they made peace with the Israelites and agreed to accept David as their king. So the Arameans were unwilling to help the Ammonites any longer, because they were afraid of Israel.

Chapter 11

¹ In that region, kings usually went with their armies to fight their enemies in the springtime. But the following year, in the springtime, David did not do that. Instead, he stayed in Jerusalem, and he sent his commander Joab to lead the army. So Joab went with the other officers and the rest of the Israelite army. They crossed the Jordan River and defeated the army of the Ammon people group. Then they surrounded their capital city, Rabbah.

² Late one afternoon, after David woke up from a short sleep, he walked around the flat roof of his palace. He saw a woman who was bathing in the courtyard of her house. The woman was very beautiful. ³ David sent a messenger to find out who she was. The messenger returned and said, "She is Bathsheba. She is the daughter of Eliam, and her husband is Uriah, from the Heth people group."

⁴ Then David sent more messengers to get her. They brought her to David, and he slept with her. (She had just finished performing the rituals to make herself pure after her menstrual period.) Then Bathsheba went back home. ⁵ After some time, she realized that she was pregnant. So she sent a messenger to tell David this news.

⁶ Then David sent a message to Joab. He said, "Send Uriah, from the Heth people group, to me." So Joab did that. He sent Uriah to David. ⁷ When he arrived, David asked if Joab was well, if other soldiers were well, and how the war was progressing. ⁸ Then David, hoping that Uriah would go home and sleep with his wife, said to Uriah, "Now go home and relax for a while." So Uriah left, and David gave someone a gift to take to Uriah's house. ⁹ But Uriah did not go home. Instead, he slept at the palace entrance with the palace guards.

¹⁰ When someone told David that Uriah did not go to his house that night, David summoned him again and said to him, "Why did you not go home to be with your wife last night, after having been away for a long time?"

¹¹ Uriah replied, "The soldiers of Judah and Israel are camping in the open fields, and even our commander Joab is sleeping in a tent, and the sacred chest is with them. I could not possibly go home, eat and drink, and sleep with my wife. I

solemnly declare that I will never do such a thing!"

¹² Then David said to Uriah, "Stay here today. I will let you return to the battle tomorrow." So Uriah stayed in Jerusalem that day and that night. ¹³ The next day, David invited him to a meal. So Uriah had a meal with David, and David made him drink a lot of wine so that he would get drunk, hoping that if he was drunk, he would sleep with his wife. But that night, Uriah again did not go home. Instead, he slept on a cot with the king's servants.

¹⁴ Someone reported that to David, so the next morning he wrote a letter to Joab, and gave it to Uriah to take to Joab. ¹⁵ In the letter, he wrote, "Put Uriah in the front line, where the fighting is the worst. Then command the soldiers to pull back from him, in order that our enemies will kill him."

¹⁶ So after Joab got the letter, as his army was surrounding the city, he sent Uriah to a place where he knew that their enemies' strongest and best soldiers would be fighting. ¹⁷ The men from the city came out and fought with Joab's soldiers. They killed some of David's officers, including Uriah.

¹⁸ Then Joab sent a messenger to David to tell him about the fighting. ¹⁹ He said to the messenger, "Tell David the news about the battle. After you finish telling that to him, ²⁰ if David is angry because so many officers were killed, he may ask you, 'Why did your soldiers go so close to the city to fight? Did you not know that they would shoot arrows at you from the top of the city wall?' ²¹ Do you not remember how Abimelech son of Gideon was killed? A woman who lived in Thebez threw a huge millstone on him from the top of a tower, and he died. So why did our troops go near to the city wall?" If the king asks this, then tell him, 'Your officer Uriah also was

killed.”

²² So the messenger went and told David everything that Joab told him to say. ²³ The messenger said to David, “Our enemies were very brave, and came out of the city to fight us in the fields. They were driving us back at first, but then we forced them back to the city gate. ²⁴ Then their archers shot arrows at us from the top of the city wall. They killed some of your officers. They killed your officer Uriah, too.”

²⁵ David said to the messenger, “Go back to Joab and say to him, ‘Do not worry about what happened, because no one ever knows who will die in battle.’ Tell him that the next time, his troops should attack the city more strongly and capture it. Encourage Joab in this way.”

²⁶ When Uriah’s wife Bathsheba heard that her husband had died, she mourned for him. ²⁷ When her time of mourning was over, David sent messengers to bring her to the palace. In this way she became David’s wife. She later gave birth to a son. But Yahweh was very displeased with what David had done.

Chapter 12

¹ Yahweh told the prophet Nathan what David had done, and he sent Nathan to tell this story to David, “Once there were two men in a certain city. One man was rich and the other was poor. ² The rich man owned a lot of cattle and sheep. ³ But the poor man had only one little female lamb, which he had bought. He raised the lamb, and it grew up with his own children. He would give the lamb some of his own food and let it drink from his cup. He let the lamb sleep as he held it next to himself. The lamb was like a daughter to him.

⁴ One day a visitor came to see the rich

man. The rich man did not want to take one of his own animals and kill it to prepare a meal for his guest. So instead, he sent men to take the poor man’s lamb; then he had someone kill it and prepare a meal with it for his guest.”

⁵ When David heard that, he was very angry. He said to Nathan, “I solemnly declare that the man who did that should be executed! ⁶ He should at least pay back to the poor man four lambs for doing this, and for not having pity on the poor man.”

⁷ Nathan said to David, “You are the man I have been talking about! And this is what Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, says to you: ‘I rescued you from Saul, and I made you king of Israel. ⁸ I gave you his palace; I let you hold his wives next to you. I made you king over Israel and Judah. If you had told me that you were not content with what I gave you, I would have given you much more! ⁹ So why have you rejected what I have commanded, when I said that my people must not commit adultery? You have done what I consider to be very evil! You have arranged for Uriah to die in battle with the Ammonites, and you have taken his wife to be your wife! ¹⁰ You have rejected me, because you took Uriah’s wife to be your wife. So some of your descendants will always die in battle. ¹¹ I solemnly declare to you that I will cause someone from your own family to bring disaster to you. I will take your wives and give them to that person, and he will sleep with them in the daytime, where everyone can see it, and you will know all about it. ¹² What you did, you did secretly, but what I cause to happen, everyone in Israel will be able to see it or know about it.”

¹³ David replied, “I have sinned against Yahweh.” Nathan said to David, “Yahweh has overlooked your sin. You will not die because of this sin. ¹⁴ But you have shown

contempt for Yahweh by doing this. So your baby will die.”

¹⁵ Then Nathan went home.

Then Yahweh caused the baby, the one that Uriah's wife had given birth to, to become very sick. ¹⁶ So David prayed to God that the child would not die. He fasted, and he went into his room and lay all night on the floor. ¹⁷ The next morning his most important servants stood around him and tried to urge him to get up. But he would not get up, and he would not eat with them.

¹⁸ One week later the baby died. David's servants were afraid to tell that to David. They said to each other, “While the baby was still alive, we talked to him, but he would not answer us. Now, if we tell him that the baby is dead, he may do something to harm himself!”

¹⁹ But when David saw that his servants were whispering something to each other, he realized that the baby must be dead. So he asked them, “Is the baby dead?” They replied, “Yes, he is dead.”

²⁰ Then David got up from the floor. He bathed himself, put lotions on his body, and put on other clothes. Then he went into Yahweh's sacred tent and worshiped him. Then he went home. He requested his servants bring some food. They gave him some, and he ate it.

²¹ Then his servants said to him, “We do not understand why you have done this! While the baby was still alive, you cried for him and refused to eat anything. But now that the baby has died, you are not crying anymore. You got up and ate some food!”

²² He replied, “While the baby was still alive I fasted and cried. I thought, ‘Perhaps Yahweh will act mercifully toward me and not allow the baby to die.’” ²³ But

now the baby is dead. So there is no reason for me to fast anymore. I cannot bring him back to myself. Some day I will go to where he is, but he will not return to me.”

²⁴ Then David comforted his wife, Bathsheba. Then he slept with her, and she became pregnant again and gave birth to another son. David named that boy Solomon. Yahweh loved this little boy. ²⁵ He told the prophet Nathan to tell David to name the baby boy Jedidiah, because Yahweh loved him.

²⁶ Meanwhile, Joab's soldiers attacked Rabbah, the capital city of the Ammon people group. They captured the king's fortress, which protected the water supply. ²⁷ Then Joab sent messengers to David to tell him this, “My troops are attacking Rabbah, and we have captured the city's water supply. ²⁸ Now gather your troops and come and surround the city and capture it. If you do not do that, my troops will capture the city and it will then be named for me instead: The City of Joab.”

²⁹ So David gathered all his troops. They went to Rabbah, attacked it, and captured it. ³⁰ Then David took the crown from the head of their king and put it on his own head. It was very heavy; it weighed about thirty-three kilograms, and it had a very valuable stone in it. His soldiers also took many other valuable things from the city. ³¹ Then they brought the people out of the city and forced them to work for them, using saws, iron picks, and axes. David's troops also forced them to make bricks. David's soldiers did this in all the cities of the Ammonites. Then David and all of his army returned to Jerusalem.

Chapter 13

¹ David's son Absalom had a beautiful sister named Tamar. Another of David's

sons, Amnon, was attracted to Tamar, with whom he was a half-brother. ² He wanted to sleep with Tamar very much, so much that he felt sick with desire. But it seemed impossible for Amnon to get her, because she was a virgin, so they kept men away from her.

³ But Amnon had a friend named Jonadab, who was a nephew to David, son of David's brother Shimeah. Jehonadab was a very crafty man.

⁴ One day Jehonadab said to Amnon, "You are the king's son, but every day I see that you seem very depressed. What is your problem?" Amnon replied, "I am in love with Tamar, my half-brother Absalom's sister."

⁵ Jehonadab said to him, "Lie down on your bed and pretend that you are sick. When your father comes to see you, ask him to let your half-sister Tamar come and give you some food to eat. Ask for her to cook the food while you are watching her. Then she can serve it to you herself."

⁶ So Amnon lay down and pretended that he was sick. When the king came to see him, Amnon said to him, "I am sick. Please allow Tamar to come and make a couple breadcakes for me while I am watching, and then she can serve them to me."

⁷ So David sent a message to Tamar in the palace saying, "Amnon is sick; he wants you to go to his house and prepare some food for him." ⁸ So Tamar went to Amnon's house, where he was lying in bed. She took some dough and kneaded it, and formed them into some breadcakes while he was watching her. Then she baked them. ⁹ She took them out of the pan and put them on a plate in front of him, but he refused to eat them. Then he said to his servants in the room, "All the rest of you, leave me!" So they all left.

¹⁰ Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the

food to my bed and serve it to me." So Tamar took into his room the breadcakes that she had made. ¹¹ But when she brought them close for him to eat them, he grabbed her and said to her, "Come to bed with me!"

¹² She replied, "No, do not force me to do such a disgraceful thing! We never do things like that in Israel! That would be shameful!" ¹³ I would not be able to endure being disgraced by having done that. And as for you, everyone in Israel would condemn you for having done such a disgraceful deed. So I plead with you, talk to the king. I am sure that he will allow me to marry you." ¹⁴ But he paid no attention to her. He was stronger than she was, so he forced her to sleep with him.

¹⁵ Then Amnon hated her very much. He hated her much more than he had desired her. He said to her, "Get up and get out of here!"

¹⁶ But she said to him, "No! It would be very wrong for you to send me away. It would be worse than what you just did to me!" But again he paid no attention to her.

¹⁷ He summoned his personal servant and said to him, "Take this woman outside, away from me, and lock the door so that she cannot come in again!" ¹⁸ So the servant put her outside and locked the door.

Now Tamar was wearing a decorated long robe, which was the clothing that was usually worn by the unmarried daughters of the king at that time. ¹⁹ But Tamar tore the long robe that she was wearing, and put ashes on her head to show that she was very sad. Then she put her hands on her head to show that she was grieving, and she went away crying.

²⁰ Her brother Absalom saw her and said to her, "Has your half-brother Amnon forced you to sleep with him? Please, my sister, do not tell anyone, and do not be-

come depressed.” So Tamar went to live in Absalom’s house, and she was very sad and lonely.

²¹ When King David heard about all this, he became very angry. ²² And Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister to sleep with him, so he would not speak to Amnon about anything.

²³ However, two years later, Absalom hired men to shear his sheep at Baal Hazor, which is near the tribal land of Ephraim. They were going to celebrate when they finished shearing the sheep, so Absalom invited all the king’s sons to come and celebrate with him. ²⁴ Absalom went to the king and said to him, “Sir, my workers have been shearing my sheep. Please come with your officials to celebrate with us!”

²⁵ But the king replied, “No, my son, it would not be good for all of us to go, because we are so many people; we would cost you too much.” Absalom continued urging him, but the king would not go. Instead, he said that he hoped that God would bless them while they celebrated.

²⁶ Then Absalom said, “If you will not go, please allow my half-brother Amnon to go with us.” But the king replied, “Why do you want him to go with you?”

²⁷ But Absalom continued to insist, so finally the king permitted Amnon and all David’s other sons to go with Absalom.

²⁸ So they all went. At the celebration, Absalom commanded his servants, “Notice when Amnon has become a bit drunk from the wine. Then when I signal to you, kill him. Do not be afraid. You will be doing this only because I told you to do it. So be courageous and do it!” ²⁹ So Absalom’s servants did what Absalom told them to do. They killed Amnon. All the rest of David’s sons saw what happened and fled, riding on their mules.

³⁰ While they were on their way home, someone quickly went and reported to David, “Absalom has killed all of your other sons. None of them is alive!” ³¹ The king stood up, tore his clothes because he was extremely sad, and then he threw himself down on the ground. All the servants who were there also tore their clothes.

³² But Jehonadab son of Shimeah, David’s brother, said, “Your Majesty, I am sure that they have not killed all your sons. I am sure that only Amnon is dead, because Absalom has been determined to do this ever since the day that Amnon raped Tamar. ³³ So, your Majesty, do not believe the report that all your sons are dead. I am sure that only Amnon is dead.”

³⁴ In the meantime, Absalom ran away.

Just then, a soldier keeping guard on the city wall saw a large crowd of people coming down the hill along the road to the west. He ran and told the king what he had seen. ³⁵ Jonadab said to the king, “Look there! What I told you is true. Your other sons are alive and have come!”

³⁶ And as soon as he said that, David’s sons came in. They all started crying, and David and all his officials also cried very much.

³⁷⁻³⁸ But Absalom had fled. He went to stay with the king of the region of Geshur. His name was Talmai son of Ammihud. Absalom stayed there for three years.

But King David mourned for his son Amnon for a long time, ³⁹ but after that, he desired very much to see Absalom, because he was no longer grieving about Amnon being dead.

Chapter 14

¹ Joab realized that the king was longing

to see Absalom. ² So Joab sent someone to the city of Tekoa to bring to him a woman who was very clever. When she arrived, Joab said to her, "Pretend that you are grieving because someone has died. Put on clothes that show that you are mourning. Do not put any lotion on your body. Act as if you were a woman who has been mourning for a long time. ³ And go to the king, and tell him what I tell you to say." Then Joab told her what to say to the king.

⁴ So the woman from Tekoa went to the king. She prostrated herself in front of him to show honor and then said, "Your Majesty, help me!"

⁵ The king replied, "What is your problem?" She replied, "Please, sir, I am a widow. My husband died some time ago.

⁶ I had two sons. But one day they quarreled with each other out in the fields. There was no one to separate them, and one of them struck the other one and killed him. ⁷ Now, all my family oppose me. They are insisting that I allow them to kill my son who is still alive, in order that they may get revenge for his killing his brother. But if they do that, I will not have any son to inherit my possessions. I will be without any son at all, and my husband will have no son to preserve our family's name."

⁸ Then the king said to the woman, "Go back home. I will take care of this matter for you."

⁹ The woman from Tekoa replied to the king, "Your Majesty, if any criticizes you for helping me, my family and I will accept the blame. You and the royal family will be innocent."

¹⁰ The king said to her, "If anyone says anything to threaten you, bring that person to me, and I will make sure that he will never cause you trouble again."

¹¹ Then the woman said, "Your Majesty,

please pray that Yahweh your God will not allow my relative, who wants to get revenge on my son for killing his brother, to be able to do that."

David replied, "As surely as Yahweh lives, your son will not be harmed at all." ¹² Then the woman said, "Your Majesty, please allow me to say one more thing to you." He replied, "Speak!"

¹³ The woman said, "Why have you done this bad thing to God's people? You have not allowed your son Absalom to return home. By saying what you have just said, you have certainly declared that what you have done is wrong. ¹⁴ All of us will die. We are like water that cannot be picked up after it is spilled on the ground. God does not take life away, but instead, God creates ways for those who have been exiled to return and be restored to their people and to their homes.

¹⁵ Now, Your Majesty, I have come to you because others have threatened me. So I said to myself, 'I will go and talk to the king, and perhaps he will do what I request him to do. ¹⁶ Perhaps he will listen to me, and save me from the man who is trying to kill my son. If my son is killed, it would result in us disappearing from the land that God gave to us.'

¹⁷ And I thought, 'What the king says will comfort me, because the king is like an angel of God. He knows what is good and what is evil.' I pray that Yahweh our God will be with you."

¹⁸ Then the king said to the woman, "I will now ask you a question. Answer it; tell me the truth." The woman replied, "Your Majesty, ask your question."

¹⁹ The king said, "Was Joab the one who told you to do this?" She replied, "Yes, Your Majesty, as surely as you live, I cannot say anything to avoid telling you what is true. Yes, indeed, it was Joab who told

me to come here, and who told me what to say. ²⁰ He did it in order to cause you to think differently about this matter. Your Majesty, you are as wise as God's angels, and it seems that you know everything that happens on the earth, so you know why Joab sent me here."

²¹ Then the king summoned Joab and said to him, "Listen! I have decided to do what you want. So go and get that young man Absalom and bring him back to Jerusalem."

²² Joab prostrated himself on the ground, and then he bowed down before the king, and asked God to bless him. Then Joab said, "Your Majesty, today I know that you are pleased with me, because you have agreed to do what I requested."

²³ Then Joab got up and went to Geshur, and got Absalom and brought him back to Jerusalem. ²⁴ But the king said that he would not allow Absalom to come to him. He said, "I do not want him to come to see me." So Absalom lived in his own house, and did not go to talk to the king.

²⁵ Now Absalom was very handsome. There were no imperfections on his body, from the bottom of his feet to the top of his head. In all of Israel there was no one whom people admired more than Absalom. ²⁶ His hair was very thick, and he cut it only once each year, when it became very heavy on him. Using the standard weights, he would weigh the hair that he cut off, and it always weighed about two and one-half kilograms. ²⁷ Absalom had three sons and one daughter named Tamar. She was a very beautiful woman.

²⁸ After Absalom returned to Jerusalem, he lived there two years, and during that time he never was allowed to see the king.

²⁹ So he sent a messenger to go to Joab to request him to come and talk to him, but Joab refused to come. So Absalom sent a

messenger to him a second time, but he still would not come.

³⁰ Then Absalom said to his servants, "You know that Joab's field is next to mine, and that he has barley growing there. Go and light a fire there to burn the barley." So Absalom's servants went there and lit a fire, and all the barley burned.

³¹ Joab knew who had done it, so he went to Absalom's house and said to him, "Why have your servants burned the barley in my field?" ³² Absalom replied, "Because you did not come to me when I sent messengers to you requesting that you come. I wanted to request that you go to the king to say to him, 'Absalom wants to know what good it did for him to leave Geshur and come here. He thinks that it would have been better for him to stay there. He wants you to allow him to talk to you. And if you think that he has done something that is wrong, you can command that he be executed.'" ³³ So Joab went to the king and told him what Absalom had said. Then the king summoned Absalom, and he came to the king and knelt down in front of him with his face touching the ground. Then the king kissed Absalom to show that he was pleased to see him.

Chapter 15

¹ Some time later, Absalom acquired a chariot and horses to pull it. He hired fifty men to run in front of him to honor him while he was riding around Jerusalem in the chariot. ² Furthermore, he always rose early each morning and stood by the city gate. Whenever someone came there with a dispute with someone that he wanted the king to decide, Absalom would call out to him, asking, "What city are you from?" The person would tell him what city and tribe he was from. ³ Then

Absalom would say to him, "Listen, I am sure that what you are saying is right. But there is no one whom the king has appointed to listen to people like you." ⁴ Absalom would then add, "I wish that I were a judge in this land. If I were a judge, anyone who had a dispute could come to me, and I would decide it fairly."

⁵ And whenever anyone came near to Absalom to bow respectfully in front of him, Absalom would reach out and embrace him and kiss him. ⁶ Absalom did this to everyone in Israel who came to the king with a dispute to be decided. In that way, Absalom persuaded all the Israelite people to be more pleased with him than they were pleased with his father David.

⁷ Four years later, Absalom went to the king and said, "Please allow me to go to the city of Hebron, in order that I can do what I promised Yahweh that I would do."

⁸ When I was living in Geshur, in Aram, I promised Yahweh that if he brought me back to Jerusalem, I would worship him in Hebron."

⁹ The king replied, "I will permit you to go safely." So Absalom went to Hebron.

¹⁰ But while he was there, he secretly sent messengers to all the tribes in Israel to tell them, "When you hear the sound of the trumpets being blown, shout, 'Absalom has become the king at Hebron!'" ¹¹ Absalom had taken with him to Hebron two hundred men from Jerusalem, but they did not know what Absalom was planning to do. ¹² While Absalom was offering sacrifices at Hebron, he sent a message to Ahithophel from the town of Giloh, requesting him to come. Ahithophel was one of the king's advisors. So the number of people who joined Absalom and who were ready to rebel against David became larger.

¹³ Soon a messenger came to David and

said to him, "All the Israelite people are joining Absalom to rebel against you!"

¹⁴ So David said to all his officials, "We must leave immediately if we want to escape from Absalom! We must go quickly, before he and his men arrive. If we do not do that, they will kill us and everyone else in the city!"

¹⁵ The king's officials said, "Very well, your Majesty, we are ready to do whatever you wish."

¹⁶ So the king left ten of his slave wives there to take care of the palace, but all the other people in his palace went with him. ¹⁷ When they all were leaving the city, they stopped at the last house. ¹⁸ The king and his officials stood there while his bodyguards went by in front of him. Six hundred soldiers from the city of Gath also walked by in front of him.

¹⁹ Then David said to Ittai, the leader of the soldiers from Gath, "Why are you going with us? Go back and stay with Absalom the new king. You are not an Israelite; you are living away from your own land. ²⁰ You have lived here in Israel for only a short time. And we do not even know where we will be going. So it is not right for me to force you to wander around with us. And take your troops with you. And I hope that Yahweh will faithfully love and be loyal to you."

²¹ But Ittai replied, "Your Majesty, as surely as you live, wherever you go, I will go. I will stay with you whether they kill me or allow me to live."

²² David replied to Ittai, "Very well, march with us!" So Ittai and all his troops and their families went with David.

²³ All the people along the road cried when they saw them walking by. The king and all the others crossed the Kidron Valley and went up the hill toward the wilderness.

²⁴ Abiathar and Zadok, the priests, were also walking with them. The descendants of Levi who helped the priests also went with them, carrying the sacred chest that contained the Ten Commandments. But they set it on the ground until all the others had left the city.

²⁵ But then the king said to Zadok, "You two must take the sacred chest back into the city. If Yahweh is pleased with me, he will some day allow me to return to see it and the place where it is kept. ²⁶ But if he says that he is not pleased with me, then I am willing for him to do to me whatever he thinks is good."

²⁷ He also said to Zadok, "Listen to what I suggest! Return to the city peacefully, and take your son Ahimaaz and Abiathar's son Jonathan with you. ²⁸ I will wait in the wilderness at the place where people can walk across the river, until you send a message to me." ²⁹ So Zadok and Abiathar carried the sacred chest back to Jerusalem, and they stayed there.

³⁰ David and those with him went up the Mount of Olives. David was crying while he walked. He was walking barefoot and had something covering his head to show that he was sorrowful. All those who were going with him also covered their heads and were crying while they walked. ³¹ Someone told David that Ahithophel had joined with those who were rebelling against David. So David prayed, "Yahweh, cause whatever Ahithophel suggests to Absalom that he should do be considered to be foolish!"

³² When they arrived at the top of the hill, where there was a place where the people had previously been accustomed to worship God, suddenly Hushai, from the Arki people group, met David. He had torn his clothes and put dirt on his head to show that he was very sad. ³³ David said to him, "If you go with me, you will not be

able to help me. ³⁴ But if you return to the city, you can help me by saying to Absalom, 'Your Majesty, I will serve you as faithfully as I served your father.' If you do that and stay near Absalom, you will be able to oppose any advice that Ahithophel gives to Absalom. ³⁵ Zadok and Abiathar the priests are already there. Whatever you hear people say in the king's palace, tell it to Zadok and Abiathar. ³⁶ Keep in mind that Zadok's son Ahimaaz and Abiathar's son Jonathan are also there. You can tell them whatever you find out, and send them to report it to me."

³⁷ So David's friend Hushai returned to the city, at the same time that Absalom was entering Jerusalem.

Chapter 16

¹ When David and the others had gone a little way past the top of the hill, Mephibosheth's servant Ziba met him. He had with him two donkeys that were carrying two hundred loaves of bread, one hundred bunches of raisins, one hundred bunches of fresh figs, and a leather bag full of wine.

² The king said to Ziba, "What are these for?" Ziba replied, "The donkeys are for your family to ride on, the bread and the fruit are for your soldiers to eat, and the wine is for them to drink when they become exhausted in the wilderness."

³ The king said, "Where is Mephibosheth, the grandson of your former master Saul?" Ziba answered, "He stayed in Jerusalem, because he thinks that now the people will allow him to rule the kingdom that his grandfather Saul ruled."

⁴ The king said to Ziba, "Very well, everything that belonged to Mephibosheth is now yours." Ziba replied, "Your Majesty,

I will humbly serve you, and I desire that you will always be pleased with me.”

⁵ When King David and those with him arrived at the city of Bahurim, a man named Shimei met him. Shimei, whose father was Gera, was a member of the same clan that Saul’s family belong to. Shimei was cursing David as he approached. ⁶ Then he threw stones at David and his officials, even though the officials and David’s bodyguards surrounded David. ⁷ Shimei cursed David and said to him, “Get out of here, you murderer, you scoundrel! ⁸ Yahweh is getting revenge on you all for murdering many people in Saul’s family. And now he is giving Saul’s kingdom to your son Absalom. You murderer, you are being paid back for the many people that you have killed!”

⁹ Then Abishai said to the king, “Your Majesty, this man is as worthless as a dead dog! Why should he be allowed to curse you? Allow me to go over there and cut off his head!”

¹⁰ But the king replied, “You two sons of Zeruiah, I want nothing to do with you. If he is cursing me because Yahweh told him to do so, then no one should ask him, ‘Why are you cursing the king?’”

¹¹ Then David said to Abishai and to all his officials, “You know that my own son is trying to kill me. So it is not surprising that this man from the tribe of Benjamin is also trying to kill me. Just ignore him, and allow him to curse me. Yahweh has told him to do that. ¹² Perhaps Yahweh will see that I am having all this trouble, and some day he will repay me by blessing me in return for this man cursing me today.”

¹³ Then David and those who were with him walked along the road, and Shimei continued walking along the hillside near him. While he walked along, he cursed David and threw stones and dirt at him.

¹⁴ When David and those stopped travel-

ing that evening, they were very tired. So they rested.

¹⁵ While that was happening, Absalom and all the Israelites who were with him had arrived in Jerusalem. Ahithophel had also arrived there. ¹⁶ When David’s friend Hushai came to Absalom, he said to Absalom, “I desire that the king will live a long time! May you live for many years!”

¹⁷ Absalom said to Hushai, “You have been loyal to your friend David for a long time. So why did you not go with him instead of coming to me?”

¹⁸ Hushai replied, “It is right for me to serve the one whom Yahweh and these people and all the other people of Israel have chosen to be their king. So I will stay with you. ¹⁹ Besides, whom should I serve? Why should I not serve my master’s son? Just as I have served your father, even so, I will serve you.”

²⁰ Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, “What do you advise that we should do?”

²¹ Ahithophel replied, “Your father left some of his slave wives in the palace to take care of it. You should sleep with them. When everyone in Israel hears that you have done that, they will realize that you hold your father in contempt. Then all those who are with you will be very encouraged.” ²² So they set up a tent for Absalom on the roof of the palace. And Absalom went into the tent and slept with his father’s slave wives, one by one, and everyone could see them going into the tent.

²³ In those days, people accepted what Ahithophel recommended as though he was speaking the words of God. So just as David had always accepted what Ahithophel said, now Absalom did also.

Chapter 17

¹ Then Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Allow me to choose twelve thousand men, and I will take them tonight to go after David. ² We will attack him while he is tired and discouraged, and make him very afraid. Everyone with him will run away. We only need to kill the king. ³ Then we will bring back all his soldiers to you, and they will come happily. You need to kill only one man—David, and then all trouble will be over." ⁴ Absalom and all the Israelite leaders who were with him thought that what Ahithophel said would be good to do.

⁵ But Absalom said, "Summon Hushai also, and we will hear what he suggests." ⁶ So when Hushai arrived, Absalom told him what Ahithophel had suggested. Then he asked Hushai, "What do you think we should do? If you do not think that we should do what Ahithophel advises, tell us what you think that we should do."

⁷ Hushai replied, "This time what Ahithophel has suggested is not good advice. ⁸ You know that your father and the men who are with him are strong soldiers, and that now they are very angry, like a mother bear whose cubs have been stolen from her. Furthermore, your father knows how to wage war because he has fought in many battles. He will not stay with his troops during the night. ⁹ Right now he is probably already hiding in one of the pits, or in some other place. If his soldiers start to attack your soldiers, and if they kill some of them, whoever hears about that will say, 'Many of the soldiers with Absalom have been killed!' ¹⁰ Then your other soldiers, even if they are as fearless as lions, they will become very afraid. Do not forget that everyone in Israel knows that your father is a great soldier, and that the soldiers who are with

him are also very brave.

¹¹ So what I suggest is that you call all the Israelite soldiers, from Dan in the far north to Beersheba in the far south. They will be as many as the grains of sand on the seashore. Wait until they come, and then you yourself should lead us into the battle. ¹² We will find your father, wherever he is, and we will attack him from all sides, as dew covers all the ground. And neither he nor any of the soldiers who are with him will survive. ¹³ If he escapes into some city, all our soldiers will bring ropes and pull that city down into the valley. As a result, not one stone will be left there on top of the hill where that city was!"

¹⁴ Absalom and all the other Israelite men who were with him said, "What Hushai suggests is better than what Ahithophel suggested." The reason that happened was that Yahweh had determined that if they would accept the good advice that Ahithophel had given them, they would have been able to defeat David. But as a result of their doing what Hushai suggested, Yahweh would cause a disaster to happen to Absalom.

¹⁵ Then Hushai told the two priests, Zadok and Abiathar, what both he and Ahithophel had suggested to Absalom and the Israelite leaders. ¹⁶ Then he said to them, "Send a message quickly to David. Tell him to not stay at the place where people walk across the river, near the wilderness. Instead, he and his soldiers must cross the Jordan River immediately, in order that they will not be killed."

¹⁷ The priest's two sons, Jonathan and Ahimaaz, were waiting at the spring at En Rogel, outside Jerusalem. They did not dare to enter the city, because if someone saw them, he would report it to Absalom. While they were at En Rogel, a female servant of the two priests would frequently go to them and report to them what was

happening, and then they would go and report it to King David. ¹⁸ But a young man saw them, and went and reported it to Absalom. They found out what the young man had done, so both of them left quickly and went to stay in the house of a man in the city of Bahurim. That man had a well in his courtyard, so the two men went down into the well to hide. ¹⁹ The man's wife took a cloth and covered the mouth of the well, and then scattered grain on top of it order than no one would even suspect that a well was there.

²⁰ Some of Absalom's soldiers found out where the two men had gone. So they went to the house, and asked the woman, "Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?"

She replied, "They went across the Jordan River."

So the soldiers crossed the river and searched for them. But after they could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem.

²¹ After they had gone, the two men came out of the well and went and reported to King David what had happened and what Ahithophel had suggested. Then they said to him, "Cross the Jordan River quickly!"

²² So David and all his soldiers quickly started to cross the river, and by dawn they had all crossed to the other side.

²³ When Ahithophel realized that Absalom was not going to do what he suggested, he put a saddle on his donkey and returned to his own city. He gave to his family instructions about his possessions, and then he hanged himself because he knew that Absalom would be defeated and that he would be considered a traitor and be killed. His body was buried in the tomb where his ancestors had been buried.

²⁴ David and his soldiers arrived at Mahanaim. At the same time, Absalom and all his soldiers also crossed the Jordan

River. ²⁵ Now Absalom had appointed his cousin Amasa to be the commander of his army, instead of Joab. Amasa was the son of Jether, an Ishmaelite. Amasa's mother was Abigail, the daughter of Nahash and the sister of Joab's mother Zeruiah. ²⁶ Absalom and his Israelite soldiers set up their tents in the region of Gilead.

²⁷ When David and his soldiers arrived at Mahanaim, Shobi son of Nahash from the Ammonite city of Rabbah, and Machir son of Ammiel from the city of Lo Debar, and Barzillai from the city of Rogelim in Gilead came to them. ²⁸ They brought sleeping mats, bowls, clay pots, barley, wheat flour, parched grain, beans, and lentils. ²⁹ They brought honey and curds, sheep, and some cream for David and his soldiers to eat. They knew that David and his soldiers would be hungry and tired and thirsty from marching in the wilderness.

Chapter 18

¹ David arranged his soldiers for the battle. He divided them into groups, and he appointed a commander for each one hundred soldiers and a commander for each one thousand soldiers. ² He sent them out in three groups. Joab commanded one group, Joab's brother Abishai commanded a second group, and Ittai from Gath commanded the third group. David said to them, "I myself will go with you to battle."

³ But his soldiers said, "No, we will not allow you to go with us. If they force us to all run away, they will not be concerned about us. Or if they kill half of us, they will not care about that, either. To them, capturing you is more important than capturing ten thousand of us. So it would be better that you stay here in the city and

send help to us.”

⁴ The king replied to them, “Very well, I will do whatever seems best to you.” So he stood at the city gate and watched while his soldiers marched out, group by group.

⁵ While they were leaving, the king commanded Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, “For my sake, do not harm my son Absalom!” And all the troops heard about this, that David had given this order to the three commanders.

⁶ So the army went out to fight against the Israelite soldiers who were with Absalom. They fought the battle in the forest where people from the tribe of Ephraim lived. ⁷ David’s soldiers defeated Absalom’s soldiers. They killed twenty thousand of them. ⁸ The battle was fought all over that area, and the number of men who died because of dangerous things in the forest was greater than the number of men who were killed in the battle.

⁹ During the battle, Absalom suddenly came near some of David’s soldiers. Absalom was riding on his mule, and when the mule went under the thick branches of a large oak tree, Absalom’s head was caught in the branches. The mule kept going, but Absalom was left dangling in the air.

¹⁰ One of David’s soldiers saw what happened, and went and told Joab, “I saw Absalom hanging in an oak tree!”

¹¹ Joab said to the man, “What? You say that you saw him hanging there, so why did you not kill him immediately? If you had killed him, I would have given you ten pieces of silver and a soldier’s belt!”

¹² The man replied to Joab, “Even if you gave me a thousand pieces of silver, I would not have done anything to harm the king’s son. We all heard the king command you and Abishai and Ittai: ‘For my sake, do not harm my son Absalom!’” ¹³ If

I had disobeyed the king and killed Absalom, the king would have heard about it, because the king hears about everything, and even you would not have defended me!”

¹⁴ Joab said, “I am not going to waste time talking to you!” Then he took three spears, went to where Absalom was, and thrust them into Absalom’s chest while he was still alive, dangling from the oak tree. ¹⁵ Then ten young men who carried weapons for Joab surrounded Absalom and finished killing him.

¹⁶ Then Joab blew his trumpet to signal that they should not fight anymore, and his soldiers returned from pursuing Absalom’s men. ¹⁷ They took Absalom’s body and threw it into a huge pit in the forest, and covered it with a huge pile of stones. Then all the remaining Israelite soldiers who had been with Absalom fled to their own homes.

¹⁸ Absalom had no sons to preserve his family name because his sons had died while they were still young. So while Absalom was alive, he had built a monument to himself in the Valley of Kings near Jerusalem, in order that people would remember him. He put his name on the monument, and people still call it Absalom’s Monument.

¹⁹ After Absalom had been killed, Zadok’s son Ahimaaz said to Joab, “Allow me to run to the king to tell him the good news that Yahweh has rescued him from the power of his enemies!”

²⁰ But Joab said to him, “No, I will not allow you to take news to the king today. Some other day I will allow you to take some news, but not today. If you took news today it would not be good news for the king, because his son is dead.”

²¹ Then Joab said to David’s servant who was from Ethiopia, “You go and tell the

king what you have seen.” So the man from Ethiopia bowed in respect to Joab, and started to run.

²² Then Ahimaaz said again to Joab, “Even though that man from Ethiopia is running, allow me to run behind him.” Joab replied, “My boy, why do you want to do that? You will not receive any reward for your news!”

²³ But Ahimaaz replied, “That does not matter, I want to go.” So Joab said, “Very well, then, go.” So Ahimaaz ran along another road through the Valley of the Jordan and arrived where David was, before the man from Ethiopia arrived.

²⁴ David was sitting between the outer gate and the inner gate of the city. The watchman went up on top of the city wall and stood on the roof over the gates. He looked out and saw one man running alone. ²⁵ The watchman called down and reported it to the king. The king said, “If he is alone, that indicates that he is bringing news.” The man who was running continued to come closer.

²⁶ Then the watchman saw another man running. So he called down to the gatekeeper, “Look! There is another man running!” And the king said, “He also is bringing some good news.”

²⁷ The watchman said, “I think the first man must be Ahimaaz, because he is running as Ahimaaz runs.” The king said, “Ahimaaz is a good man, and I am sure he is coming with good news.”

²⁸ When Ahimaaz reached the king, he called out, “I hope that things will go well with you!” Then he prostrated himself on the ground in front of the king and said, “Your Majesty, praise Yahweh our God, who has rescued you from the men who were rebelling against you!”

²⁹ The king said, “Is the young man Absalom safe?” Ahimaaz did not want to an-

swer that question, so he replied, “When Joab sent me, I saw that there was a lot of confusion, but I do not know what it was about.”

³⁰ Then the king said, “Stand aside.” So Ahimaaz stepped aside and stood there.

³¹ Suddenly the man from Ethiopia arrived, and said, “Your Majesty, I have good news for you! Yahweh has enabled your soldiers to defeat all those who rebelled against you!”

³² The king said to him, “Is the young man Absalom safe?” The man from Ethiopia replied, “Sir, I wish that what happened to him would happen to all of your enemies and to all those who rebel against you!”

³³ The king realized that he meant that Absalom was dead, so he became extremely distressed, and he went up to the room above the gateway and cried. While he was going up, he kept crying out, “O, my son Absalom! My son! O, my son Absalom, I desire that I had died instead of you!”

Chapter 19

¹ Someone told Joab that the king was crying and mourning because Absalom had died. ² All of David’s soldiers heard that the king was mourning because Absalom was dead. So they became sad that they had defeated Absalom’s men. ³ The soldiers returned to the city quietly and ashamed, as if they had lost the battle instead of winning it. ⁴ The king covered his face with his hands and kept crying loudly, “O, my son Absalom! O, Absalom, my son! My son!”

⁵ Joab entered the room where the king was, and said to the king, “Today you have caused your soldiers to be ashamed! You have humiliated the men who saved your

life and the lives of your sons and daughters and your ordinary wives and your slave wives! ⁶ It seems that you love those who hate you and that you hate those who love you. Everyone realizes now that your commanders and your officers are not at all important to you. If Absalom were still alive and we were all dead today, you would actually be happy. ⁷ So now go and thank your soldiers for what they did. Because I solemnly declare that if you do not do that, none of them will still be with you by tomorrow morning. That would be worse for you than all the disasters that you have experienced since you were a boy.”

⁸ So the king got up and went and sat at the city gate. And all the people were told, “The king is sitting at the gate!” So they all came and gathered around him.

Meanwhile, all of Absalom’s men had gone home.

⁹ Then all the people throughout the tribes of Israel started to quarrel among themselves. They said to each other, “The king rescued us from the people of Philistia and from our other enemies. But now he has fled from Absalom and left Israel! ¹⁰ We appointed Absalom to be our king, but he died in the battle against David’s soldiers. So why does someone not try to bring King David back?”

¹¹ King David found out what the people were saying. So he sent the two priests, Zadok and Abiathar, to say to the leaders of Judah, “The king says that he has heard that all the Israelite people want him to be king again. And he says, ‘Why should you be the last ones to bring me back to my palace?’ ¹² You are my relatives. We have the same ancestor. So why should you be the last ones to bring me back?”

¹³ And say to Amasa, “You are one of my relatives. I hope that God will kill me if I do not appoint you to be, from now on, the

commander of my army instead of Joab.”

¹⁴ By sending that message to them, David convinced all the people of Judah that they should be loyal to him. So they sent a message to the king, saying, “We want you and all your officials to return here.” ¹⁵ So the king and his officials started back toward Jerusalem. When they reached the Jordan River, the people of Judah came there to Gilgal to meet the king, and to escort him across the river.

¹⁶ Shimei, the man from the tribe of Benjamin, also came down quickly to the river with the people of Judah to meet King David. ¹⁷ There were a thousand men from the tribe of Benjamin who came with him. Ziba, who had been the servant of Saul, also hurried down to the Jordan River, bringing twenty of his servants with him. They all came to the king. ¹⁸ They all prepared to take the king and all his family across the river, at the place where they could walk across it. They wanted to do whatever the king wanted. As the king was about to cross the river, Shimei came to him and prostrated himself in front of the king.

¹⁹ He said to the king, “Your Majesty, please forgive me. Please do not keep thinking about the terrible thing that I did on the day that you left Jerusalem. Do not think about it anymore. ²⁰ I know that I have sinned. Look, I have come today, the first one from the northern tribes to come here to greet you today, Your Majesty.”

²¹ But Abishai son of Zeruiah, said to David, “He cursed the one whom Yahweh appointed to be the king! So should he not be executed for doing that?”

²² But David said, “You sons of Zeruiah, what am I going to do with you? It is as though you had become my enemies today. I know that I am still king of Israel, so I say that certainly no one in Israel should

be executed today.” ²³ Then the king said to Shimei, “I solemnly promise that I will not execute you.”

²⁴ Then Miphibosheth, Saul’s grandson, came down to the river to greet the king. He had not washed his feet or trimmed his beard or washed his clothes from the time that the king left Jerusalem until the day that he returned. ²⁵ When he arrived from Jerusalem to greet the king, the king said to him, “Mephibosheth, why did you not go with me?”

²⁶ He replied, “Your Majesty, you know that I am crippled. When I heard that you were leaving Jerusalem, I said to my servant Ziba, ‘Put a saddle on my donkey in order that I can ride on it and go with the king.’ But he deceived me and left without me. ²⁷ He lied to you about me. But your Majesty, you are as wise as God’s angel. So do whatever seems right to you. ²⁸ All of my grandfather’s family expected that we would be executed. But you did not execute me. You allowed me to eat food with you at your table! So I certainly do not have the right to request from you anything more.”

²⁹ The king replied, “You certainly do not need to say any more. I have decided that you and Ziba will divide equally the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul.”

³⁰ Mephibosheth replied to the king, “Your Majesty, I am content that you have returned safely. So allow him to take all the land.”

³¹ Barzillai, the man from the region of Gilead, had come down to the Jordan River from his town of Rogelim to escort the king across the river. ³² Barzillai was a very old man, eighty years old. He was a very wealthy man, and he had provided food for the king and his soldiers while they were at Mahanaim. ³³ The king said to Barzillai, “Come with me to Jerusalem,

and I will take care of you.”

³⁴ But Barzillai replied, “I certainly do not have many more years to live. So why should I go with you to Jerusalem? ³⁵ I am eighty years old. I do not know what is enjoyable and what is not enjoyable. I cannot enjoy what I eat and what I drink. I cannot hear the voices of men and women as they sing. So why should I be another burden to you? ³⁶ I will cross the Jordan River with you and go a little further, and that will be all the reward that I need for helping you. ³⁷ Then please allow me to return to my home, because that is where I want to die, near my parents’ grave. But here is my son Kimham. Your Majesty, allow him to go with you and serve you, and do for him whatever seems good to you!”

³⁸ The king replied, “Very well, he will cross the river with me, and I will do for him whatever seems good to you. And I will do for you whatever you want me to do.”

³⁹ Then King David and all the others crossed the Jordan River. He kissed Barzillai and asked God to bless him. Then Barzillai returned to his home.

⁴⁰ After they crossed the river, Kimham went with the king, and all the army of Judah and half the army of the other Israelite tribes escorted the king to Gilgal.

⁴¹ Then all the Israelite soldiers from the other Israelite tribes came to the king and said, “Why is it that our relatives, the men from Judah, took you away from us and wanted to be the only ones to escort you and your family across the river, along with all your men? Why did you not request us to do that?”

⁴² The soldiers from Judah replied, “We did it because the king is from Judah. Why are you angry about this? The king has never paid for our food, and he has never given us any gifts.”

⁴³ The men of the other Israelite tribes replied, "There are ten tribes in Israel, and only one in Judah. So it is ten times more right for us to say that David is our king than it is for you to say that. So why are you despising us? We were certainly the first ones to talk about bringing David back to Jerusalem to be our king again."

But the men of Judah spoke more harshly than the men from the other tribes of Israel did.

Chapter 20

¹ There was also a man there at Gilgal named Sheba. He was a man who always caused trouble. He was from the tribe of Benjamin son of Bikri. He blew a trumpet and called out, "We have nothing to do with David, that son of Jesse! So, men of Israel, let us go to our homes!"

² So all the men from the Israelite tribes deserted David and went with Sheba, but the men of Judah stayed with David. They wanted him to be their king, and went with him from near the Jordan River up to Jerusalem.

³ When David arrived at the palace in Jerusalem, he took the ten slave wives whom he had left there to take care of the palace and put them in another house. He put a guard at that house, and he provided for them what they needed, but he never had slept with them again. So they remained shut up in their house until they died. It was as though they were widows.

⁴ One day the king said to Amasa, "Summon the soldiers of Judah to come here within three days, and you must be here also." ⁵ So Amasa went to summon them, but he did not return within the time that David told him to.

⁶ So David said to Abishai, "Now Sheba

will harm us more than Absalom did. So you take my soldiers and pursue him. If you do not do that, he and his soldiers may occupy some of the fortified cities and escape from us." ⁷ So Abishai and Joab and the king's bodyguards and the other soldiers left Jerusalem to pursue Sheba.

⁸ When they arrived at the huge rock in the region of Gibeah, Amasa met them. Joab was wearing armor for battle and had a sword fastened to his belt. When he came close to Amasa, he allowed the sword to fall on the ground.

⁹ Joab said to Amasa, "Are things going well with you, my friend?" Then Joab grabbed Amasa's beard with his right hand, in order to kiss him. ¹⁰ But Amasa did not see that Joab was holding another dagger in his other hand. Joab thrust it into Amasa's belly, and his insides spilled out onto the ground. Amasa died immediately. Joab did not need to stab him again. Then Joab and his brother Abishai continued to pursue Sheba.

¹¹ One of Joab's soldiers stood alongside Amasa's body and called out, "Everyone who wants Joab to be our commander and who wants David to be our king, go with Joab!" ¹² Amasa's body was lying on the road. It was covered with blood. The soldier of Joab who had called out saw that many other of Joab's soldiers were stopping to look at it, so he dragged Amasa's body off the road into a field and threw a cloth over the body. ¹³ After the body had been taken off the road, all the soldiers went with Joab to pursue Sheba.

¹⁴ Sheba went through all the tribes of Israel, and arrived at the city that is called Abel of Beth Maacah in the northern part of Israel. All the members of his father Bikri's clan gathered there and went with Sheba into the city. ¹⁵ The soldiers who were with Joab found out that Sheba had gone there, so they went there and

surrounded the city. They built a dirt ramp up against the city wall. They also pounded against the wall to cause it to collapse. ¹⁶ Then a wise woman who was in that town stood on the top of the wall and shouted down, "Listen to me! Tell Joab to come here, because I want to talk to him!" ¹⁷ So after they told Joab, he came there, and the woman said, "Are you Joab?"

He replied, "Yes, I am." She said to him, "Listen to what I say." He replied, "I am listening." ¹⁸ She said, "Long ago people used to say, 'Go to Abel town to get good advice about your problems.' And that is what people did. ¹⁹ We are peaceful and loyal Israelites. Our people here are important and respected. So why are you trying to destroy a city that belongs to Yahweh?"

²⁰ Joab replied, "I would certainly never want to ruin or destroy your city! ²¹ That is not what we want to do. But Bikri's son Sheba, a man from the hill area in the tribe of Ephraim, is rebelling against King David. Put this man into our hands, and then we will go away from this town."

The woman replied to Joab, "Very well; we will cut off his head and throw it over the wall to you."

²² Then this woman went to the elders of the town and told them what she had said to Joab. So they cut off Sheba's head and threw it over the wall to Joab. Then Joab blew his trumpet to signal that the battle was ended, and all his soldiers left the town and returned to their homes. Joab returned to Jerusalem and told the king what had happened.

²³ Joab was the commander of the entire Israelite army. Jehoiada's son Benaiah was the commander of David's bodyguards. ²⁴ Adoniram supervised the men who were forced to work for the king. Ahilud's son Jehoshaphat was the man

who reported to the people everything that David decided. ²⁵ Sheva was the official secretary. Zadok and Abiathar were the priests, ²⁶ and Ira from Jair town was also one of David's priests.

Chapter 21

¹ There was a famine in Israel for three years that occurred in the time that David ruled. David prayed to Yahweh about it. And Yahweh said, "In order for the famine to end, Saul's family need to be punished because Saul killed many people from the city of Gibeon."

² The people of Gibeon were not native born Israelites. They were a small group of the Amor people group whom the Israelites had solemnly promised to protect when they invaded the land of Canaan. But Saul had tried to kill all of them because he was very eager to enable the people of Judah and Israel to be the only ones living in that land. So the king summoned the leaders of Gibeon ³ and said to them, "What should I do for you? How can I make up for what Saul did to your people, in order that you will bless us who belong to Yahweh and have so many good things from him?"

⁴ They replied, "You cannot settle our quarrel with Saul and his family by giving us silver or gold. And we do not have the right to kill any Israelites."

So David asked, "Then what do you say that I should do for you?" ⁵ They replied, "Saul wanted to get rid of us. He wanted to annihilate all of us, in order that none of us would live anywhere in Israel. ⁶ Put seven of Saul's descendants into our hands. We will hang them where Yahweh is worshiped in Gibeon, our city, the city where Saul, whom Yahweh chose to be king, lived."

The king replied, "Very well, I will hand them over to you."⁷ The king did not hand over Saul's grandson Mephibosheth to them, because of what he and Mephibosheth's father Jonathan had solemnly promised to each other.⁸ Instead, he took the two sons of Rizpah and Saul, named Armoni and Mephibosheth—Rizpah was the daughter of Aiah and had been Saul's slave wife; David also the five sons of Merab, Saul's daughter. Merab's husband was Adriel son of Barzillai, was from the city of Meholah.⁹ David handed these men over to the people of Gibeon. They took those seven men to Gibeon and hanged them on a hill where they worshiped Yahweh. They died during the time of the year that the people started to harvest the barley.

¹⁰ Then Rizpah took coarse cloth made from goats' hair, and spread it on the rock where the corpses lay. She stayed there from the time that people started to harvest the barley until the rains started. She did not allow any birds to come near the corpses during the day, and she did not allow any animals to come near during the night.¹¹ Someone told David what Rizpah had done.¹² So he went with some of his servants to Jabesh in the region of Gilead and got the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan. The people of Jabesh had stolen their bones from the plaza in the city of Beth Shan, where the men from Philistia had hanged them on the day that they had killed Saul and Jonathan on Mount Gilboa.¹³ David and his men took the bones of Saul and Jonathan, and they also took the bones of the seven men from Gibeon who had been hanged.

¹⁴ David's servants went to the tomb of Saul's father Kish, in the city of Zela in the land of the tribe of Benjamin. There they buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan also. In this way, they did all that the king

had commanded them to do. After that, because God saw that Saul's family had been punished to pay for Saul's murder of many people from Gibeon, he answered the Israelites' prayers for their land, and caused the famine to end.

¹⁵ The army of Philistia again started to fight against the army of Israel. And David and his soldiers went to fight them. During the battle, David became tired.¹⁶ One of the Philistine men thought that he could kill David. His name was Ishbi-Benob. He was a descendant of a group of giants. He carried a bronze spear that weighed almost three and one-half kilograms, and he also had a new sword.¹⁷ But Abishai came to help David, and attacked the giant and killed him. Then David's soldiers forced David to promise that he would not go with them into a battle again. They said to him, "If you die, and none of your descendants become king, that would be like extinguishing the last light in Israel."

¹⁸ Some time after that, there was a battle with the army of Philistia near the village of Gob. During the battle, Sibbekai, from the clan of Hushah, killed Saph, one of the descendants of the Rapha giants.

¹⁹ Later there was another battle with the army of Philistia at Gob. During that battle, Elhanan son of Jair from Bethlehem, killed the brother of Goliath from Gath, whose spear shaft was very thick, like the bar on a weaver's loom.

²⁰ Later there was another battle near Gath. There was a huge man there who liked to fight in battles. He had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot. He was descended from the Rapha giants.

²¹ But when he insulted the men in the Israelite army, Jonathan son of Shimeah, David's older brother, killed him.

²² Those four men were some of the descendants of the Rapha giants who had

lived in Gath, who were killed by David and his soldiers.

Chapter 22

¹ After Yahweh had rescued David from Saul and his other enemies, David sang a song to Yahweh. ² This is what he sang:

”Yahweh, you are like a huge rock on top of which I can hide.

You are like a fortress, and you rescue me.

³ Yahweh, you protect me. You are like a shield,

and you are the powerful one who saves me.

You are like a place where I find refuge.

You save me from those who act violently toward me.

⁴ I call out to you, Yahweh.

You deserve to be praised,

and you rescue me from my enemies.

⁵ I almost died. It was as if a huge wave had crashed over me,

and almost destroyed me like a flood.

⁶ I thought that I would die. It was as though death had wrapped ropes around me,

and it was as though I were in a trap where I would surely die.

⁷ But when I was very distressed, I called out to you, Yahweh.

I cried out to you, my God.

You heard me from your temple.

You listened when I called to you to help me.

⁸ Then it was as though the earth quaked and shook.

It was as though the foundations that held up the sky trembled,

because you were angry.

⁹ It was as though smoke poured out of your nostrils

and burning coals and fire that burns everything came out of your mouth.

¹⁰ You tore open the skies and came down.

There was a thick dark cloud under your feet.

¹¹ You rode through the sky on a winged creature.

The wind enabled you to travel swiftly, like a bird.

¹² The darkness was around you, like a blanket

thick clouds that were full of water surrounded you.

¹³ Out of the lightning in front of you

fire from burning coals flamed.

¹⁴ Then, Yahweh, you spoke like thunder from the sky.

It was your voice, God, you who are greater than all other gods, that was heard.

¹⁵ When you sent flashes of lightning,

it was as though you shot your arrows and scattered your enemies.

¹⁶ Then the bottom of the ocean was uncovered.

The foundations of the world could be seen

when you shouted, going into battle against our enemies

and angry at them.

¹⁷ Yahweh, you reached down from heaven and lifted me up.

You pulled me up from the deep water.

¹⁸ You rescued me from my strong enemies,

from those who hated me.

I could not defeat them because they were very strong.

¹⁹ They attacked me when I was experiencing troubles,

but Yahweh, you protected me.

²⁰ You brought me into a place where I was safe.

You rescued me because you were pleased with me.

²¹ Yahweh, you rewarded me because I do what is right.

You did good things for me because I was innocent.

²² Yahweh, I have obeyed your laws.

I have not stopped worshipping you, my God.

²³ All of your decrees were in my mind,

and I did not stop obeying all your decrees.

²⁴ You know that I have not done anything that is evil.

I have kept myself from doing things for which you would punish me.

²⁵ So you have rewarded me in return for my doing what is right,

because you know that I am innocent of doing wrong things.

²⁶ Yahweh, you are faithful to those who always trust in you,

and you always do what is good to those whose behavior is always good.

²⁷ You act sincerely toward those whose inner beings are pure,

but you are hostile to those who are perverse.

²⁸ You rescue those who are humble,

but you watch those who are proud and humiliate them.

²⁹ Yahweh, you are like a lamp

that causes it to become light when I am in the darkness.

³⁰ With your strength I can break through a line of soldiers blocking my way;

I can climb over the wall that surrounds their city.

³¹ My God whom I worship, everything that you do is perfect.

You always do what you promise that you will do.

You are like a shield to all those who request you to protect them.

³² Yahweh, you are the only one who is God.

Only you are like a huge rock on top of which we are protected.

³³ God, you whom I worship are a strong refuge for me.

You lead anyone who is pure in the way he should go.

³⁴ When I walk in the mountains,

you enable me to walk safely

as a deer runs, without stumbling.

³⁵ You teach me how to fight in a battle in order that I can shoot arrows well from a very strong bow.

³⁶ It is as though you have given me a shield

by which you have saved me,

and you have answered my prayers and caused me to become famous.

³⁷ You have not allowed my enemies to capture me,

and I have not fallen down during battle.

³⁸ I pursued my enemies and defeated them.

I did not stop fighting them until they were all killed.

³⁹ I struck them down. I stabbed them with my sword,

and they fell down at my feet and did not stand up again.

⁴⁰ You have given me strength for fighting battles

and caused those who were attacking me to fall down; I trampled on them.

⁴¹ You caused my enemies to turn and run away from me.

I destroyed those who hated me.

⁴² They looked for someone to rescue them, but no one did.

They cried out to you, Yahweh, for help, but you did not answer them.

⁴³ I crushed them, and they became like tiny particles of dust.

I trampled them, and they became like mud in the streets.

⁴⁴ You rescued me from those who tried to rebel against me,

and you appointed me to rule many nations.

People whom I did not know previously are now under my authority.

⁴⁵ Foreigners humbly bowed down in front of me.

As soon as they heard about me, they obeyed me.

⁴⁶ They became afraid,

and they came to me, trembling, from the places where they were hiding.

⁴⁷ Yahweh, you are alive! I praise you! You are like a huge rock on top of which I am safe!

You are the one who rescues me.

Everyone should exalt you.

⁴⁸ You enable me to conquer my enemies,

and you cause people of other nations to be under my authority.

⁴⁹ You delivered me from my enemies, and you caused me to be honored more than they were.

You rescued me from men who always acted violently.

⁵⁰ Because of all this, I praise you among many people groups,

and I sing to praise you.

⁵¹ You enable me, whom you appointed to be king, to conquer my enemies.

You faithfully love me, David, and you will love my descendants forever."

Chapter 23

¹ David son of Jesse, was a man whom God caused to become great.

The God whom Jacob worshiped made him king of Israel.

David wrote beautiful songs for the people of Israel.

This is the last song that he wrote:

² "The Spirit of Yahweh tells me what to say.

The message that I speak comes from him.

³ God, the one whom we Israelite people worship, has spoken.

The one who protects us people of Israel said to me,

'Kings who rule fairly over people
have an awesome respect for me, God.

⁴ They are like the sun that shines at dawn

and causes the grass to sprout after the rain ends.'

⁵ And truly, that is how God will surely bless my family

because he made a covenant with me that will last forever,

a covenant in which he promises that no part of it will ever be changed.

He will surely cause me to prosper,
and he will always help me,
and that is all that I desire.

⁶ But he will get rid of people who do not honor him, just as people throw away thorns

that injure people if they try to pick them up with their hands.

⁷ Someone who wants to get rid of thorn-bushes does not grab them,

but he uses an iron shovel or a spear to dig them out

and then he burns them completely."

⁸ These are the names of David's greatest soldiers.

The first was Jeshbaal, from the Hachmon clan. He was the leader of the greatest soldiers. Once he fought against eight hundred enemies and killed them all with his spear.

⁹ The second of the greatest warriors was Eleazar son of Dodo, who was from the clan of Ahoh. One day he was with David when they defied the soldiers of Philistia who had gathered there for the battle. The other Israelite soldiers retreated,

¹⁰ but Eleazar stood there and fought the soldiers of Philistia until his arm became very tired, with the result that his hand cramped and he could not stop gripping his sword. Yahweh won a great victory on that day. And afterwards the other Israelite soldiers returned to where Eleazar was, and stripped off the armor from the men whom he had killed.

¹¹ The third of the greatest warriors was Shammah son of Agee from the clan of Harar. One time the Philistine soldiers gathered at the city of Lehi, where there was a field full of lentils that they wanted to steal. The other Israelite soldiers ran away from the Philistine troops, ¹² but Shammah stood there in the field and did not let the Philistine soldiers steal the peas, and killed them. Yahweh won a great victory on that day.

¹³ At one time, when it was almost time to harvest the crops, three of those thirty men went down to the Cave of Adullam, where David was staying. A group of men from the Philistine army had set up their tents in the Valley of Rephaim near Jerusalem. ¹⁴ David and his soldiers were in the cave because it was safe there, and another group of Philistine soldiers was occupying Bethlehem. ¹⁵ One day David very much wanted some water to drink, and said, "I wish that someone would bring me some water from the well near the gate at Bethlehem!" ¹⁶ So his three greatest warriors forced through the camp of Philistine soldiers and drew some water from the well, and brought it to David. But he would not drink it. Instead, he poured it out on the ground to be an offering to Yahweh. ¹⁷ He said, "Yahweh, it would certainly not be right for me to drink this water! That would be like drinking the blood of these men who were willing to die for me!" So he refused to drink it.

That was one of the things that those three great warriors did.

¹⁸ Abishai, Joab's younger brother, was the leader of David's greatest soldiers. One day he fought against three hundred men and killed them all with his spear. As a result, he also became famous. ¹⁹ He was the most famous of the greatest soldiers, and he became their leader, but even he was not one of the three greatest warriors.

²⁰ Jehoiada's son Benaiah, from the city of Kabzeel, also did great deeds. He killed two of the best warriors from the Moab people group. Also, he went down into a pit on a day when snow was falling on the ground, and killed a lion there. ²¹ He also killed a huge soldier from Egypt who carried a spear. Benaiah had only his club, but he attacked the giant with it. Then he snatched the spear from the man's hand and killed him with his own spear. ²² Those are some of the things that Benaiah did. As a result, he became famous, like the three greatest warriors were. ²³ He was more honored than the other greatest soldiers, but not as famous as the three greatest. David appointed him to be the commander of his bodyguards.

²⁴ These are the names of the great warriors:

Asahel, the younger brother of Joab,

Elhanan son of Dodo, from Bethlehem,

²⁵ Shammah and Elikah, from the clan of Harod,

²⁶ Helez, from the city of Pelet,

Ira son of Ikkesh, from the city of Tekoa,

²⁷ Abiezer, from the city of Anathoth,

Mebunnai whose other name was Sibbekai, from Hushah's clan,

²⁸ Zalmon whose other name was Ilai, from Ahoh's clan,

Maharai, from the city of Netophah,

²⁹ Heleb son of Baanah, also from Netophah,

Ithai son of Ribai, from the city of Gibeah in the land that belonged to the tribe of Benjamin,

³⁰ Benaiah, from the city of Pirathon,

Hiddai, from the valleys near the valleys of Gaash,

³¹ Abi-Albon, from the clan of Arabah,

Azmaveth, from the city of Bahurim,

³² Eliahba, from the city of Shaalbon—

The sons of Jashen,

Jonathan son of Shammah from the city of Harar,

³³ Ahiam the son of Sharar, from Harar,

³⁴ Eliphelet son of Ahasbai, from the city of Maacah,

Eliam son of Ahithophel, from the city of Gilo,

³⁵ Hezro, from the city of Carmel,

Paarai, from the city of Arba,

³⁶ Igal son of Nathan, from the city of Zobah,

Bani, from the tribe of Gad;

³⁷ Zelek, from the Ammon people group,

Naharai, the man who carried Joab's weapons, from the city of Beeroth,

³⁸ Ira and Gareb, from the city of Jattir,

³⁹ Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, from the Heth people group.

Altogether, there were thirty-seven famous soldiers.

Chapter 24

¹ Yahweh was angry with the Israelite people again, so he incited David to cause

trouble for them. He said to David, "Send some men to count the people of Israel and Judah."

² So the king said to Joab, the commander of his army, "Go with your officers through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan in the far north to Beersheba in the far south, and count the people, in order that I may know how many people there are who are able to be soldiers in the army."

³ But Joab replied to the king, "Your Majesty, I wish that Yahweh our God will cause there to be a hundred times as many people in Israel as there are now, and I wish that you would see that happen before you die. But why do you want us to do this?"

⁴ But the king commanded Joab and his officers to do it. So they left the king and went out to count the people of Israel.

⁵ They crossed the Jordan River and set up their tents south of Aroer, in the middle of the valley, in the territory that was given to the tribe of Gad. From there they went north to Jazer. ⁶ Then they went north to Gilead and to Kadesh, in the land where the Heth people group lived. Then they went to Dan in the far north of Israel, and then further west, to Sidon near the Mediterranean Sea. ⁷ Then they went south to Tyre, a city with high walls around it, and to all the cities where the Hiv and Canaan people groups lived. Then they went east to Beersheba, in the southern wilderness of Judah.

⁸ After nine months and twenty days, when they had finished going throughout the land and counting the people, they returned to Jerusalem.

⁹ They reported to the king the number of people that they had counted. There were 800,000 men in Israel and 500,000 men in Judah who were able to become soldiers in the army.

¹⁰ But after David's men had counted the people, David regretted that he had told them to do that. One night he said to Yahweh, "I have committed a very great sin. Please forgive me, because what I have done is very foolish."

¹¹ When David got up the next morning, Yahweh gave a message to the prophet Gad. He said to him, ¹² "Go and tell this to David, 'I am allowing you to choose one of three things to punish you. I will do whichever one you choose.'"

¹³ So Gad went to David and told him what Yahweh had said. He said to David, "You can choose whether there will be three years of famine in your land, or three months of your army running away from your enemies, or three days when there will be a plague in your land. You must think about it and choose which one you want, and tell me, and I will return to Yahweh and tell him what your answer is."

¹⁴ David said to Gad, "All those are very terrible things for me to choose between! But allow Yahweh to punish me, because he is very merciful. Do not allow humans to punish me, because they will not be merciful."

¹⁵ So Yahweh sent a plague on the Israelite people. It started that morning and did not stop until the time that he had chosen. All over the land, from Dan to Beersheba, there were seventy thousand Israelites who died because of the plague. ¹⁶ When Yahweh's angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy the people by this plague, Yahweh grieved about punishing any more people. He said to the angel who was killing them with the plague, "Stop what you are doing! That is enough!" When he said that, the angel was standing at the ground where Araunah, from the Jebus people group, threshed grain.

¹⁷ When David saw the angel who was

causing the people to become sick and die, he said to Yahweh, "Truly, I am the one who has committed the sin. I have done a very wicked thing, but these people are as innocent as sheep. They have certainly not done anything that is wrong. So you should punish me and my family, not these people!"

¹⁸ That day Gad came to David and said to him, "Go up to the place where Araunah threshes grain, and build an altar to worship Yahweh there." ¹⁹ So David did what Gad told him to do, which was what Yahweh had commanded, and he went up there. ²⁰ When Araunah looked down and saw the king and his officials coming toward him, he prostrated himself on the ground in front of the king, with his face touching the ground.

²¹ Araunah said, "Your Majesty, why have you come to me?" David replied, "I have come to buy this ground where you thresh grain, in order to build an altar to Yahweh and offer sacrifices on it, so that he will stop the plague."

²² Araunah replied to David, "Your Majesty, offer to Yahweh whatever you wish. Here, take my oxen to use for the offering that will be completely burned on the altar. And here, take their yokes and the boards that I use for the threshing, and use them for the wood that you will burn. ²³ I, Araunah, am giving all this to you, my king." Then he said, "I desire that Yahweh our God will accept your offering."

²⁴ But the king said to Araunah, "No, I will not take these things as a gift. I will pay you for it. I will not offer sacrifices that have cost me nothing, and offer them to Yahweh to be completely burned on the altar." So he paid fifty pieces of silver to Araunah for the oxen and the ground.

²⁵ Then David built an altar to Yahweh, and he offered the oxen to be completely

burned on the altar, and he also offered sacrifices to restore fellowship with Yahweh. Then, Yahweh answered David's prayers, and he caused the plague in Israel to end.

1 KINGS

Chapter 1

¹ When King David was very old, even though his servants put many blankets on top of him at night, he was unable to keep warm. ² So they said to him, "Your Majesty, allow us to search for a young virgin who can stay with you and take care of you. She can sleep close to you and make you warm."

³ The king gave them permission, so they searched throughout Israel for a beautiful young woman. They found a woman named Abishag, from the town of Shunem, and brought her to the king. ⁴ She was truly very beautiful. She took care of the king, but the king did not have sexual relations with her.

⁵⁻⁶ After Absalom died, David's oldest son was Adonijah, whose mother was Haggith. He was a very handsome man. But David had never rebuked him about anything he did. After Absalom died, he thought that he would become king. So he started to boast, saying, "I will become king now." Then he provided for himself some chariots, and men to drive them, and horses to pull them, and fifty men to run as his bodyguards in front of those chariots wherever he went.

⁷ One day he conferred with Joab, David's army commander, and Abiathar the priest, and they promised to help Adonijah. ⁸ But other important people refused to help him. These included Zadok, who was also a priest, Benaiah who had supervised David's bodyguards, Nathan the prophet, Shimei and Rei, and David's most capable soldiers.

⁹ One day Adonijah went to stone of Zoheleth near En Rogel, which is near

Jerusalem, to sacrifice some sheep and oxen and fattened cattle. He invited most of his brothers, King David's other sons, to come. He also invited all of the king's officials from Judah to come to the celebration. ¹⁰ But he did not invite Nathan, Benaiah, or the king's most capable soldiers, or his younger brother Solomon.

¹¹ Nathan found out what they were doing, so he went to Solomon's mother Bathsheba and asked her, "Have you not heard that Haggith's son Adonijah is making himself king? And King David does not know about it! ¹² So if you want to save yourself and your son Solomon from being killed, allow me to tell you what you should do. ¹³ Go right away to King David. Say to him, 'Your Majesty, you solemnly promised me that my son Solomon would become the king after you die and that he would sit on your throne and rule. So why are people saying that Adonijah is now king?' ¹⁴ Then, Bathsheba, while you are still talking to the king, I will come in and tell him that what you are saying to him about Adonijah is true."

¹⁵ So Bathsheba went to see the king in his bedroom. He was very old, and Abishag was taking care of him. ¹⁶ Bathsheba bowed very low in front of the king, and the king asked her, "What do you want?"

¹⁷ She replied, "Your Majesty, you solemnly promised me, knowing that Yahweh our God was listening, that my son Solomon would become king after you die and that he would sit on your throne and rule. ¹⁸ But now, Adonijah has made himself king, and you do not know anything about it. ¹⁹ He has sacrificed a lot of oxen and fattened cattle and sheep, and he has invited all of your other sons to the celebration. He has also invited Abiathar the priest and Joab the commander of your army, but he did not invite your son Solomon. ²⁰ Your Majesty, all the peo-

ple of Israel are expecting you to tell them who is the one who will become king after you are no longer with us. ²¹ If you do not do that, what will happen is that after you die people will consider that my son Solomon and I are rebelling, and they will execute us because we did not help Adonijah to become king."

²² While she was still talking to the king, Nathan came to the palace. ²³ The king's servants told David, "Nathan the prophet has come." So Bathsheba left, and Nathan went into where the king was and knelt down, with his face on the ground.

²⁴ Then Nathan said, "Your Majesty, have you declared that Adonijah will become king after you? ²⁵ I say that because today he has gone down to En Rogel and has sacrificed a lot of oxen, fattened cattle, and sheep. And he has invited all of your other sons, Joab the army commander, and Abiathar the priest. They are all eating and drinking with him and saying, 'We hope that King Adonijah will live a long time!' ²⁶ But he did not invite me or Zadok the priest or Benaiah or Solomon. ²⁷ Did you say that they should do this without telling your other officials who you want to become king after you are no longer the king?"

²⁸ Then King David said, "Tell Bathsheba to come in here again." So someone went and told her, and she came in and stood in front of the king.

²⁹⁻³⁰ Then the king said, "Yahweh has rescued me from all my troubles. I promised you, with Yahweh the God whom we Israelites worship listening, that your son Solomon would be king after I am no longer the king. Today, as surely as Yahweh lives, I solemnly declare that I will do what I promised." ³¹ Bathsheba knelt down with her face on the ground and said, "Your Majesty, I hope you will live forever!"

³² Then King David said to a servant, "Summon Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah." So a servant went and summoned them. When they came in, ³³ he said to them, "Put my son Solomon on my mule. Take him with my officials down to the spring at Gihon. ³⁴ There, you two, Zadok and Nathan, must anoint him with olive oil to appoint him to be the king of Israel. Then you two must blow trumpets, and all the people there must shout, 'We hope that King Solomon will live for many years!' ³⁵ Then follow him back here, and he will come and sit on my throne. He will then become king instead of me. I have appointed him to be the ruler of all the people of Israel and of Judah."

³⁶ Benaiah replied, "We will do that! We hope that Yahweh, who is your God and our God, will cause it to happen! ³⁷ King David, Yahweh has helped you. We hope that he will also help Solomon and enable him to become an even greater king than you have been."

³⁸ So Zadok, Nathan, Benaiah, and the two groups of men who were the king's bodyguards went and put Solomon on King David's mule and escorted him down to the spring at Gihon. ³⁹ There Zadok took the container of olive oil from the sacred tent and anointed Solomon. Then two of them blew trumpets, and all the people shouted, "We hope that King Solomon will live for many years!" ⁴⁰ Then all the people followed him back up to the city, shouting joyfully and playing flutes. They shouted very loudly, so that the ground shook.

⁴¹ When Adonijah and all his guests were finishing eating at their celebration, they heard the noise. When Joab heard the sound of the trumpets, he asked, "What is the meaning of all that noise in the city?"

⁴² While he was still speaking, Jonathan son of Abiathar the priest, arrived. Adoni-

jah said, "Come in! You are a man whom we can trust, so you must be bringing us good news!"

⁴³ Jonathan replied, "No, I do not have good news! His Majesty, King David, has made Solomon to be the king!" ⁴⁴ He sent Zadok, Nathan, Benaiah, and the his own groups of bodyguards to go with Solomon. They put Solomon on King David's mule.

⁴⁵ They went down to the spring at Gihon, and there Zadok and Nathan have anointed him to become the king. Now they have returned from there to the city, shouting joyfully. That is why there is that great noise that you are hearing. ⁴⁶ So Solomon is now our king. ⁴⁷ Furthermore, the palace officials came to His Majesty, King David, to tell him that they approved of what he had done. They said, 'We wish that God will make Solomon even more famous than you have been and enable him to be an even better king than you have been.' When they said that, the king, lying on his bed, bowed his head to worship Yahweh. ⁴⁸ Then he said, 'I praise Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, because he has allowed one of my sons to become the king today and has permitted me to see it happen.'"

⁴⁹ Then all of Adonijah's guests trembled, so they all immediately got up and left and scattered. ⁵⁰ Adonijah was afraid of what Solomon would do, so he went to the sacred tent and grabbed the projections at the corners of the altar, because he thought that no one would kill him there. ⁵¹ But someone told Solomon, "See, Adonijah is afraid of you, so he has gone to the sacred tent and is holding on to the altar. He is saying, 'Before I leave, I want King Solomon to solemnly promise that he will not command that I be executed.'"

⁵² Solomon replied, "If he proves that he is loyal to me, I will not harm him at all. But if he does anything that is wrong, he

will be executed." ⁵³ So King Solomon sent some men to Adonijah, and they brought him back from the altar. He came to Solomon and bowed down in front of him. Then Solomon said to him, "Go home."

Chapter 2

¹ When David knew that he was about to die, he gave these final instructions to his son Solomon:

² "I am about to die, as everyone else on earth does. Be courageous and conduct yourself as man should. ³ Do what Yahweh our God tells you to do. Conduct yourself as he wants you to do. Obey all of his laws and commands and decrees and instructions that are written in the laws that Moses gave us. Do this in order that you will prosper in all that you do and wherever you go. ⁴ If you continually do that, Yahweh will do what he promised me. He said, 'If your descendants do what I tell them to do, and faithfully obey my commands with all their inner beings, they will always be the ones who will rule Israel.'

⁵ There is something else that I want you to do. You know what Joab did to me. He killed my two army commanders, Abner and Amasa. He murdered them violently. He is guilty of murder. ⁶ Because you are wise, do to him what you think is best for you to do, but do not allow him to become old and die peacefully.

⁷ But act kindly toward the sons of Barzilai, the man from the region of Gilead, and be sure that they always have enough food to eat. Do that because Barzillai helped me when I was running away from your older brother Absalom.

⁸ Also, you remember Gera's son Shimei from the town of Bahurim in the area

where the descendants of Benjamin live. You know what he did to me. He cursed me terribly on the day I left Jerusalem and went to the town of Mahanaim. But when he later came down to see me when I was crossing the Jordan River, I solemnly promised, while Yahweh listened, that I would not cause him to be executed.⁹ But now you must surely punish him. You are a wise man, so you will know what you should do to him. He is an old man, but be sure that his blood flows when he dies .”

¹⁰ Then David died and was buried in that part of Jerusalem which was called the city of David. ¹¹ David had been king of Israel for forty years. He ruled for seven years in Hebron and for thirty-three years in Jerusalem. ¹² Solomon became the ruler to take the place of his father David and took control of all of the kingdom.

¹³ One day Adonijah came to Solomon’s mother Bathsheba. She said to him, “Have you come because you want things to go well?” He replied, “Yes.”

¹⁴ But then he said, “I have something to request you to do.” She said, “Tell me what you want me to do.”

¹⁵ He said, “You know that all the Israelite people expected me to be their king because I am David’s oldest son. But that did not happen. Instead, my younger brother became king, because that is what Yahweh wanted. ¹⁶ Now I have one thing that I request you to do. Please do not refuse to do it.” She replied, “Tell me what you want me to do.”

¹⁷ He said, “Please ask King Solomon to give to me Abishag, the woman from the town of Shunem, to be my wife. I am sure that he will not refuse.”

¹⁸ Bathsheba replied, “Very well, I will speak to the king for you.”

¹⁹ So Bathsheba went to King Solomon.

The king got up from his throne and went to greet her and bowed down to her. Then he sat on his throne again and asked someone to bring a chair for her. So she sat down at the king’s right side.

²⁰ Then she said, “I have one small thing that I want you do. Please do not say that you will not do it.” The king replied, “Mother, what do you want? I will not refuse you.”

²¹ She said, “Allow Abishag to be given to your older brother Adonijah to be his wife.”

²² The king replied angrily, “What? Are you requesting me to give Abishag to Adonijah? Does he want me to allow him to rule the kingdom, too? Because he is my older brother, does he think that he should be the king? Does he think that Abiathar should be the priest instead of Zadok, and that Joab should be the army commander instead of Benaiah because they supported him when he tried to become the king?”

²³ Then Solomon solemnly promised, requesting Yahweh to listen, “I wish God to strike me and kill me if I do not cause Adonijah to be executed for requesting this! ²⁴ Yahweh has appointed me to be the king and placed me here to rule as my father David did. He has promised that my descendants will be the kings of Israel. So just as surely as Yahweh lives, I solemnly promise that Adonijah will be executed today!” ²⁵ So King Solomon gave orders to Benaiah to go and kill Adonijah, and Benaiah did that.

²⁶ Then Solomon said to Abiathar the priest, “Go to the town of Anathoth, to your land there. You deserve to be killed, but I will not execute you now, because you were the one who supervised the men who carried Yahweh’s sacred chest for David my father, and you endured all

the troubles that my father endured.”²⁷ So Solomon dismissed Abiathar from being the priest of Yahweh. By doing that he caused to happen what Yahweh had said many years previously at Shiloh, that some day he would get rid of the descendants of Eli.

²⁸ Joab had not supported Absalom when he tried to become the king, but he had supported Adonijah. So when Joab heard what had happened, he ran to the sacred tent, and he took hold of the altar because he thought that no one would kill him there.²⁹ When someone told Solomon that Joab had run to the sacred tent and was alongside the altar, Solomon told Benaiah, “Go and execute Joab.”

³⁰ So Benaiah went to the sacred tent and said to Joab, “The king commands that you come out.” But Joab replied, “No, I will die here.” So Benaiah went back to the king and reported what he had said to Joab, and what Joab had replied.

³¹ The king replied to him, “Do what he has requested. Kill him and bury his body. If you do that, I and my descendants will no longer be punished for what Joab did when he killed two men who were innocent.”³² But I hope that Yahweh will punish Joab for attacking and killing Abner, the commander of the army of Israel, and Amasa, the commander of the army of Judah, who were both much better men than he is. My father David did not even know that Joab was planning to murder them.³³ I hope that Yahweh will punish Joab and his descendants forever for his murdering Abner and Amasa. But I hope that things will go well forever for David’s descendants who rule as he did.”

³⁴ So Benaiah went into the sacred tent and killed Joab. Joab was buried on his property in the wilderness of Judah.³⁵ Then the king appointed Benaiah to be the commander of the army instead of Joab,

and he appointed Zadok to be the priest instead of Abiathar.

³⁶ Then the king sent a messenger to summon Shimei, and the king said to him, “Build a house for yourself here in Jerusalem. Remain there and do not leave the city to go anywhere.”³⁷ Be sure that the day that you leave Jerusalem and go across the Kidron Brook, you will be executed, and it will be your own fault.”

³⁸ Shimei replied, “Your Majesty, what you say is good. I will do what you have said.” So Shimei remained in Jerusalem for several years.

³⁹ But three years later, two of Shimei’s slaves ran away. They went to stay with Maacah’s son Achish, the king of the city of Gath. When someone told Shimei that they were in Gath,⁴⁰ he put a saddle on his donkey and got on the donkey and went to Gath. He found his slaves staying with King Achish and brought them back home.

⁴¹ But someone told King Solomon that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath and had returned.⁴² So the king sent a soldier to summon Shimei and said to him, “I told you to solemnly promise, knowing that Yahweh was listening, that you must not leave Jerusalem. I told you, ‘Be sure that if you ever leave Jerusalem, you will be executed.’ And you replied to me, ‘What you have said is good; I will do what you have said.’”⁴³ So why did you not do what you solemnly promised to Yahweh? Why did you disobey what I commanded you?”

⁴⁴ The king also said to Shimei, “You know in your inner being all the evil things that you did to my father David. So Yahweh will now punish you for the evil things that you did.”⁴⁵ But Yahweh will bless me, and he will enable David’s descendants to rule forever.”

⁴⁶ Then the king gave a command to Benaiah son of Jehoiada. He went out and put Shimei to death.

So Solomon obtained complete control of the kingdom.

Chapter 3

¹ Now Solomon made an agreement to marry the king's daughter. Then Solomon brought the king's daughter to live in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David. She lived there until Solomon's workers had finished building his house, the temple of Yahweh, and the wall around Jerusalem. ² At that time the temple of Yahweh had not yet been built, so the Israelite people were still offering sacrifices at many other places of worship. ³ Solomon loved Yahweh, and he obeyed all the instructions that his father David had given him. But he also offered sacrifices and burned incense at various places.

⁴ One day the king went to the city of Gibeon to offer a sacrifice there, because that was where a very famous place of worship was. He offered a thousand whole burnt sacrifices there. ⁵ That night, Yahweh appeared to him in a dream. He asked him, "What would you like me to give to you?"

⁶ Solomon replied, "You always greatly and faithfully loved my father David, who served you well. You did that because he was faithful to you and acted righteously and honestly toward you. And you have shown how greatly and faithfully you loved him by giving me to him, his son, and now I am ruling as he did before he died.

⁷ Now, Yahweh my God, you have enabled me to be the king like my father was. But I am very young, like a little child. I do not

know how to rule my people at all. ⁸ I live among the people whom you have chosen. They are a very large group of people. There are very, very many of them; no one can count them. ⁹ So please enable me to think clearly, in order that I may rule your people well. Enable me to know what is good and what is evil. If you do not do that, I will never be able to rule this great group of people who belong to you."

¹⁰ Yahweh was very pleased that Solomon had requested that. ¹¹ God said to him, "You did not request that you live for many years or that you become very rich or that you be able to kill all your enemies. Instead, you have requested that I enable you to be wise, in order that you will be able to know and to do what is right while you govern these people. ¹² So I will certainly do what you requested. I will enable you to be very wise. The result will be that no one who has lived before you or who will live after you will be as wise as you are. ¹³ I will also give you things that you did not request. I will enable you to become very rich and honored, all of the years that you live. You will be richer and more honored than any other king. ¹⁴ If you conduct your life as I want you to, and if you obey all my laws and commandments, as your father David did, I will enable you to live for many years."

¹⁵ Then Solomon awoke, and he realized that God had spoken to him in a dream. Then he went to Jerusalem and stood in front of the sacred tent where the sacred chest was, and he offered many sacrifices that were completely burned on the altar and offerings to promise friendship with Yahweh. Then he made a feast for all his officials.

¹⁶ One day two prostitutes came and stood in front of King Solomon. ¹⁷ One of them said, "Your Majesty, this woman and I live in the same house. I gave birth to a baby

while she was there in the house. ¹⁸ On the third day after my baby was born, this woman also gave birth to a baby. Only the two of us were in the house. There was no one else there.

¹⁹ But one night this woman's baby died because she accidentally rolled on top of her baby and smothered it. ²⁰ So she got up at midnight and took my baby boy who was lying beside me while I was sleeping. She carried him to her bed and brought her dead baby and put it in my bed. ²¹ When I awoke the next morning and was ready to nurse my baby, I saw that it was dead. But when I looked at it closely in the morning light, I saw that it was not my baby!"

²² But the other woman said, "That is not true! The baby that is alive is mine, and the baby that is dead is yours!" Then the first woman said, "No, the dead baby is yours, and the one that is alive is mine!" And they continued to argue in front of the king.

²³ Then the king said, "Both of you are saying, 'My baby is the one that is alive and the one that is dead is yours.'" ²⁴ So he said to one of his servants, "Bring me a sword." So the servant brought a sword to the king. ²⁵ Then the king said to the servant, "Cut the baby that is alive into two parts. Give one part to each of the women."

²⁶ But the woman whose baby was alive greatly loved her baby, so she said to the king, "No, Your Majesty! Do not allow him to kill the baby! Give her the child that is alive!" But the other woman said to the king, "No, cut it in half. Then it will not be her baby or my baby."

²⁷ Then the king said to the servant, "Do not kill the baby. Give the baby to the woman who said, 'Do not cut the baby in half,' because she is truly the baby's

mother."

²⁸ All the Israelite people heard about what the king had decided, and they had an awesome respect for him. They realized that God had truly enabled him to be very wise, to judge people's matters fairly.

Chapter 4

¹ Now when Solomon was king over all Israel, ² these were his most important officials:

Azariah, whose father was Zadok, was the priest.

³ Shisha's sons Elihoreph and Ahijah were the official secretaries.

Ahilud's son Jehoshaphat was the one who announced to the people the king's decisions.

⁴ Benaiah was the army commander.

Zadok and Abiathar were also priests.

⁵ Azariah, whose father was Nathan, was in charge of the governors.

Another of Nathan's sons, Zabud, was a priest and the king's chief advisor.

⁶ Ahishar supervised the servants who worked in the palace.

Abda's son Adoniram supervised the men who were forced to do work for the king.

⁷ Solomon appointed twelve men to govern the districts in Israel. They also were required to provide food for the king and all the others who lived and worked in the palace. Each man was required to provide from his own district the food for one month in each year. ⁸ Their names were:

Ben-Hur, for the hill area of the tribe of Ephraim.

⁹ Ben-Deker, for the cities of Makaz, Shaalbim, Beth Shemesh, and Elon Beth-hanan,

¹⁰ Ben-Hesed, for the cities of Arubboth and Sokoh and the area near the city of Hephher,

¹¹ Ben-Abinadab, who was married to Solomon's daughter Taphath, for all the district of Dor,

¹² Ahilud's son Baana, for the cities of Taanach and Megiddo, for all the region near the city of Zarethan, and from the city of Beth Shan south of Jezreel as far as the cities of Abel Meholah and Jokmeam,

¹³ Ben-Geber, for the city of Ramoth in the region of Gilead, for the villages in Gilead that belonged to Jair, who was a descendant of Manasseh, and for the area of Argob in the region of Bashan. There were sixty large cities in that region altogether, each city with a wall around it and bronze bars across the gates.

¹⁴ Iddo's son Ahinadab, for the city of Mahanaïm east of the Jordan River;

¹⁵ Ahimaaz, who had married Solomon's daughter Basemath, for the territory of the tribe of Naphtali,

¹⁶ Hushai's son Baana, for the territory of the tribe of Asher and for the city of Aloth,

¹⁷ Paruah's son Jehoshaphat, for the territory of the tribe of Issachar,

¹⁸ Ela's son Shimei, for the territory of the tribe of Benjamin,

¹⁹ Uri's son Geber, for the region of Gilead, the land that Sihon the king of the Amor people group formerly ruled, and Og who formerly ruled the region of Bashan.

In addition to all these, Solomon appointed one governor for the territory of the tribe of Judah.

²⁰ There were as many people in Judah and Israel as there are grains of sand on the seashore. They had plenty to eat and drink, and they were happy. ²¹ Solomon's kingdom extended from the Euphrates River in the northeast to the region of Philistia in the west and to the border of Egypt in the south. The conquered people in those areas paid taxes and were under Solomon's control all during his life.

²² The people whom Solomon ruled were required to bring to Solomon every day thirty donkey-loads of fine flour and sixty donkey-loads of wheat, ²³ ten head of cattle that had been raised in stalls, twenty head of cattle raised in pastures, one hundred sheep, grain-fed poultry—and wild game: deer, gazelle, and roebucks. ²⁴ Solomon ruled over all the area west of the Euphrates River, from the city of Tiph-sah in the northeast to the city of Gaza in the southwest. He ruled over all the kings in that area. There was peace between his government and the governments of nearby countries. ²⁵ All during the years that Solomon ruled, the people of Judah and Israel lived safely.

²⁶ Solomon had forty thousand stalls for the horses that pulled his chariots and twelve thousand men who rode on horses.

²⁷ His twelve district governors supplied the food that King Solomon needed for himself and for all those who ate in the palace. Each governor supplied food for one month each year. They provided everything that Solomon required. ²⁸ They also brought stalks of barley and wheat for the fast horses that pulled the chariots and for the other work horses. They brought this fodder to the places where the horses were kept.

²⁹ God enabled Solomon to be extremely wise and to have great understanding. He enjoyed learning about a huge number of things. ³⁰ He was wiser than all the wise

men in the regions east of Israel, and all the wise men in Egypt. ³¹ Ethan from Ezrah and Heman and Kalkol and Darda and the sons of Mahol were considered to be very wise, but Solomon was wiser than all of them. People in all the nearby countries heard about Solomon. ³² He composed more than one thousand songs. ³³ He talked about various kinds of plants, from the huge cedar trees in Lebanon to the tiny hyssop plants that grow in cracks in walls. He also talked about wild animals, birds, reptiles, and fish. ³⁴ People came from all over the world to hear the wise things that Solomon said. Many kings sent men to listen to him and then return and tell them what Solomon said.

Chapter 5

¹ Hiram, the king of the city of Tyre, had always been a close friend of King David. When he heard that Solomon had been appointed to become the king after his father was no longer king, he sent messengers to Solomon. ² Solomon gave those messengers this message to take back to Hiram:

³ "You know that my father David led his soldiers to fight many wars against his enemies in the nearby countries. So he could not try to build a temple in which we could worship Yahweh our God, until after Yahweh enabled the Israelite army to defeat all his enemies. ⁴ But now Yahweh our God has enabled us to have peace with all the surrounding countries. There is no danger that we will be attacked. ⁵ Yahweh promised my father David, 'Your son, whom I will enable to be king after you are no longer king, will build a temple for me, Yahweh your God.'

⁶ So I am requesting that you command your workers to cut cedar trees for me. My men will work with them, and I

will pay your workers whatever you decide. But my men cannot do the work alone, because they do not know how to cut down trees like your workers from the city of Sidon do."

⁷ When Hiram heard the message from Solomon, he was very happy and said, "I praise Yahweh today for giving David a very wise son to rule that great nation!"

⁸ He sent this message back to Solomon, "I have heard the message that you sent to me, and I am ready to do what you ask. I will provide cedar and cypress logs. ⁹ My workers will bring the logs down from the Lebanon mountains to the Mediterranean Sea. Then they will tie them together to make rafts to float them in the water along the coast to the place that you indicate. Then my workers will untie the logs, and your workers will take them from there. What I want you to do is to supply food for my men."

¹⁰ So Hiram arranged for his workers to supply all the cedar and cypress logs that Solomon wanted. ¹¹ Each year Solomon gave Hiram 3,520 cubic meters of wheat and 416,350 liters of pure olive oil to feed his workers. ¹² Yahweh enabled Solomon to be wise, just like he had promised. Solomon and Hiram made a treaty.

¹³ King Solomon forced thirty thousand men from all over Israel to become his workers. ¹⁴ Adoniram was their boss. Solomon divided the men into three groups. Each month ten thousand of them went to Lebanon and worked for a month there, and then they came back home for two months. ¹⁵ Solomon also forced

eighty thousand men to cut stones in the hill country and seventy thousand men to haul the stones to Jerusalem. ¹⁶ He also assigned 3,300 men to supervise their work.

¹⁷ The king also commanded his workers to cut huge blocks of stones from the quarries and to smooth the sides of the stones.

These huge stones were for the foundation of the temple. ¹⁸ Solomon's workers and Hiram's workers and men from the city of Gebal shaped the stones and prepared the timber to build the temple.

Chapter 6

¹ 480 years after the Israelite people left Egypt, during the fourth year that Solomon ruled Israel, in the second month, that of Ziv, Solomon's workers began to build the temple.

² Inside, the main part of the temple was twenty-seven meters long, nine meters wide, and thirteen and one-half meters high. ³ The front portico was four and one-half meters deep and nine meters wide, just as wide as the main part of the temple. ⁴ There were openings like windows in the temple walls. The openings were narrower on the outside than on the inside. ⁵ Against the two sides and the back of the temple walls, they built a structure that had rooms in it. This structure had three levels; each level was two and one-third meters high. ⁶ Each room in the lowest level was two and one-third meters wide. Each room in the middle level was two and four-fifths meters wide. The rooms in the top level were three and one-tenth meters wide. The wall of the temple at the top level was thinner than the wall at the middle level, and the wall of the middle level was thinner than the wall at the bottom level. In this way, the rooms could rest on the wall underneath them; the rooms did not need wooden beams underneath to support them.

⁷ The huge stones for the foundation of the temple were cut and shaped at the quarry to become very smooth. The result was that while the workers were building the temple there was no noise, because they

did not use hammers or chisels or any other iron tools there.

⁸ The entrance to the bottom level of this attached structure was on the south side of the temple. There were stairs from the bottom level to the middle and top levels. ⁹ So Solomon's workers finished building the framework of the temple. They made the ceiling from cedar beams and boards. ¹⁰ They built the rooms alongside the main chambers with three levels, each two and one-third meters high, and joined them to the temple with cedar beams.

¹¹ Then Yahweh said this to Solomon, ¹² "I want to tell you about this temple that you are building. If you continually obey all my statutes and decrees and commands, I will do for you what I promised to your father David. ¹³ I will live among the Israelite people, in this temple, and I will never abandon them."

¹⁴ Solomon's workers worked to finish building the temple. ¹⁵ On the inside, they lined the rooms from the floor to the ceiling. They made the floor from cypress boards. ¹⁶ Inside the back part of the temple they built an inner room, called the very holy place. It was nine meters long. All the walls of this room were lined with cedar boards. ¹⁷ In front of the very holy place was a room that was eighteen meters long. ¹⁸ The cedar boards on the walls inside the temple were decorated with carvings of gourds and flowers. The walls were completely covered with cedar boards, with the result that the stones of the walls behind them could not be seen.

¹⁹ At the back of the temple they made the very holy place, in order to put the sacred chest there. ²⁰ That room was nine meters long, nine meters wide, and nine meters high. They covered the walls with very thin sheets of pure gold. For burning incense they also made an altar of cedar boards. ²¹ Solomon told them to cover the

other walls inside the temple with very thin sheets of pure gold and to fasten gold chains across the entrance to the very holy place. ²² They covered all the walls of the temple and the altar that was outside the very holy place with very thin sheets of gold.

²³ Inside the very holy place they made from olive tree wood large statues of two creatures with wings. Each one was four and one-half meters tall. ²⁴⁻²⁶ They each were the same size and had the same shape. They each had two wings which were spread out. Each wing was two and one-third meters long, with the result that the distance between the outer ends of the two wings was four and one-half meters across. The height of each cherub was four and one-half meters. ²⁷ They put these statues next to each other in the very holy place so that the wing of the one touched the one wing of the other in the center of the room, and the outer wings touched the walls. ²⁸ They covered the statues with very thin sheets of gold.

²⁹ Solomon told them to decorate the walls of the main room and the very holy place by carving representations of winged creatures and palm trees and flowers. ³⁰ They also covered the floor of both rooms with very thin sheets of gold.

³¹ They made a set of doors from olive tree wood, and placed them at the entrance to the very holy place. The lintel and doorposts had five indented sections.

³² The doors were decorated by carving on them representations of winged creatures, palm trees, and flowers. All of these things were covered with very thin sheets of gold. ³³ They made a rectangular doorframe from olive tree wood, with four indented sections, and put it between the entrance room and the main room.

³⁴ They made two folding doors from cypress wood and fastened them to the door-

frame. ³⁵ The doors were also decorated with wood carvings of winged creatures, palm trees, and flowers, and they were also covered evenly with very thin sheets of gold.

³⁶ They built a courtyard in front of the temple. The walls around the courtyard were made of cedar and stone. To make the walls, between each layer of cedar beams they put down two layers of stone.

³⁷ They laid the foundation of the temple of Yahweh in the month of Ziv, in the fourth year that Solomon ruled. ³⁸ In the eleventh year that he ruled, in the month of Bul, they finished building the temple and all of its parts, doing exactly what Solomon's told them to do. It required seven years to build it.

Chapter 7

¹ They also built a palace for Solomon, but it required thirteen years to build it. ² One of the buildings they built was a large ceremonial hall. It was called the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon. It was forty-six meters long, twenty-three meters wide, and fourteen meters high. It was supported by four rows of cedar pillars. There were cedar beams across each row. ³ The carpenters build a roof from cedar planks that were attached to beams. The carpenters made pillars to support the cedar beams. There were a total of forty-five pillars put in place, making fifteen pillars in each row to support the roof. ⁴ On each of the two side walls there were three sets of windows facing each other. ⁵ All the windows and doorways had rectangular frames. The windows along the long wall on one side faced the windows on the other side.

⁶ They also built a long room with pillars; it was twenty-three meters long and four-

teen meters wide. In front of it was a covered porch whose roof was supported by pillars.

⁷ Then they made a building called the Hall of the Throne. It was also called the Hall of Justice. That was where Solomon decided about people's disputes. The entire floor was covered with cedar wood.

⁸ In the courtyard behind the Hall of Judgment they built a house for Solomon to live in that was made like the other buildings. They also built the same kind of house for his wife, who was the daughter of the king of Egypt.

⁹ All of these buildings and the walls around the palace courtyard were made from stones, from the foundations up to the eaves. The stones had been expensive for the workers to cut at the quarry, according to the sizes that were needed, and the sides of the stones were shaped and smoothed by cutting them with saws. ¹⁰ The foundations were also made from huge blocks of expensive stones that had been prepared at the quarry. Some of them were about three and three-quarters meters long and others were about four and four-fifths meters long. ¹¹ On top of the foundation stones were other expensive stones that had been cut according to the sizes they needed, as well as cedar beams. ¹² The palace courtyard, the inner courtyard in front of the temple, and the portico in front of the temple had walls made by putting down three layers of cut stones between each layer of cedar beams.

¹³⁻¹⁴ There was a man who lived in the city of Tyre whose name was Hiram. He was a craftsman. His father had also lived in Tyre and had also been very skilled at making things from bronze, but Hiram's father was no longer living. His mother was from the tribe of Naphtali. Hiram was very wise and intelligent and

was very skilled at making things from bronze. Solomon invited him to come to Jerusalem and supervise all the work of making things from bronze, and Hiram agreed.

¹⁵ He made two bronze pillars. Each one was eight and one-third meters tall and eight and one-half around. ¹⁶ He also made two gleaming bronze tops to be put on top of the pillars. Each top was two and one-third meters tall. ¹⁷ Then he made bronze networks of chains like wreaths to decorate the top of each pillar. There were seven of these networks at the top of each pillar. ¹⁸ Hiram also made bronze figures that resembled pomegranates. He put two rows of pomegranates over the top of each pillar. ¹⁹ The top over each pillar was shaped like a lily. Each lily leaf was one and four-fifths meters tall. ²⁰ These tops were placed on a bowl shaped section around which were two rows of two hundred figures of pomegranates around the top of each pillar. ²¹ His helpers set up the pillars in front of the entrance of the temple. The pillar on the south side was named Jakin, and the pillar on the north side was named Boaz. ²² The bronze tops that were shaped like lilies were placed on top of the pillars.

So Hiram and his helpers completed the work of making the bronze pillars.

²³ Hiram also made a very large round bronze basin called "The Sea" that was made of metal and cast in a clay mold. It was two and one-third meters tall, four and three-fifths meters across, and thirteen and three-quarters meters around. ²⁴ Around the outer edge of the rim of the "The Sea" were two rows of figures that resembled gourds that were made of bronze. But the gourds were not cast separately. They were cast in the same mold as the rest of the tank. For each meter of length around the rim of the tank there were

about eighteen gourds.

²⁵ Hiram also cast twelve bronze statues of oxen. He placed them to face outward. He placed three of them to face north, three to face west, three to face south, and three to face east. His helpers put the large bronze tank known as "The Sea" so that it sat on the backs of the statues of the oxen. ²⁶ The sides of the tank were eight centimeters thick. The rim was like the rim of a cup. It curved outward, like the petals of a lily. When the tank was full, it held about forty-four cubic meters of water.

²⁷ Hiram also made ten bronze carts. Each was one and four-fifths meters long, one and four-fifths meters wide, and one and one-third meters tall. ²⁸ On the sides of the carts there were panels set in frames. ²⁹ On those panels were bronze figures of lions, oxen, and winged creatures. Below and above the lions and bulls there were decorations of bronze wreaths. ³⁰ Each cart had four bronze wheels and two axles made of bronze. At the top corners of each cart were bronze supports to hold up a basin. On these supports were also decorations of bronze wreaths. ³¹ On top of each cart, under each basin, was a frame that resembled a circular collar. The top of each circular frame was forty-six centimeters above the top of the cart, and the bottom of it was twenty-three centimeters below the top of the cart. There were also engravings within square panels. ³² The wheels were sixty-nine centimeters high. They were below the panels. The wheels were connected to axles that had been cast in the same mold as the rest of the cart. ³³ The wheels of the carts were like the wheels of chariots. The axles, the rims, the spokes, and the hubs were all cast from bronze.

³⁴ At the top corners of each cart there were handles. These were molded into the

cart itself. ³⁵ There was a bronze band of twenty-three centimeters around the top of each cart. There were braces attached to the corners of each cart. The bands and the braces were cast in the same mold as the rest of the cart. ³⁶ The braces and the panels on the sides of the carts were also decorated with figures of winged creatures, lions, and palm trees, whenever there was space for them, and there were bronze wreaths all around them. ³⁷ That is how Hiram made the ten carts. They were all cast in the same mold, so they were all alike. They all were the same size and had the same shape.

³⁸ Hiram also made ten bronze basins, one basin for each of the ten stands. Each basin was one and four-fifths meters across and held 880 liters of water. ³⁹ Hiram placed five of the carts on the right side of the temple and five on the left side of the temple. He put the large tank known as "The Sea" on the corner that was toward the east and in the direction of the south. ⁴⁰ Hiram also made pots, shovels for carrying ashes, and bowls for carrying the blood of the animals that would be sacrificed. He completed all the work that King Solomon requested him to do for the temple. This is a list of the bronze things he made:

⁴¹ the two pillars,

the two tops to be put on top of the pillars,

the two wreaths of chains to decorate the tops of the pillars,

⁴² the four hundred figures of pomegranates in four rows, with one hundred in each row; two of these rows were placed over the head of each pillar,

⁴³ the ten carts,

the ten basins,

⁴⁴ the big tank known as "The Sea,"

the twelve statues of oxen on whose backs the tank was placed,

⁴⁵ the pots, shovels for the ashes of the altar, and bowls.

Huram and his workers made all these things for King Solomon and put them outside the temple. They were all made of bronze that the workmen polished for it to gleam brightly.

⁴⁶ They made them by pouring melted bronze into the clay molds that Hiram had set up near the Jordan River valley, between the cities of Succoth and Zarethan.

⁴⁷ Solomon did not tell his workers to weigh those bronze objects, because there were many items. So no one ever knew what they weighed.

⁴⁸ Solomon's workers also made all the gold items for the temple of Yahweh:

the altar,

the table where the bread of the presence was kept before God,

⁴⁹ the ten lampstands that were put in front of the very holy place, five on the south side and five on the north side,

the decorations that resembled flowers,

the lamps,

the tongs to grasp the hot coals,

⁵⁰ the cups, the gold lamp wick snuffers, the small lamp bowls, the dishes for incense, the pans for carrying the hot coals, and the sockets for the doors at the entrance to the very holy place and for the doors at the entrance to the main room of the temple.

Those things were all made of gold.

⁵¹ So Solomon's workers finished all the work for the temple. Then they placed in the temple storerooms all the things that his father David had dedicated to

Yahweh—all the silver and gold, and the other valuable items.

Chapter 8

¹ Solomon then summoned to Jerusalem all the elders of Israel, all the leaders of the tribes and the leaders of the clans. He arranged for them to join in bringing to the temple Yahweh's sacred chest from Mount Zion, where it was in the part of the city called the city of David. ² So all the Israelite leaders came to King Solomon during the Festival of Shelters, in the month of Ethanim.

³ When they had all arrived, the priests lifted up the sacred chest ⁴ and brought it to the temple. Then the descendants of Levi who assisted the priests helped them to carry to the temple the sacred tent and all the sacred things that had been in the tent. ⁵ Then King Solomon and many of the Israelite people gathered in front of Yahweh's sacred chest. And they sacrificed a huge amount of sheep and oxen. No one was able to count the sacrifices because there were very many.

⁶ Then the priests brought the sacred chest into the very holy place in the temple, and they placed it under the wings of the statues of the winged creatures. ⁷ The wings of those statues spread out over the sacred chest and over the poles by which it was carried. ⁸ The poles were very long, with the result that the ends of the poles could be seen by people who were standing at the entrance to the very holy place, but they could not be seen by people standing outside the temple. Those poles are still there. ⁹ The only things that were in the sacred chest were the two stone tablets that Moses had put there at Mount Sinai, where Yahweh made a covenant with the people after they left Egypt.

¹⁰ The priests put the sacred chest in the temple. When they came out of the holy place, suddenly it was filled with a cloud.

¹¹ The glory of Yahweh filled the temple, with the result that the priests were not able to continue their work.

¹² Then Solomon prayed this:

"Yahweh, you have placed the sun in the sky,

but you have decided that you would live in very dark clouds.

¹³ I have built for you a splendid temple, a place for you to live in forever."

¹⁴ Then, while all the people stood there, the king turned around and faced them, and he asked God to bless them. ¹⁵ He said, "Praise Yahweh, the God to whom we Israelites belong! By his own power he has done what he promised to my father David. What he promised was this:

¹⁶ From the time that I brought my people out of Egypt, I have never chosen any city in Israel in which a temple should be built for my people to worship me there. But I chose you, David, to rule my people."

¹⁷ Then Solomon said, "My father David wanted to build a temple in order that we Israelite people could worship Yahweh our God there. ¹⁸ But Yahweh said to him, 'You have wanted to build a temple for me, and what you wanted to do was good. ¹⁹ However, you are not the one who I want to build it. It is one of your sons who I want to build a temple for me.'

²⁰ And now Yahweh has done what he promised to do. I have become the king of Israel to succeed my father, and I am ruling my people, as Yahweh promised. I have arranged for this temple to be built for us Israelites to worship Yahweh, the God to whom we Israelites belong. ²¹ I have also provided a place in the temple for the sacred chest in which are the

two stone tablets of the covenant that Yahweh made with our ancestors when he brought them out of Egypt."

²² Then Solomon stood in front of the altar which was in front of the Israelite people who had gathered there. He spread out his arms toward heaven, ²³ and he prayed,

"Yahweh, the God whom we Israelite people worship, there is no god like you up in heaven or down here on the earth. You solemnly promised that you would faithfully love us. And that is what you have done for us who earnestly do what you want us to do.

²⁴ You have done the things that you promised my father David, who served you very well, that you would do. Truly, you promised to do these things for him, and today we see that by your power you have done them.

²⁵ So now, Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, I am requesting that you do the other things that you promised my father that you would do. You told him that there would always be some of his descendants who would be kings in Israel, if they would conduct their lives as he did. ²⁶ So now, God of us Israelite people, cause what you promised to do for my father David, who served you well, to happen.

²⁷ But God, will you really live on the earth among people? There is not enough space in heaven for you to have enough space to live there. So this temple that I have commanded my workers to build is certainly too small for you to live in. ²⁸ But Yahweh, my God, please listen to me while I am praying to you this day. ²⁹ I pray that you would protect this temple night and day. This is the place about which you have said, 'I will always be there.' I request that you listen to me whenever I turn my face toward this temple and pray.

³⁰ I request that when I pray to you and your people pray to you while they turn their faces toward this place, that in your home in heaven you will hear us and forgive us for the sins that we have committed.

³¹ Suppose that people accuse someone of doing something wrong to another person, and they bring him to your altar outside this holy temple. And suppose that he says, 'I did not do that; may God punish me if I am not telling the truth.' ³² In that case, listen from heaven and decide who is telling the truth. Then punish the person who is guilty as he deserves to be punished, and declare that the other person is innocent.

³³ Or suppose that your Israelite people are defeated by their enemies in a battle because they have sinned against you. Suppose also that they are forced to go to some distant country. Then suppose that they stop acting in a sinful way. Suppose that they face in the direction of this temple and acknowledge you have justly punished them. And suppose that they plead that you will forgive them. ³⁴ In that case, listen to them from heaven, forgive your Israelite people for the sins that they have committed, and bring them back to this land that you gave to our ancestors.

³⁵ Or suppose that you do not allow any rain to fall because your people have sinned against you. Suppose that they face in the direction of this place and admit that you have justly punished them. Suppose also that they stop acting sinfully and humbly pray to you. ³⁶ In that case, listen to them in heaven and forgive your Israelite people for the sins that they have committed. Teach them the right way to conduct their lives, and then send rain on this land that you have given to your people to belong to them permanently.

³⁷ Suppose that the people of

this land experience famine, or suppose that there is a plague by mildew or by locusts or grasshoppers. Or suppose that their enemies surround any of their cities in order to attack them. Suppose that any of those bad things happen to them.

³⁸ And suppose that your Israelite people earnestly plead with you, because they know in their inner beings that they are suffering because they have sinned. Suppose that they stretch out their arms toward this temple and pray. ³⁹ In that case, listen to them from your home in heaven, and forgive them, and help them. You are the only one who knows what people are thinking, so act toward each person as he needs, ⁴⁰ in order that your people may then have an awesome respect for you all the years that they live in this land that you gave to our ancestors.

⁴¹⁻⁴² There will be some foreigners who do not belong to your Israelite people who will have come here from countries far away because they have heard that you are very great, and because they have heard about the great things that you have done for your people. Suppose that people like that come here to this temple to worship you and pray. ⁴³ In that case, in your home in heaven listen to their prayer, and do for them what they request you to do. Do that in order that all the people groups in the world will know about you and revere you, as we your Israelite people do. Then they will know that this temple that I have caused to be built to honor you belongs to you and is where you should be worshiped.

⁴⁴ Suppose that you send your people to go to fight against their enemies. And suppose that your people pray to you, wherever they are, and that they turn toward this city that you have chosen and toward this temple that I have caused to be built for you. ⁴⁵ In that case, listen in

heaven to their prayers. Listen to what they plead for you to do, and assist them.

⁴⁶ It is true that everyone sins. So, suppose that your people sin against you and that you become angry with them. You might allow their enemies to defeat them, capture them, and take them away to their own countries, even to countries that are far away. ⁴⁷ And suppose that, while your people are in those countries to which they had to go, they sincerely repent and plead with you there saying, 'We have sinned and have done things that are very wicked.' ⁴⁸ Suppose that they very truly and sincerely repent, and turn toward this land that you gave to our ancestors. Suppose that they turn toward this city that you have chosen to be the place where we should worship you, and toward this temple that I have caused to be built for you. Suppose that they then pray to you. ⁴⁹ In that case, from your home in heaven listen to them while they plead for your help, and help them. ⁵⁰ Forgive them for all the sins that they have committed against you and cause their enemies to act kindly toward them. ⁵¹ Do not forget that the Israelites are your people. They are your special possession. You brought our ancestors out of Egypt where they were greatly suffering as though they were in a blazing furnace.

⁵² I request that you always listen to your Israelite people and to their king, and heed their prayers whenever they call out to you to help them. ⁵³ You chose them from all the other people groups in the world to belong to you, which is what you told Moses to tell them when you brought our ancestors out of Egypt."

⁵⁴ After Solomon had finished praying this and pleading to Yahweh for his help, he stood up in front of the altar where he had been kneeling. He lifted up his arms. ⁵⁵ Then he asked God to bless all the Israelite

people. He prayed loudly, saying,

⁵⁶ "Praise Yahweh, who has given us his people peace, like he promised that he would do. He has done every one of the good things that he promised to Moses, the man who served him very well. ⁵⁷ I pray that our God will be with us like he was with our ancestors, and that he will never, never abandon us. ⁵⁸ I pray that he will cause us to loyally serve him, to conduct our lives as he wants us to, and to obey all his commandments and statutes and decrees that he gave to our ancestors. ⁵⁹ I pray that Yahweh our God will never forget these words that I have prayed, pleading for his help. I pray that he will think about them by day and by night. I pray that he will always act mercifully toward us Israelite people and toward our king, giving us the things that we need day by day. ⁶⁰ If you do that, all the people groups in the world will know that you, Yahweh, are the only one who is God, and that there is no other one who is God. ⁶¹ I pray that you, his people, will always be fully committed to Yahweh, and that you will obey all his statutes and commands, like you are doing now."

⁶² Then the king and all the Israelite people who were there offered sacrifices to Yahweh. ⁶³ They sacrificed twenty-two thousand cattle and 120,000 sheep to restore fellowship with Yahweh. Then the king and all the people dedicated the temple.

⁶⁴ On that day, the king also dedicated the middle part of the courtyard that was in front of the temple. Then he offered there sacrifices that would be completely burned on the altar, the offerings of flour and the fat of the animals that were sacrificed to restore fellowship with Yahweh. They sacrificed them there because the bronze altar was not big enough for all those sacrifices to be burned on it that

day.

⁶⁵ Then Solomon and all the Israelite people celebrated the Festival of Shelters for seven days and then for another seven days, for a total of fourteen days. There was a huge crowd of people there, some of whom had come from distant places like Hamath in the far north and the border of Egypt in the far south. ⁶⁶ On the final day, Solomon sent the people to their homes. They all praised him and went home happy because of all the things that Yahweh had done to bless David and his Israelite people.

Chapter 9

¹ After Solomon's workers had finished building the temple and his palace and everything else that Solomon wanted them to build, ² Yahweh appeared to him in a dream a second time, like he had appeared to him at the city of Gibeon. ³ Yahweh said to him,

"I heard what you prayed and what you pleaded for me to do. I have set this house apart for myself, for me to be present in it forever.

⁴ And as for you, if you conduct your life as I want you to, like your father David did, and if you very sincerely obey all the statutes and decrees that I have commanded you to obey, ⁵ I will do what I promised your father that I would do. I promised him that Israel would always be ruled by his descendants.

⁶ But suppose that you or your descendants stop worshiping me; suppose that you disobey the commands and decrees that I have given to you; suppose that you start to worship other gods. ⁷ Then I will remove my Israelite people from the land that I have given to them. I will

also abandon this temple that I have dedicated. Then people everywhere will despise Israel and make fun of it. ⁸ Despite the fact that this temple is very beautiful, there will come a time when everyone who passes by will be astonished when they see it, and they will hiss and say, 'Why has Yahweh done this to this land and to this temple?' ⁹ Other people will reply, 'It happened because the Israelite people abandoned Yahweh their God, the one who brought their ancestors out of Egypt. They started to accept and worship other gods. And that is why Yahweh has caused them to experience all these disasters.'"

¹⁰ Solomon's workers worked for twenty years to build the temple and the palace.

¹¹ Hiram, the king of the city of Tyre, had arranged for his workers to give Solomon all the cedar and pine logs and all the gold that he needed for this work. After it was all finished, King Solomon gave to Hiram twenty cities in the region of Galilee.

¹² But when Hiram went from Tyre to Galilee to see the cities that Solomon had given to him, he was not pleased with them. ¹³ He said to Solomon, "My friend, those cities that you gave me are worthless." Because of that, Hiram called that region Worthless. ¹⁴ Hiram gave Solomon only 4,000 kilograms of gold for those cities.

¹⁵ This is a record of the work that King Solomon forced men to do. He forced them to build the temple and his palace and the landfill on the east side of the city, and the wall around Jerusalem, and to rebuild the cities of Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer. ¹⁶ The reason they needed to rebuild Gezer was that the army of the king of Egypt had attacked Gezer and captured it. Then they had burned the houses in the city and killed all the people of the Canaan people group who lived there. The king of Egypt gave that city to his daughter for

a gift when she married Solomon. ¹⁷ So Solomon's workers also rebuilt the city of Gezer, and they also rebuilt the city of Lower Beth Horon. ¹⁸ They also rebuilt the cities of Baalath and Tamar in the wilderness in the southern part of Judah. ¹⁹ They also built the cities where they kept the supplies for Solomon, the places where his horses and chariots were kept. They also built everything else that he wanted them to build, in Jerusalem and in Lebanon, and in other places in the area over which he ruled.

²⁰ There were many people groups who belonged to the Amor, the Heth, the Periz, the Hiv, and the Jebus, who were not killed when the Israelites captured their land. ²¹ Their descendants still lived in Israel. It was those people whom Solomon forced to become his slaves to build all those places, and they are still slaves. ²² But Solomon did not force any Israelite people to become slaves. Some of them became soldiers, servants, officials, army officers, commanders of his chariot forces, and men who rode on his horses. ²³ There were 550 officials who supervised the slaves who worked to build all those places.

²⁴ After Solomon's wife, who was the daughter of the king of Egypt, moved from the part of Jerusalem called the city of David to the palace that Solomon's workers built for her, Solomon told his workers to fill in the land on the east side of the city.

²⁵ Three times each year Solomon brought to the temple offerings that the priests burned completely on the altar and offerings to promise friendship with Yahweh. He also brought incense to be burned in the presence of Yahweh.

And that is how his men finished building the temple.

²⁶ King Solomon's workers also built a fleet of ships at the city of Ezion Geber, which is near the city of Elath, on the shore of the Sea of Reeds, in the land belonging to the Edom people group. ²⁷ King Hiram sent some expert sailors to go on the ships with Solomon's workers. ²⁸ They sailed to the region of Ophir and brought back to Solomon about fourteen metric tons of gold.

Chapter 10

¹ The queen who ruled the land of Sheba heard that Yahweh had caused Solomon to become famous, so she traveled to Jerusalem to ask him questions that were difficult to answer. ² She came with a large group of wealthy people, and she brought camels that were loaded with spices, precious gems, and much gold. When she met Solomon, she asked him questions about all the things in which she was interested. ³ Solomon answered all her questions. He explained everything that she asked about, even things that were very difficult. ⁴ The queen realized that Solomon was very wise. She saw his palace, ⁵ she saw the food that was served on his table every day, she saw where his officials lived, their uniforms, the servants who served the food and wine, and the sacrifices that he took to the temple to be offered. She was extremely amazed.

⁶ She said to the king, "Everything that I heard in my own country about you and about how wise you are is true!" ⁷ But I did not believe it was true until I came here and saw it myself. But really, what they told me is only half of what they could have told me about you. You are extremely wise and rich, more than what people told me. ⁸ How fortunate are your wives! And how fortunate are your

servants, who are waiting to serve you, who are listening to the wise things that you say! ⁹ Praise Yahweh, your God, who has shown that he is pleased with you by causing you to become the king of Israel! God has always loved the Israelite people, and therefore he has appointed you to be their king, in order that you will rule them fairly and righteously.”

¹⁰ Then the queen gave to the king the things that she had brought. She gave him over 4,000 kilograms of gold and a large amount of spices and gems. Never again did King Solomon receive more spices than the queen gave him at that time.

¹¹ In the ships that belong to King Hiram, in which they had previously brought gold from Ophir, they also brought a large amount of almug wood and precious gem stones. ¹² King Solomon told his workers to use that wood to make pillars in the temple and in his palace, and also to make harps and lyres for the musicians. That wood was the largest amount of fine wood that had ever been brought to or seen in Israel.

¹³ King Solomon gave to the queen from Sheba everything that she wanted. He gave her those gifts in addition to the gifts that he always gave to other rulers who visited him. Then she and the people who came with her returned to her own land.

¹⁴ Each year there was brought to Solomon a total of twenty-two metric tons of gold. ¹⁵ That was in addition to the taxes paid to him by the merchants and traders, and the annual taxes paid by the kings of Arabia and by the governors of the districts in Israel.

¹⁶ King Solomon’s workers took this gold and hammered it into thin sheets and covered two hundred large shields with those thin sheets of gold. They put six and one-half kilograms of gold on each shield. ¹⁷

His workers made three hundred smaller shields. They covered each of them with one and three-quarters kilograms of gold. Then the king put those shields in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon.

¹⁸ His workers also made for him a large throne. Part of it was covered with ivory, and part of it was covered with very fine gold. ¹⁹⁻²⁰ There were six steps in front of the throne. There was a statue of a lion on both sides of each step. So altogether there were twelve statues of lions. The back of the throne was rounded at the top. At each side of the throne there was an armrest and alongside each armrest there was a small statue of a lion. No throne like that had ever existed in any other kingdom. ²¹ All of Solomon’s cups were made of gold, and all the various dishes in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon were made of gold. They did not make things from silver, because during the years that Solomon ruled silver was not considered to be valuable. ²² The king had a fleet of ships that sailed with the ships that King Hiram owned. Every three years the ships returned from the places to which they had sailed bringing gold, silver, ivory, monkeys, and baboons.

²³ King Solomon became richer and wiser than any other king. ²⁴ People from all over the world wanted to come and listen to the wise things that Solomon said, things that God had put into his mind. ²⁵ All the people who came to him brought presents. They brought things made from silver or gold, or robes, or weapons, or spices, or horses, or mules. The people continued to do this every year.

²⁶ Solomon acquired 1,400 chariots and twelve thousand men who rode on the horses. Solomon put some of them in Jerusalem and some of them in other cities where he kept his chariots. ²⁷ During the years that Solomon was king, sil-

ver became as common in Jerusalem as stones, and lumber from cedar trees in the foothills of Judah were as plentiful as lumber from fig trees. ²⁸ Solomon's agents bought horses and supervised the bringing of them into Israel from the areas of Egypt and Kue that were famous for breeding horses. ²⁹ In Egypt they bought chariots and horses. They paid six and one-half kilograms of silver for each chariot and one and three-fifths kilograms of silver for each horse. They brought them to Israel. Then they sold many of them to the kings of the Hittite people group and the kings of Aram.

Chapter 11

¹ King Solomon married many foreign women. First he married the daughter of the king of Egypt. He also married women from the Heth people group and from the Moab, Ammon, and Edom people groups, and from the city of Sidon. ² He married them even though Yahweh had commanded the Israelite people saying, "Do not marry people from those areas, because if you do that, they will surely persuade you to worship the gods that they worship!" ³ Solomon married seven hundred women who were kings' daughters. He also had three hundred wives who were his slaves. And his wives caused him to stop worshiping God. ⁴ By the time that Solomon became old, they had persuaded him to worship the gods from their countries. He was not completely dedicated to Yahweh his God like his father David had been. ⁵ Solomon worshiped Asherah, the goddess that the people of Sidon worshiped, and he worshiped Molech, the disgusting god that the Ammon people group worshiped. ⁶ Thus Solomon did many things that Yahweh said were evil. He did not conduct his life as his father David had

done; he did not conduct his life as Yahweh wanted him to.

⁷ On the hill to the east of Jerusalem he built a place to worship Chemosh, the disgusting god that the Moab people group worshiped, and a place to worship Molech, the disgusting god that the Ammon people group worshiped. ⁸ He also built places where all his foreign wives could burn incense and offer sacrifices to the gods from their own countries.

⁹⁻¹⁰ Even though Yahweh, the God whom the Israelites worshiped, had appeared to Solomon two times, and had commanded him to not worship foreign gods, Solomon refused to obey Yahweh. So Yahweh was angry with Solomon. ¹¹ Yahweh said to him, "You have chosen to disobey the covenant that I made with you and to disobey what I commanded you. So I am certainly not going to allow you to rule all of your kingdom. I am going to allow one of your officials to rule. ¹² But because of what I promised your father David, I will allow you to rule all your kingdom while you are still living. After you die, I will not allow your son to rule the whole kingdom. ¹³ But I will not stop him from ruling some of the kingdom. I will allow him to rule one tribe, because of what I promised to David, who served me well, and because I want David's descendants to rule in Jerusalem, where my temple is located."

¹⁴ Yahweh caused Hadad, from the family of the kings in the Edom people group, to rebel against Solomon. ¹⁵⁻¹⁶ What happened was that previously, when David's army had conquered Edom, his army commander Joab had gone there to help bury the Israelite soldiers who had been killed in the battle. Joab and his army remained in Edom for six months, and during that time they killed all the males of that area.

¹⁷ Hadad was a young child at that time,

and he had escaped to Egypt, along with some of his father's servants from Edom.

¹⁸ They went to the region of Midian, and then they went to the desert area at Paran. Some other men joined them there. Then they all traveled to Egypt and went to the king of Egypt. The king gave Hadad some land and ordered his servants to give him some food regularly. ¹⁹ The king liked Hadad. As a result he gave him the sister of his own wife, Queen Tahpenes, to be Hadad's wife.

²⁰ Later Hadad's wife gave birth to a son named Genubath. The sister of Tahpenes raised him in the palace, where he lived with the king's sons.

²¹ While Hadad was in Egypt, he heard that David had died, and that Joab, the commander of David's army, was also dead. So he said to the king of Egypt, "Please allow me to return to my own country."

²² But the king said to him, "Why do you want to go back to your country? Is there something that you lack that you want me to give to you?" Hadad replied, "No, but please just allow me to go." So the king allowed him to leave, and he returned to his own country and became the king of Edom.

²³ God also caused another man named Rezon son of Eliada, to rebel against Solomon. Rezon had run away from his master, King Hadadezer of the area of Zobah, north of Damascus. ²⁴ Rezon then became the leader of a group of outlaws. That happened after David's army had defeated Hadadezer and had also killed all his soldiers. Rezon and his men went to Damascus and started to live there, and the people there appointed him to be their king. ²⁵ All during the time that Solomon was alive, while Rezon was ruling not only Damascus but all of Aram, he was an enemy of Israel and caused trouble for Israel

like Hadad did.

²⁶ Another man who rebelled against Solomon was one of his officials named Jeroboam son of Nebat. He was from the city of Zeredah in the region where the tribe of Ephraim lives. His mother was a widow named Zeruah.

²⁷ This is what happened. Solomon's workers were filling in the land on the east side of Jerusalem and repairing the walls around the city. ²⁸ Jeroboam was a very capable young man. So, when Solomon saw that he worked very hard, he appointed him to supervise all the men who were forced to work in the areas where the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim live.

²⁹ One day when Jeroboam was walking alone along the road outside of Jerusalem, the prophet Ahijah from the city of Shiloh met him. Ahijah was wearing a new robe, ³⁰ which he took off and tore into twelve pieces. ³¹ He said to Jeroboam, "Take ten of these pieces for yourself, because Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, says to you, 'I am going to tear the kingdom from Solomon, and I am going to enable you to become the ruler of ten of the tribes of Israel. ³² Solomon's descendants will still rule one tribe, because of what I promised David, a man who served me very well, and because of Jerusalem, the city that I have chosen from all the cities in Israel to be the city where my people will worship me. ³³ I am going to do this because Solomon has rejected me and has been worshiping Asherah, the goddess that the people of Sidon worship, Chemosh, the god that the Moab people group worships, and Molech, the god that the Ammon people group worships. He has not conducted his life as I wanted him to. He has not obeyed my statutes and decrees, as his father David did.

³⁴ But I will not take the entire kingdom away from him. I will enable him to rule

Judah all during the years that he is alive. I will do that because of what I promised to do for David, whom I chose to be the king, and who served me well, and who always obeyed my commandments and laws. ³⁵ But I will take the other ten tribes of his kingdom and give them to you to rule. ³⁶ I will allow Solomon's son to rule one tribe, in order that descendants of David will always rule in Jerusalem, the city that I have chosen to be the place where my people worship me. ³⁷ I will enable you to become the king of Israel, and you will rule over all the territory that you want to. ³⁸ If you obey all that I command you to do, and conduct your life as I want you to, and if you do what I say is right by obeying my laws and commandments like David did, I will help you. I will make sure that your descendants will rule after you die, like I promised to do for David. ³⁹ Because of Solomon's sins, I will punish David's descendants, but I will not continue to punish them forever."

⁴⁰ Solomon found out what Ahijah told Jeroboam, so he tried to kill Jeroboam. But Jeroboam escaped and went to Egypt. He went to Shishak, the king of Egypt, and stayed with him until after Solomon died.

⁴¹ A record of all the other things that Solomon did, and all the wise things that he said, was written in the book of the events of Solomon. ⁴² He was king in Jerusalem and ruled over all of Israel for forty years. ⁴³ Then Solomon died and was buried in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David. Then his son Rehoboam became the king.

Chapter 12

¹ All the people of northern Israel went to the city of Shechem in order to appoint Rehoboam to be their king. So Rehoboam

also went there. ² When Jeroboam, who was still in Egypt, heard about that, he returned from Egypt to Israel. ³ The leaders of the northern tribes summoned him, and they went together to talk to Rehoboam. They said to him, ⁴ "Your father Solomon forced us to work very hard, and if you allow us to work less, we will serve you faithfully."

⁵ He replied, "Go away, and come back three days from now and I will give you my answer." So those leaders and Jeroboam left.

⁶ Then King Rehoboam consulted his older men who had advised his father Solomon while he was still living. He asked them, "What should I say to answer these men?"

⁷ They replied, "If you want to serve these people well, speak kindly to them when you reply to them. If you do that, they will always serve you faithfully."

⁸ But he ignored what the older men advised him to do. Instead, he consulted the younger men who had grown up with him, who were now his advisors. ⁹ He said to them, "What do you say that I should answer the men who are asking me to reduce the work that my father required from them?"

¹⁰ They replied, "This is what you should tell them: 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist. ¹¹ What I mean is that my father required you to work hard. But I will make those loads heavier. It was as though my father whipped you, but I will whip you with scorpions.'"

¹² So three days later, Jeroboam and all the leaders came to Rehoboam again, which is what he had told them to do. ¹³ The king ignored the advice of the older men and spoke harshly to the Israelite leaders. ¹⁴ He told them what the younger men had advised. He said, "My father put heavy burdens of work on you, but I will put

heavier burdens on you. It was as though he beat you with whips, but I will beat you with scorpions!" ¹⁵ So the king did not pay any attention to the Israelite leaders. Now all this happened in order that what Yahweh wanted would occur, what he had told the prophet Ahijah about Jeroboam becoming king of the ten tribes.

¹⁶ When the Israelite leaders realized that the king did not pay any attention to what they said, they shouted,

"We do not want anything to do with this descendant of King David!

We will not pay attention to what this grandson of Jesse says!

You people of Israel, let us go home!

As for this descendant of David, he can rule his own tribe!"

So the Israelite leaders returned to their homes. ¹⁷ And after that, the only Israelite people whom Rehoboam ruled over were those who lived in the territory of the tribe of Judah.

¹⁸ Then King Rehoboam went with Adoniram to talk to the Israelite people. Adoniram was the man who supervised all the men who were forced to work for Rehoboam. But the Israelite people killed him by throwing stones at him. When that happened, King Rehoboam quickly got in his chariot and escaped to Jerusalem. ¹⁹ Ever since that time, the people of the northern tribes of Israel have been rebelling against the descendants of King David.

²⁰ When the Israelite people heard that Jeroboam had returned from Egypt, they invited him to come to a meeting, and there they appointed him to be the king of Israel. Only the people of the tribe of Judah continued to be loyal to the kings descended from King David.

²¹ When Rehoboam arrived in Jerusalem,

he gathered 180,000 of the best soldiers from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. He wanted them to fight against the northern tribes of Israel and defeat them, in order that he could rule all the tribes of his kingdom again.

²² But God spoke to the prophet Shemaiah and said this to him: ²³ "Go and tell this to Solomon's son Rehoboam, the king of Judah, and to all the people of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and the people from the northern tribe who live in Judah: ²⁴ 'Yahweh says that you must not go to fight against your own relatives, the people of Israel. All of you must go home. What has happened is what Yahweh wanted to happen.'" So Shemaiah went and told that to them, and they all listened what Yahweh had commanded them to do, and they went home.

²⁵ Then Jeroboam's workers built walls around the city of Shechem in the hill country where the descendants of Ephraim lived, and he ruled from there for a while. He and his workers then left there and went to the city of Peniel, and they built walls around that city.

²⁶⁻²⁷ Then Jeroboam said to himself, "If my people continue to go to Jerusalem and offer sacrifices to Yahweh at the temple there, soon they will again become loyal to Rehoboam, the king of Judah, and they will kill me."

²⁸ So he consulted his advisors, and then he did what they suggested. He told his workers to make gold statues of two calves. Then he said to the people, "You have been going to Jerusalem to worship for a long time. You are making too big an effort to keep going there. You people of Israel, look! These statues are the gods that brought our ancestors up from Egypt! So you can worship these, here!" ²⁹ He told his workers to place one of the statues in the city of Bethel in the south and one in

the city of Dan in the north. ³⁰ So what Jeroboam did caused the people to sin. Some of them went and worshiped the calf at Bethel, and others went and worshiped the other calf at Dan.

³¹ Moses had declared that only men from the tribe of Levi would be priests, but Jeroboam also told his workers to build places on the hills where they could worship idols, and then he appointed men who were not from the tribe of Levi to be priests for the idols. ³² They had a celebration in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day, like the celebration of living in temporary shelters that occurred in Judah each year. On the altar that they built at Bethel, he offered sacrifices to the gold statues of calves that they had made, and he stationed the priests on the hills where idols were worshiped, where his workers built houses used for idolatry. ³³ Jeroboam went up to that altar on that day in the eighth month that he himself had chosen. There on that altar he burned incense to be a sacrifice. And he declared that the people should celebrate that festival on that same day every year.

Chapter 13

¹ One day a prophet, obeying what Yahweh commanded him to do, went from Judah north to Bethel. He arrived there right at the time that Jeroboam was standing at the altar, ready to burn incense. ² Saying what Yahweh told him to say, the prophet shouted, "This is what Yahweh says about this altar, 'I want you to know that some day a descendant of King David will be born. His name will be Josiah, and he will come here. He will slaughter at this altar the priests who are burning incense for sacrifices on the hills in this area, and he will burn the bones of dead people on this altar.'" ³ Then the prophet also

said, "This is what will prove to you that Yahweh has said this: This altar will be split apart, and the ashes that are on it will be scattered."

⁴ When King Jeroboam heard the prophet say that, he pointed his finger at him and said to his servants, "Seize that man!" But immediately the king's arm became paralyzed, with the result that he could not move it. ⁵ (The altar split apart, and the ashes spilled out on the ground, which is what the prophet said that Yahweh had predicted would happen.)

⁶ Then the king said to the prophet, "Please pray that Yahweh will be merciful to me and heal my arm!" So the prophet prayed, and Yahweh completely healed the king's arm.

⁷ Then the king said to the prophet, "Come home with me and eat some food. And I will also give you a reward for what you have done!"

⁸ But the prophet replied, "Even if you would promise to give me half of everything that you own, I will not go with you, and I will not eat or drink anything with you here, ⁹ because Yahweh commanded me not to eat or drink anything here. He also commanded me not to return home on the road on which I came here." ¹⁰ So he started to return home, but he did not go on the road on which he came to Bethel. He went on a different road.

¹¹ At that time there was an old man living in Bethel who was also a prophet. His sons came and told him what the prophet from Judah had done there on that day, and they also told him what the prophet had said to the king. ¹² Their father said, "On which road did he go?" So his sons showed him the road on which the prophet from Judah had gone when he left Bethel. ¹³ Then he said to his sons, "Put a saddle on my donkey." So they did that,

and he got on the donkey. ¹⁴ He went along the road to find the prophet from Judah. He found him sitting under an oak tree. He said to him, "Are you the prophet who came from Judah?" He replied, "Yes, I am."

¹⁵ The old prophet said to him, "Come home with me and eat some food."

¹⁶ He replied, "No, I am not allowed to go with you into your house, or to eat or drink anything with you, ¹⁷ because Yahweh told me, 'Do not eat or drink anything here, and do not return home on the road on which you came.'"

¹⁸ Then the old prophet said to him, "I also am a prophet, like you are. Yahweh sent an angel to tell me that I should take you home with me and give you some food and drink." But the old man was lying when he said that. ¹⁹ But because of what the old prophet said, the prophet from Judah returned with him to his home and ate some food and drank some water with him.

²⁰ While they were sitting at the table, Yahweh spoke to the old man. ²¹ Then he cried out to the prophet from Judah, "This is what Yahweh says: 'You have disobeyed him, and you have not done what he commanded you to do. ²² Instead, you have come back here and had things to eat and drink in a place where he commanded you not to do that. As a result, you will be killed, and your body will not be buried in the grave where your ancestors are buried.'"

²³ When they had finished eating, the old man put a saddle on the donkey for the prophet from Judah, and the prophet from Judah left. ²⁴ But as he was going, a lion met him and killed him. The prophet's corpse was lying on the road; the donkey was standing beside it, and the lion was also standing beside the corpse.

²⁵ Some men passed by and were surprised to see the corpse on the road and the lion standing next to the corpse. So they went into Bethel and reported what they had seen.

²⁶ When the old man who had brought the prophet from Judah to his home heard about it, he said, "That is the prophet who disobeyed what Yahweh told him to do! That is why Yahweh allowed the lion to attack him and kill him. That is what Yahweh said would happen!"

²⁷ Then he said to his sons, "Put a saddle on my donkey." So they did that. ²⁸ Then he rode on the donkey and found the prophet's corpse on the road, and his donkey and the lion were still standing there alongside the corpse. But the lion had not eaten any of the flesh of the prophet and had not attacked the donkey. ²⁹ The old man picked up the corpse of the prophet and put it on his donkey and brought it back to Bethel, in order to mourn for him and to bury his corpse. ³⁰ He buried the prophet's corpse in the grave where other people in his family had been buried. Then he and his sons mourned about him, saying, "We are very sorry, my brother!"

³¹ After they had buried him, the old man said to his sons, "When I die, bury my corpse in the grave where we buried the prophet from Judah. Lay my corpse next to his corpse. ³² And do not forget what he said, things that Yahweh told him to say about the altar in Bethel, and what Yahweh told him to say about the places where they worshiped idols on the hills around the towns in Samaria. Those things will surely happen."

³³ But King Jeroboam still did not stop continuing to do the evil things that he was doing. Instead, he appointed more priests from men who were not descended from Levi. He appointed as priest anyone who

agreed to become one, in order that he could offer sacrifices on the hilltops. ³⁴ Because he committed that sin, a few years later God got rid of most of Jeroboam's descendants and did not allow them to become kings of Israel.

Chapter 14

¹ At that time, Jeroboam's son Abijah became very sick. ² Jeroboam said to his wife, "Disguise yourself in order that no one will recognize that you are my wife. Then go to the city of Shiloh, where the prophet Ahijah lives. He is the one who predicted that I would become the king of Israel. ³ Take with you ten loaves of bread and some small flat cakes, and a jar of honey, and give them to him. Tell him about our son, and he will tell you what will happen to him." ⁴ So his wife went to Shiloh, to Ahijah's house. Ahijah was unable to see, because he was very old and had become blind.

⁵ But before she got there, Yahweh told Ahijah that Jeroboam's wife was coming to inquire about their son, who was very sick. And Yahweh told Ahijah what he should tell her.

When she came to him, she pretended to be another woman. ⁶ But when Ahijah heard her footsteps as she entered the doorway, he said to her, "Come in, wife of Jeroboam! Why do you pretend that you are someone else? Yahweh has given me bad news to tell you. ⁷ Go and tell Jeroboam that this is what Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, says to you: 'I chose you from among the common people and enabled you to become the king of my Israelite people. ⁸ I took most of the kingdom of Israel away from David's descendants and gave it to you. But you have not been like David, who served me very

well. He obeyed all my commandments very sincerely, doing only things that I considered to be right. ⁹ But you have done more evil things than all those who ruled before you. You have rejected me, and you have caused me to become very angry by making metal images of other gods so that you and others could worship them.

¹⁰ So, I am going to cause terrible things to happen to your family. I will cause all your male descendants to die, young ones and old ones. I will completely get rid of your family just like a man completely burns dung to cook his food. ¹¹ The corpses of any members of your family who die in cities will be eaten by dogs. And the corpses of any members of your family who die out in the open fields will be eaten by vultures. This will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said that it will happen.'

¹² So go back home. And as soon as you enter the city, your son will die. ¹³ All the Israelite people will mourn for him and bury him. He is the only one of Jeroboam's family who will be buried properly, because he is the only one of Jeroboam's family with whom Yahweh is at all pleased.

¹⁴ Furthermore, Yahweh will appoint for himself a king to rule over Israel who will get rid of Jeroboam's descendants. And that will start to happen today! ¹⁵ Yahweh will punish the people of Israel. He will shake them like the wind shakes the reeds that grow in a stream. He will expel the Israelite people from this good land that he gave to our ancestors. He will scatter them into countries east of the Euphrates River, because they have caused him to become very angry by making poles for worshiping the goddess Asherah. ¹⁶ Yahweh will abandon the Israelite people because of the sins that Jeroboam committed, sins which induced the Israelite people to com-

mit them.”

¹⁷ Jeroboam’s wife returned home to the city of Tirzah, the new capital of Israel. And just as she entered her house, her son died. ¹⁸ All the Israelite people mourned for him and buried him, which is what Yahweh had told his servant, the prophet Ahijah, would happen.

¹⁹ Everything else that Jeroboam did, and the record of wars that his army fought, and how he ruled, is written in the book of the events of the Kings of Israel. ²⁰ Jeroboam ruled for twenty-two years. Then he died, and his son Nadab became king.

²¹ Solomon’s son Rehoboam ruled Judah. He was forty-one years old when he started to rule, and he ruled for seventeen years. He ruled in Jerusalem, which is the city that Yahweh chose out of all the tribes of Israel to be the place where he should be worshiped. Rehoboam’s mother’s name was Naamah. She was from the Ammon people group.

²² The people of Judah did many things that Yahweh said were evil. They caused him to become angry because they committed more sins than their ancestors had committed. They worshiped many other gods instead of worshiping only Yahweh. ²³ They built places to worship those gods. On high hills and under big trees they set up pillars and poles for worshiping Asherah. ²⁴ Also, there were male prostitutes at these places of worship. The Israelite people did the same disgraceful things that had been done by the people whom Yahweh had expelled while the Israelites were advancing through the land.

²⁵ When Rehoboam had been ruling for almost five years, King Shishak of Egypt came with his army to attack Jerusalem.

²⁶ They took away all the valuable things in the temple and in the king’s palace, in-

cluding the gold shields that Solomon’s workers had made. ²⁷ King Rehoboam’s workers made bronze shields to replace them and put them into the hands of officers who guarded the entrance to the king’s palace. ²⁸ Every time that the king went into the temple, those guards carried those shields, and when he left the temple they returned the shields to the storeroom.

²⁹ Everything else that Rehoboam did is written in the book of the events of the Kings of Judah. ³⁰ There were wars continually between the armies of Rehoboam and Jeroboam. ³¹ Then Rehoboam died, and he was buried in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David, where his ancestors were buried. Then his son Abijah became the king.

Chapter 15

¹ After Jeroboam had been the king of Israel for almost eighteen years, Abijah became the king of Judah. ² He ruled for three years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Maacah, the daughter of Abishalom.

³ Abijah committed the same kind of sins that his father had committed. He was not fully dedicated to Yahweh his God, as his ancestor David had been. ⁴ But, because of what Yahweh his God had promised to David, Yahweh gave Abijah a son to rule in Jerusalem after him, and in order to protect Jerusalem from their enemies. ⁵ Yahweh did that because David had always done what pleased Yahweh and because David had always obeyed Yahweh. The only time when he disobeyed Yahweh was when he caused Uriah to be killed due to his sin with Bathsheba.

⁶ There were wars between the armies of Rehoboam and Jeroboam all during the

time that Abijah ruled. ⁷ Everything else that Abijah did is written in the book of the events of the Kings of Judah. ⁸ Abijah died and was buried in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David, and his son Asa became king.

⁹ After Jeroboam had been the king of Israel for almost twenty years, Asa started to rule Judah. ¹⁰ He ruled in Jerusalem for forty-one years. His grandmother was Maacah, the daughter of Abishalom.

¹¹ Asa did what was pleasing to Yahweh, as his ancestor David had done. ¹² He got rid of the male prostitutes who were at the places where the people worshiped idols, and he also got rid of all the idols that his ancestors had made. ¹³ He also removed his grandmother Maacah so that she no longer had influence in the government because of being the mother of a previous king. He did that because she had made a disgusting wooden statue of the goddess Asherah. Asa told his workers to cut down the statue and burned it in the Kidron Valley. ¹⁴ He was not able to destroy all the places where the people worshiped Yahweh, but he continued to be dedicated to Yahweh all during the time that he lived. ¹⁵ He told his workers to place in the temple all the items that his father had dedicated to God, and all the gold and silver things that he had dedicated to God.

¹⁶ There were wars between the armies of Asa and Baasha, the king of Israel, all during the time that they ruled. ¹⁷ Baasha's army invaded Judah. They captured the city of Ramah north of Jerusalem. Then they started to build a wall around it in order to prevent people from entering or leaving the area in Judah that King Asa ruled.

¹⁸ So Asa told his workers to take all the silver and gold that was still in the store-rooms in the temple and in the palace and gave it to some of his officials. He told

them to take it to Damascus and give it to King Ben Hadad who ruled Aram. Ben Hadad was son of Tabrimmon and grandson of Hezion. He told the officials to say this to Ben Hadad: ¹⁹ "I want there to be a peace treaty between me and you, like there was between my father and your father. For that purpose, I am giving you this silver and gold. So now please cancel the treaty that you made with Baasha, the king of Israel, in order that he will take his soldiers away from attacking mine, because he will be afraid of your army." ²⁰ So the officials went and gave the message to Ben Hadad, and he did what Asa suggested. He sent his army commanders and their soldiers to attack some of the towns in Israel. They captured Ijon, Dan, Abel of Beth Maacah, the area near the Sea of Galilee, and all the land of the tribe of Naphtali. ²¹ When Baasha heard about that, he told his soldiers to stop working at Ramah. He and his soldiers returned to Tirzah and stayed there. ²² Then King Asa sent a message to all the people in the towns in Judah, stating that they all were required to go to Ramah and carry away the stones and timber that Baasha's soldiers had been using to build a wall around the city. With those stones and timber they fortified the city of Mizpah north of Jerusalem, and Geba, a town in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin.

²³ Everything else that Asa did, the armies that his soldiers defeated, and the names of the cities that he caused to be fortified, are all written in the book of the events of the Kings of Judah. But when Asa became old, he got a disease in his feet. ²⁴ He died and was buried where his ancestors were buried in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David. Then his son Jehoshaphat became king.

²⁵ After Asa had been the king of Judah for almost two years, King Jeroboam's son

Nadab started to rule Israel. He ruled for two years. ²⁶ He did many things that Yahweh said were evil. His behavior was sinful like his father's behavior had been, and what he did induced the people of Israel to sin.

²⁷ A man named Baasha, from the tribe of Issachar, planned to harm him. He killed Nadab when Nadab and his army had surrounded the city of Gibbethon in the region of Philistia. ²⁸ That was when Asa had been the king ruling Judah for almost three years. Then Baasha became the king of Israel.

²⁹ As soon as he became king, he commanded his soldiers to kill all of Jeroboam's family. Doing what Yahweh had told the prophet Ahijah from Shiloh would happen, they killed all of Jeroboam's family. None of them were left. ³⁰ That happened because Yahweh had become very angry with Jeroboam because of all the sins that Jeroboam had committed, and because of the sins that he had persuaded the people of Israel to commit.

³¹ Everything else that Nadab did is written in Book of the Events of the Kings of Israel. ³² There were wars between the armies of King Asa and King Baasha all the time that they ruled.

³³ After Asa had been the king of Judah for almost three years, Baasha son of Ahijah, started to rule Israel at the city of Tirzah. He ruled for twenty-four years. ³⁴ Baasha did many things that Yahweh said were evil, and he lived a sinful life just like Jeroboam lived. Baasha's sinful life set an example for the people of Israel that encouraged them to commit sins that were like his sins.

Chapter 16

¹ During the time that Baasha was king of Israel, the prophet Jehu, Hanani's son, gave Baasha this message that he had received from Yahweh: ² "You were very insignificant when I caused you to become the ruler of my Israelite people. But you have caused me to become very angry by doing the kinds of evil things that King Jeroboam did. You have also caused me to become angry by causing my people to sin. ³ So now I will get rid of you and your family. I will do to you just like I did to Jeroboam and his family. ⁴ The bodies of those in your family who die in this city will not be buried. They will be eaten by dogs, and the bodies of those who die in the fields will be eaten by vultures."

⁵ The other things that Baasha did during the time that he ruled Israel, and the great things that his army did, are written in Book of the Events of the Kings of Israel. ⁶ When Baasha died, he was buried in Tirzah, the capital city. Then his son Elah became king.

⁷ Yahweh gave that message about Baasha and his family to the prophet Jehu. Baasha had done many deeds that Yahweh said were evil, which caused Yahweh to become angry. Baasha did the same kind of deeds that King Jeroboam and his family had done previously. Yahweh was also angry with Baasha because he had killed all of Jeroboam's family.

⁸ After Asa had been the king of Judah for almost twenty-six years, Elah became the king of Israel. Elah ruled in Tirzah for only two years.

⁹ A man named Zimri was one of Elah's army officers. He commanded the drivers of half of Elah's army's chariots. He made plans to kill Elah while Elah was in Tirzah, getting drunk at the house of a

man named Arza. Arza was the man who took care of the things in the king's palace.

¹⁰ Zimri went into Arza's house and killed Elah. Then he became the king of Israel. That was when Asa had been the king of Judah for twenty-seven years.

¹¹ As soon as Zimri became king, he killed all of Baasha's family. He killed every male in Baasha's family and all of Baasha's male friends. ¹² So he got rid of all of Baasha's family. That was just what Yahweh told the prophet Jehu would happen.

¹³ Baasha and his son Elah had sinned and induced the Israelite people to sin. They caused Yahweh, the God whom the Israelite people worshiped, to become angry, because they both urged the people to worship worthless idols.

¹⁴ Everything else that Elah did is written in Book of the Events of the Kings of Israel.

¹⁵ So Zimri became the king of Israel after Asa had been king of Judah for twenty-seven years. But Zimri ruled in Tirzah for only seven days. The Israelite army was besieging Gibeah, a town that belonged to the Philistine people group. ¹⁶ The men in the Israelite army camp heard that Zimri had secretly planned to kill King Elah, and then had killed him. So on that day the soldiers chose Omri, the commander of their army, to become the king of Israel. ¹⁷ The Israelite army was camped near Gibbethon. When they heard what Zimri had done, they left there and went to Tirzah, and surrounded the city. ¹⁸ When Zimri realized that the city was about to be captured, he went into his palace and set it on fire. So the palace burned down, and he died in the fire. ¹⁹ He died because he had sinned by doing many things that Yahweh said were evil. Jeroboam had induced the Israelite people to sin, and Zimri sinned just like Jeroboam had sinned.

²⁰ All the other things that Zimri did, and

the record of how he rebelled against King Elah, are written in Book of the Events of the Kings of Israel.

²¹ After Zimri died, the Israelite people were divided among themselves. One group wanted Tibni son of Ginath, to be their king. The other group wanted Omri to be the king. ²² Those who supported Omri were stronger than those who supported Tibni. So Tibni was killed, and Omri became king.

²³ Omri became king when Asa had been king of Judah for almost thirty-one years. Omri ruled Israel for twelve years. For the first six years he ruled in Tirzah. ²⁴ Then he bought a hill from a man named Shemer and paid him about sixty-six kilograms of silver for it. Then Omri ordered his men to build a city on that hill, and he called it Samaria, to honor Shemer, the man who owned it previously.

²⁵ But Omri did many things that Yahweh said were evil. He did more evil deeds than any of the kings who ruled Israel before he did. ²⁶ When Jeroboam was previously the king, he had induced the Israelite people to sin, and Omri committed the same kind of sins that Jeroboam did. The Israelite people caused Yahweh, the God the Israelite people had worshiped, to become very angry, because they worshiped worthless idols.

²⁷ Everything that Omri did, and the record of the victories that his army won, are written in Book of the Events of the Kings of Israel. ²⁸ After Omri died, he was buried in Samaria, and his son Ahab became king.

²⁹ Ahab became king of Israel when Asa had ruled Judah for almost thirty-eight years. Ahab ruled in the city of Samaria for twenty-two years. ³⁰ Ahab did many things that Yahweh said were evil. He did more evil deeds than any of the kings

who ruled Israel before he did. ³¹ He committed the same kind of sins that Jeroboam did, but he did things that were worse than the things that Jeroboam did. He married a woman named Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, the king of the city of Sidon. Then Ahab started to worship Baal, the god that the Canaan people group worshiped. ³² He built a temple in Samaria in order that the Israelite people could worship Baal there, and he put an altar there for making sacrifices to Baal. ³³ He also made an idol that represented Asherah, Baal's wife. He did many more things that caused Yahweh to become angry. He did more evil things than any of the previous kings of Israel had done.

³⁴ During the years that Ahab ruled, Hiel, a man from the city of Bethel, rebuilt the city of Jericho. But when he started to rebuild the city, his oldest son Abiram died. And when the city was finished, while Hiel was building the city gates, his youngest son Segub died. They died just as Yahweh had told Joshua would happen to the sons of anyone who would rebuild Jericho.

Chapter 17

¹ Elijah was a prophet who lived in the city of Tishbe in the region of Gilead. One day he went to King Ahab and said to him, "Yahweh is the God whom we Israelites worship and the God whom I worship and serve. Just as certainly as Yahweh lives, there will be no dew or rain for the next few years, unless I command it to fall."

² Then Yahweh said to Elijah, ³ "Because you have made the king angry with you, escape from the king and, go to the east, to the Kerith Brook, east of where it flows into the Jordan River. ⁴ You will be able to drink water from the brook, and you will be able to eat what the crows bring to you,

because I have commanded them to bring food to you."

⁵ So Elijah did what Yahweh commanded him to do. He went and camped alongside Kerith Brook. ⁶ Crows brought bread and meat to him every morning and every evening, and he drank water from the brook.

⁷ But after a while, the water in the brook dried up, because rain did not fall anywhere in the land. ⁸ Then Yahweh said to Elijah, ⁹ "Go and live in the village of Zarephath, near the city of Sidon. There is a widow there who will give you food to eat. I have already told her what to do about that." ¹⁰ So Elijah did what God said. He went to Zarephath. As he arrived at the gates of the village, he saw a widow who was gathering sticks. He said to her, "Would you please bring me a cup of water?" ¹¹ While she was going to get it, he called out to her, "Bring me a piece of bread, too!"

¹² But she replied, "Your God knows that what I am telling you is true. I do not have even one piece of bread in my house. I have only a handful of flour in a jar, and a little olive oil in a jug. I was gathering a few sticks to use these to make a fire and cook one more meal, and then after my son and I eat that, we will die from hunger."

¹³ But Elijah said to her, "Do not be worried! Go home and do what you said that you were going to do. But first, bake me a little loaf of bread and bring it to me. After you do that, take what is left and prepare some food for you and your son. ¹⁴ I know that you will be able to do that, because Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, says this, 'There will always be plenty of flour and olive oil left in your containers, until the time when I send rain again and the crops grow again!'"

¹⁵ So the woman did exactly what Elijah told her to do. And she and her son and Elijah had enough food every day, ¹⁶ because the flour in the jar was never finished, and the jug of oil was never empty. That happened just like Yahweh had told Elijah that it would happen.

¹⁷ Some time later, the woman's son became sick. He continued to get worse, and finally he died. ¹⁸ So the woman went to Elijah and said to him, "You are a prophet; so why have you done this to me? Have you come here to punish me for my sins by causing my son to die?"

¹⁹ But Elijah replied, "Give your son to me." So she gave her son to him, and he took the boy's body from her and carried it up the steps to the room where he stayed. He laid the boy's body on his bed. ²⁰ Then Elijah cried out to Yahweh, "O Yahweh my God, this widow has kindly allowed me to stay in her home. So why have you brought this tragedy to her and caused her son to die?" ²¹ Then Elijah stretched himself on top of the boy's body and called out to Yahweh saying, "Yahweh my God, please allow this boy to become alive again!" He did this three times.

²² Yahweh heard what Elijah prayed, and he caused the boy to become alive again.

²³ Elijah carried the boy down the steps and gave him to his mother. He said, "Look, your son is alive!"

²⁴ The woman said to Elijah, "Now I know for certain that you are a prophet and that the words that you speak are truly from Yahweh!"

Chapter 18

¹ For almost three years there was no rain in Samaria. Then Yahweh said this to Elijah: "Go and meet with King Ahab and tell

him that I will soon send rain." ² So Elijah went to talk to Ahab.

In Samaria there was almost no food for anyone to eat. ³ There was a man there named Obadiah. He was in charge of the king's palace. He greatly revered Yahweh. ⁴ One time when Queen Jezebel had tried to kill all Yahweh's prophets, Obadiah hid a hundred of them in two caves. He put fifty prophets in each cave, and he brought food and water to them.

⁵ By this time, the famine had become very severe in Samaria. So Ahab summoned Obadiah and said to him, "We must look near every spring and in every valley to see if we can find enough grass to give to some of my horses and mules, so that they will not all die." ⁶ So they both started walking through the land. Obadiah went by himself in one direction, and Ahab went in another direction by himself.

⁷ While Obadiah was walking along, he saw Elijah coming toward him. Obadiah recognized Elijah and bowed down in front of him and said, "Is it really you, Elijah, my master?"

⁸ Elijah replied, "Yes. Now go and tell Ahab your master that I am here."

⁹ Obadiah objected. He said, "Sir, I have not harmed you at all. So why are you sending me back to Ahab? He will kill me!" ¹⁰ Yahweh your God knows that I am telling the truth when I solemnly declare that King Ahab has searched in every kingdom to find you. Each time that some king said to him, 'Elijah is not here,' Ahab demanded that the king of that country solemnly swear that the king was telling the truth. ¹¹ Now you say to me, 'Go and tell your master that Elijah is here!' ¹² But as soon as I leave you, the Spirit of Yahweh will carry you away, and I will not know where he will take you. So when I tell Ahab that you are here and he comes

to me and he does not find you here, he will kill me! But I do not deserve to die because I have revered Yahweh since I was a boy. ¹³ My master, have you not heard about what I did when Jezebel wanted to kill all of Yahweh's prophets? I hid a hundred of them in two caves and took food and water to them. ¹⁴ Now, sir, you say, 'Go and tell your master that Elijah is here.' But if I do that, and he comes and you are not here, he will kill me!"

¹⁵ But Elijah replied, "Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the one whom I serve, knows that I am telling the truth as I solemnly declare that I will go to meet with Ahab today."

¹⁶ So Obadiah went to tell Ahab that Elijah had come. Ahab went to meet with him.

¹⁷ When he saw Elijah, he said to him, "Is that you, the one who causes trouble for the people of Israel?"

¹⁸ Elijah replied, "It is not I who have caused trouble for the people of Israel! You and your family are the ones who have caused trouble! You have refused to obey Yahweh's commands, and you have worshiped the idols of Baal instead. ¹⁹ So now, command all the Israelite people to come to Mount Carmel, and be sure to bring all the 450 prophets who worship Baal and the four hundred prophets who worship the goddess Asherah, the ones to whom your wife Jezebel always invites to eat with her."

²⁰ So Ahab summoned all his prophets and all the other Israelite people to the top of Mount Carmel, and Elijah went up there too. ²¹ Then Elijah stood in front of them and said, "How long are you going to be undecided about who is truly God? If Yahweh is God, then worship him. If Baal is truly God, then worship him!" But the people said nothing in reply, because they were afraid of what Jezebel would do to them if they admitted that they worshiped

Yahweh.

²² Then Elijah said to them, "I am the only true prophet of Yahweh who is left, but Baal has 450 prophets. ²³ Bring two bulls. The prophets of Baal may choose the one that they want. They must kill it and cut it into pieces and lay the pieces on the wood that is on the altar that they made. But they must not light a fire under the wood. I will kill the other bull and cut it in pieces and lay the pieces on the altar that I make. ²⁴ Then they must call to their god, and I will call to Yahweh. The god who answers by lighting a fire to the wood that is on that altar is the true God!"

Then all the people thought that Elijah's suggestion was good.

²⁵ Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "You call to Baal first, because there are many of you. Choose one of the bulls and prepare it, and then call to your god. But do not light a fire under the wood!" ²⁶ So they killed one of the bulls and cut it up and placed the pieces on the altar. Then they called out to Baal all morning. They shouted, "Baal, answer us!" But no one answered. There was no reply at all.

Then they danced wildly around the altar that they had made.

²⁷ About noontime, Elijah started to make fun of them. He said, "Surely Baal is a god, so it seems that you must shout louder! Perhaps he is thinking about something, or perhaps he has gone to the toilet. Or perhaps he is traveling somewhere, or perhaps he is asleep and you need to wake him up!" ²⁸ So they shouted louder. Then, doing one of the things that they frequently did when they worshiped Baal, they slashed themselves with knives and swords until a lot of blood flowed. ²⁹ They continued calling out to Baal all afternoon. But there was no voice that gave a reply, no answer, no god who paid attention.

³⁰ Then Elijah called to the people saying, "Come closer!" So they all crowded around him. Then Elijah repaired the altar of Yahweh that had been ruined by the prophets of Baal. ³¹ Then he took twelve large stones, each one to represent one of the Israelite tribes, whose ancestors were the twelve sons of Jacob. ³² With these stones he rebuilt Yahweh's altar. Then around the altar he dug a little ditch that was large enough to hold about fifteen liters of water. ³³ He piled wood on top of the stones. He killed the bull and cut it in pieces. Then he laid the pieces on top of the wood. Then he said, "Fill four large jars with water, and pour the water on top of the pieces of meat and the wood." So they did that.

³⁴ Then he said, "Do the same thing again!" So they did it again. Then he said, "Do it a third time!" So they did it again.

³⁵ As a result, the water flowed down below the altar and filled the ditches.

³⁶ When it was time to offer the evening sacrifices, Elijah walked close to the altar and prayed. He said, "Yahweh, you who are the God that our ancestors Abraham and Isaac and Jacob worshiped, prove today that you are the God whom the Israelite people should worship, and prove that I am your servant. Prove that I have done all these things because you told me to do them. ³⁷ Yahweh, answer me! Answer me in order that these people will know that you, Yahweh, are God and that you have caused them to trust in you again!"

³⁸ Immediately a fire from Yahweh flashed down from the sky. The fire burned up the pieces of meat, the wood, the stones, and the dirt that was around the altar. It even dried up all the water in the ditch!

³⁹ When the people saw that, they prostrated themselves on the ground and

shouted, "Yahweh is God! Yahweh is God!"

⁴⁰ Then Elijah commanded them, "Seize all the prophets of Baal! Do not allow any of them to escape!" So the people seized all the prophets of Baal, and took them down the mountain to the river Kishon, and Elijah killed them all there.

⁴¹ Then Elijah said to Ahab, "Go and get something to eat and drink. But do it quickly, because it is soon going to rain very hard!" ⁴² So Ahab and his men left to prepare a big meal. But Elijah went back up to the top of Mount Carmel and prayed.

⁴³ Then he said to his servant, "Go and look out toward the sea, to see if there are any rain clouds." So his servant went and looked, and came back and said, "I do not see anything." This happened six times.

⁴⁴ But when the servant went the seventh time, he came back and said, "I saw a very small cloud above the sea. As I extend my arm, the cloud is about the size of my hand."

Then Elijah shouted to him, "Go and tell King Ahab to get his chariot ready and go home immediately! If he does not do that, the rain will stop him!" ⁴⁵ Very soon the sky was full of black clouds. There was a strong wind, and then it began to rain very hard. Ahab got into his chariot and started to return to the city of Jezreel. ⁴⁶ Yahweh gave extra strength to Elijah. He tucked his cloak into his belt in order to run fast, and he ran ahead of Ahab's chariot all the way to Jezreel.

Chapter 19

¹ When Ahab got home, he told his wife Jezebel what Elijah had done. He told her that Elijah had killed all the prophets of

Baal. ² So Jezebel sent this message to Elijah, "By this time tomorrow I will have killed you, just like you killed all those prophets of Baal. If I do not do that, I hope the gods will kill me."

³ When Elijah received her message, he was afraid. So taking his servant with him, he fled in order that he would not be killed. He went far south to Beersheba, in Judah. He left his servant there. ⁴ Then he went by himself further south into the desert. He walked all day. He sat down under a broom tree and prayed that Yahweh would allow him to die. He said, "Yahweh, I cannot endure anymore. So allow me to die, because for me to live is no better than being with my ancestors who have died."

⁵ Then he lay down under the broom tree and slept. But while he was sleeping, an angel touched him and woke him up and said to him, "Get up and eat some food!"

⁶ Elijah looked around and saw some bread which had been baked on hot stones, and he also saw a jar of water. So he ate some bread and drank some water and lay down to sleep again.

⁷ Then the angel who had been sent by Yahweh came again and touched him, and said, "Get up and eat some more food, because you need more strength to go on a long journey." ⁸ So he got up and ate and drank some more; because he did that, he got enough strength to travel for forty days and nights to Mount Horeb, the mountain that was dedicated to God. ⁹ He went into a cave there and slept there that night.

The next morning, Yahweh said to him, "Elijah, why are you here?" ¹⁰ Elijah replied, "I have zealously served you, Yahweh, commander of angel armies. But the Israelite people have rejected the agreement that they made with you. They

have torn down your altars, and they have killed all of your prophets. I am the only one whom they have not killed, and now they are trying to kill me, too. So I am running away from them."

¹¹ Yahweh said to him, "Go out and stand in front of me on this mountain while I pass by." So Elijah did that. While he was standing there, a strong windstorm struck the mountain. As a result, rocks were loosened from the mountainside. But Yahweh was not in the wind. Then there was an earthquake, but Yahweh was not in the earthquake.

¹² Then there was a fire, but Yahweh was not in the fire. Then there was a sound like someone whispering quietly. ¹³ When Elijah heard that, he wrapped his cloak around his face. He went out of the cave and stood at its entrance. And he heard Yahweh speaking to him, saying again, "Elijah, why are you here?"

¹⁴ He replied again, "I have zealously served you, Yahweh, commander of angel armies. But the Israelite people have rejected the agreement that they made with you. They have torn down your altars, and they have killed all of your prophets. I am the only one whom they have not killed, and now they are trying to kill me, too. So I am running away from them."

¹⁵ Then Yahweh told him, "Go back to the wilderness near Damascus. When you arrive there anoint with olive oil a man named Hazael, to appoint him to be the king of Aram. ¹⁶ Then anoint Jehu son of Nimshi to be the king of Israel, and also anoint Elisha son of Shaphat, from the city of Abel Meholah, to become my prophet after you are gone. ¹⁷ Hazael's army will kill many people, and those who escape from being killed by his army will be killed by Jehu's army, and those who escape from being killed by Jehu's army will be killed by Elisha. ¹⁸ But you need to

know that there are still seven thousand people in Israel who have never bowed to worship Baal or kissed his idol.”

¹⁹ So Elijah went to Aram and found Elisha as he was plowing a field with a team of oxen. There were eleven other men who were in front of him, plowing with teams of oxen in the same field. Elijah went to Elisha, and took off his own coat and put it on Elisha, to show Elisha that he wanted Elisha to take his place as a prophet. Then he started to walk away. ²⁰ Elisha left the oxen standing there and ran after Elijah, and said to him, “I will go with you, but first let me kiss my parents goodbye.”

Elijah replied, “Very well, go home. But do not forget why I have given my cloak to you!” ²¹ So Elisha went back home. He killed his oxen and cut them in pieces and used the wood from the plow to build a fire to roast the meat. He distributed the meat to the other people in his town, and they all ate some. Then he went with Elijah and became his helper.

Chapter 20

¹ Ben Hadad, the king of Aram, gathered all his army, and he brought thirty-two lesser kings to join him with their armies and horses and chariots. They marched to the city of Samaria, the capital of Israel, and surrounded it and prepared to attack it. ² Ben Hadad sent messengers into the city to King Ahab, and they said this to him: “This is what King Ben Hadad says: ³ ‘You must give to me all your silver and gold, your good-looking wives and strongest children.’”

⁴ The king of Israel replied to them, “Tell this to King Ben Hadad, ‘I agree to do what you requested. You can have me and everything that I own.’”

⁵ The messengers told that to Ben Hadad, and he sent them back with another message: “I sent a message to you saying that you must give me all your silver and gold and your wives and your children. ⁶ But in addition to that, about this time tomorrow, I will send some of my officials to search your palace and the houses of your officials, and to bring to me everything that they see is valuable.”

⁷ King Ahab summoned all the leaders of Israel, and said to them, “You can see for yourselves that this man is trying to cause much trouble. He sent me a message insisting that I must give him my wives and my children, my silver and my gold, and I agreed to do that.”

⁸ The leaders and all the other people said to him, “Do not pay any attention to him! Do not do what he is requesting!”

⁹ So Ahab said to Ben Hadad’s messengers, “Tell the king that I agree to give him the things that he first requested, but I do not agree to allow his officials to take anything that they want from my palace and from the houses of my officials.” So the messengers reported that to King Ben Hadad, and they returned with another message from Ben Hadad.

¹⁰ In that message he said, “We will destroy your city completely, with the result that there will not be enough ashes left for each of my soldiers to have one handful! I hope that the gods will strike me dead if we do not do that!”

¹¹ King Ahab replied to the messengers, “Tell King Ben Hadad this: No one wins a battle before he fights it, so do not boast before you should.”

¹² Ben Hadad heard that message while he and the other rulers were drinking wine in their temporary shelters. He told his men to prepare to attack the city. So his men did that.

¹³ At that moment, a prophet came to King Ahab and said to him, "This is what Yahweh says: 'Do not be at all afraid of the large enemy army that you see! I will enable your army to defeat them today, and you will know that it is I, Yahweh, who has done it.'"

¹⁴ Ahab asked, "What group of our army will defeat them?" The prophet replied, "The young soldiers whom the district governors command will do it." The king asked, "Who should lead the attack?" The prophet replied, "You should!"

¹⁵ So Ahab gathered the young soldiers who were commanded by the district governors. There were 232 of those men. Then he also summoned all the Israelite army. There were only seven thousand soldiers. ¹⁶ They started to attack at noon, while Ben Hadad and the other rulers were getting drunk in their temporary shelters. ¹⁷ The young soldiers advanced first. Some scouts who had been sent out by Ben Hadad reported to him, "There are men coming out of Samaria!"

¹⁸ He said, "It does not matter whether they are coming to fight against us or to request for peace. Capture them, but do not kill them!"

¹⁹ The young Israelite soldiers went out of the city to attack the Aramean army, and the other soldiers in the Israelite army followed them. ²⁰ Each Israelite soldier killed an Aramean soldier. The rest of the Aramean army then ran away, and the Israelite soldiers pursued them. But King Ben Hadad escaped riding his horse, along with some other men riding horses. ²¹ Then the king of Israel went out of the city; he and his soldiers captured all the other Aramean horses and chariots, and also killed a large number of Aramean soldiers.

²² Then that same prophet went to King

Ahab and said to him, "Go back and prepare your soldiers, and think carefully about what will be necessary for you to do, because the king of Aram will attack with his army again in the springtime of next year."

²³ After the Aramean army was defeated, Ben Hadad's officials said to him, "The gods that the Israelites worship are gods who live in the hills. Samaria is built on a hill, and that is why their soldiers were able to defeat us. But if we fight against them in the plains, we certainly will be able to defeat them. ²⁴ So, this is what you should do: You must remove the thirty-two kings who are leading your troops and replace them with army commanders. ²⁵ Then gather an army like the army that was defeated. Gather an army that has as many horses and chariots as the first army had. Then we will fight the Israelites in the plains, and we will surely defeat them."

Ben Hadad agreed with them, and he did what they suggested. ²⁶ In the spring of the following year, he gathered his soldiers and marched with them to the city of Aphek east of the Sea of Galilee, to fight against the Israelite army. ²⁷ The Israelite army was also gathered together, and they were given the things that they needed for the battle. Then they marched out and formed two groups facing the Aramean army. Their army was very small. They resembled two small flocks of goats, whereas the Aramean army was very large and spread all over the countryside.

²⁸ A prophet came to King Ahab and said to him, "This is what Yahweh says: 'The Arameans say that I am a god who lives in the hills, and that I am not a god who lives in the valleys. So I will show that they are wrong by enabling your men to defeat this huge army in the valley, and you will

know that I, Yahweh, have done it.’”

²⁹ The two armies stayed in their tents for seven days, in groups that faced each other. Then, on the seventh day, they started fighting. The Israelite army killed 100,000 Aramean soldiers. ³⁰ The other Aramean soldiers ran away into Aphek. Then the wall of the city collapsed and killed twenty-seven thousand more Aramean soldiers.

Ben Hadad also escaped into the city and hid in the back room of a house. ³¹ His officials went to him and said, “We have heard a report that the Israelites act mercifully. So allow us to go to the king of Israel, wearing coarse sacks around our waists and ropes on our heads to indicate that we will be his slaves. Perhaps if we do that, he will allow you to remain alive.”

³² The king permitted them to do that, so they wrapped coarse sacks around their waists and put ropes on their heads, and they went to the king of Israel and said to him, “Ben Hadad, who greatly respects you, says, ‘Please do not kill me.’” Ahab replied, “Is he still alive? He is like a brother to me!”

³³ Ben Hadad’s officials were trying to find out if Ahab would act mercifully, and when Ahab said “brother,” they were optimistic. So they replied, “Yes, he is like your brother!” Ahab said, “Go and bring him to me.” So they went and brought Ben Hadad to him. When Ben Hadad arrived, Ahab told him to get in the chariot and sit with him.

³⁴ Ben Hadad said to him, “I will give back to you the towns that my father’s army took from your father. And I will allow you to set up market areas for your merchants in Damascus my capital, just as my father did in Samaria your capital.” Ahab replied, “Because you agree to do that, I will not execute you.” So Ahab made an

agreement with Ben Hadad, and allowed him to go home.

³⁵ Then Yahweh spoke to a member of an association of prophets and told him to request a fellow prophet to strike him. But that man refused to do it.

³⁶ So the prophet said to him, “Because you refused to obey what Yahweh told you to do, a lion will kill you as soon as you leave me.” And as soon as he left that prophet, a lion suddenly met him and killed him.

³⁷ Then the prophet found another prophet, and said to him, “Strike me!” So that man hit him very hard and injured him. ³⁸ Then the prophet put a large bandage over his face so that no one would recognize him. Then he went and stood alongside the road, waiting for the king to come by. ³⁹ When the king passed by, the prophet cried out to him, saying “Your Majesty, after I was wounded while I was fighting in a battle, a soldier brought to me one of our enemies who he had captured, and said to me, ‘Guard this man! If he escapes, you must pay me thirty-three kilograms of silver; if you do not pay that, you will be executed!’” ⁴⁰ But while I was busy doing other things, the man escaped!” The king of Israel said to him, “That is your problem! You yourself have said that you deserve to be punished.”

⁴¹ The prophet immediately took off the bandage, and the king of Israel recognized that he was one of the prophets. ⁴² The prophet said to him, “This is what Yahweh says: ‘You have allowed that man Ben Hadad to escape after I commanded you to be sure to execute him! Since you did not do that, you will be killed instead. And your army will be destroyed because you allowed some of his army to escape!’” ⁴³ The king went back home to Samaria, very angry and depressed.

Chapter 21

¹ King Ahab had a palace in the city of Jezreel. Near the palace was a vineyard owned by a man named Naboth. ² One day, Ahab went to Naboth and said to him, "Your vineyard is close to my palace. I would like to buy it, so that I can plant some vegetables there. I will give you in exchange a better vineyard somewhere else, or if you prefer, I will pay you for your vineyard."

³ But Naboth replied, "That land belonged to my ancestors, so I want to keep it. I hope that Yahweh will never allow me to give that land to you!"

⁴ So Ahab became very sullen and angry because of what Naboth had said. He went home and lay down on his bed. He turned his face toward the wall, and he refused to eat anything.

⁵ His wife Jezebel came in and asked him, "Why are you so depressed? Why are you refusing to eat anything?"

⁶ Ahab replied, "I talked to Naboth, that man from Jezreel. I told him that I wanted his vineyard. I said, 'I will buy it from you, or I will give you another vineyard for it.' But he refused to let me have it."

⁷ His wife replied, "You are the king of Israel, so you can get whatever you want! Get up, and eat some food and do not worry about what Naboth said. I will get Naboth's vineyard for you."

⁸ Then Jezebel wrote some letters, and she signed Ahab's name on them. She used his official seal to seal them. Then she sent them to the older leaders and other important men who lived near Naboth and who decided public matters with him. ⁹ This is what she wrote in the letters: "Proclaim a day when all the people will gather together and fast. Give to Naboth an important place to sit among them. ¹⁰ Then find

two men who always cause trouble. Give them places to sit opposite him. Tell these men to testify that they heard Naboth say things that criticized God and the king. Then take Naboth out of the city and kill him by throwing stones at him."

¹¹ The leaders received the letters and did what Jezebel had written in the letters for them to do. ¹² They declared a day on which the people would all go without food. And they gave Naboth a seat in a place where honored people sat, in front of the people. ¹³ Two men who always caused trouble sat opposite Naboth. While everyone was listening, they stated that they had heard Naboth say things that criticized God and the king. So the people seized Naboth. They took him outside the city and killed him by throwing stones at him. ¹⁴ Then those leaders sent a message to Jezebel, saying, "We have executed Naboth."

¹⁵ When Jezebel found out that Naboth had been killed, she told Ahab, "Naboth is dead. Now you can go and take possession of the vineyard that he refused to sell to you." ¹⁶ When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he got up and went to the vineyard to claim that he now owned it.

¹⁷ Then Yahweh spoke to Elijah the prophet. He said, ¹⁸ "Go to Samaria and talk to Ahab, the king of Israel. He is in the vineyard of a man named Naboth. He has gone there to claim that he now owns it. ¹⁹ Tell Ahab that this is what I, Yahweh, say to him, 'You have murdered Naboth and taken his land. So I am telling you this. In the same place where Naboth died and dogs came and licked up Naboth's blood, you will die and the dogs will lick up your blood, too!'"

²⁰ So when Elijah met with Ahab, Ahab said to him, "You, my enemy, have found me!" Elijah answered, "Yes, I have found you. You have never stopped doing the

things that Yahweh says are wrong.

²¹ So this is what Yahweh says to you, 'I will soon get rid of you. I will kill you, and I will also kill every male in your household, including those who are slaves and those who are not slaves. ²² Your family will all be killed, just like the family of King Jeroboam and like the family of King Baasha were killed. I will get rid of you because you have caused me to become very angry, and you have also induced the Israelite people to sin.'

²³ Yahweh has also told me that your wife Jezebel will be killed, and dogs in Jezreel will eat her body. ²⁴ The dead bodies of the members of your family who die in this city will not be buried. They will be eaten by dogs, and the bodies of those who die in the fields will be eaten by vultures."

²⁵ There was no man who gave himself as completely to do things that Yahweh said were evil like Ahab did. But his wife Jezebel urged him to do many of those things. ²⁶ The most disgusting thing that Ahab did was to worship idols, just like the Amor people group had done. And that is why Yahweh took their land from them and gave it to the Israelites.

²⁷ After Elijah finished talking to Ahab, Ahab tore his clothes to show that he was sorry for all the sins that he had committed. He put on rough clothes that were made from sacks, and he refused to eat anything. He even wore those rough clothes made from sacks when he slept, to show that he was sorry.

²⁸ Then Yahweh said this to Elijah, ²⁹ "I have seen that Ahab is now very sorry for all the evil things that he has done. So the things that I promised to do to his family will not happen while he is still alive. I will cause them to happen after his son becomes king. Then those things will happen to his family."

Chapter 22

¹ For almost three years there was no war between Aram and Israel. ² Then King Jehoshaphat, who ruled Judah, went to visit King Ahab, who ruled Israel. ³ While they were talking, Ahab said to his officials, "Do you realize that the Arameans are still occupying our city of Ramoth in the region of Gilead? And we are doing nothing to retake that city!" ⁴ Then he turned toward Jehoshaphat and asked, "Will your army join my army to fight against the people of Ramoth and retake that city?"

Jehoshaphat replied, "Certainly! I will do whatever you want, and you may command my troops. You may take my horses into battle, also." ⁵ Then he added, "But we should ask Yahweh first, to find out what he wants us to do." ⁶ So Ahab summoned about four hundred of his prophets together, and he asked them, "Should my army go to fight the people in Ramoth and retake that city, or not?"

They answered, "Yes, go and attack them, because God will enable your army to defeat them."

⁷ But Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there no other prophet of Yahweh here whom we can ask?"

⁸ The king of Israel replied, "There is one other man we can ask. His name is Micaiah son of Imlah. But I hate him, because when he prophesies he never says that anything good will happen to me. He always predicts that bad things will happen to me."

Jehoshaphat replied, "King Ahab, you should not say that!"

⁹ So the king of Israel told one of his officers to summon Micaiah immediately.

¹⁰ The king of Israel and the king of Judah were both wearing their royal robes and

sitting on thrones at a gate in the city wall of Samaria. Many prophets were speaking messages to them. ¹¹ One of them, whose name was Zedekiah son of Kenaanah, had made from iron something that resembled horns of a bull. Then he proclaimed to Ahab, "This is what Yahweh says, 'With horns like these your army will keep attacking the Arameans as a bull attacks another animal, until you completely destroy them!'"

¹² All the other prophets of Ahab agreed. They said, "Yes! If you go up to attack Ramoth in Gilead, you will be successful, because Yahweh will enable you to defeat them!"

¹³ Meanwhile, the messenger who went to summon Micaiah said to him, "Listen to me! All the other prophets are predicting that the king's army will defeat the Arameans. So be sure that you agree with them and say what will be favorable."

¹⁴ But Micaiah replied, "As surely as Yahweh lives, I will tell Ahab only what Yahweh tells me to say."

¹⁵ When Micaiah came to Ahab, Ahab asked him, "Micaiah, should we go to fight against the people of Ramoth, or not?"

Micaiah replied, "Of course you should go! Yahweh will enable your army to defeat them!" ¹⁶ But King Ahab realized that Micaiah was being sarcastic, so he said to Micaiah, "I have told you many times that you must always tell only the truth when you say what Yahweh has revealed to you!"

¹⁷ So Micaiah said to him, "The truth is that in a vision I saw all the troops of Israel scattered on the mountains. They seemed to be like sheep that did not have a shepherd. And Yahweh said, 'Their master has been killed. So tell them all to go home peacefully.'"

¹⁸ Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "I told you

that he never predicts that anything good will happen to me! He always predicts that bad things will happen to me."

¹⁹ But Micaiah continued, saying, "Listen to what Yahweh showed to me! In a vision I saw Yahweh sitting on his throne, with all the armies of heaven surrounding him, on his right side and on his left side. ²⁰ And Yahweh said, 'Who can persuade Ahab to go to fight against the people of Ramoth, in order that he may be killed there?'

Some suggested one thing, and others suggested something else. ²¹ Finally one spirit came to Yahweh and said, 'I will deceive him!'

²² Yahweh asked him, 'How will you do it?' The spirit replied, 'I will go and inspire all of Ahab's prophets to tell lies.' Yahweh said, 'You will be successful; go and do it!' ²³ So now I tell you that Yahweh has let all of your prophets lie to you. Yahweh has decided that something terrible will happen to you."

²⁴ Then Zedekiah walked over to Micaiah and slapped him on his face. He said, "Do you think that Yahweh's Spirit left me in order to speak to you?"

²⁵ Micaiah replied, "You will find out for yourself to which of us Yahweh's Spirit has truly spoken on the day when you go into a room of some house to hide from the Aramean troops!"

²⁶ King Ahab commanded his soldiers, "Seize Micaiah and take him to Amon, the governor of this city, and to my son Joash. ²⁷ Tell them that I have commanded that they should put this man in prison and give him only bread and water. Do not give him anything else to eat until I return safely from the battle!"

²⁸ Micaiah replied, "If you return safely, it will be clear that it was not Yahweh who told me what to say to you!" Then he said

to all those who were standing there, "Do not forget what I have said to King Ahab!"

²⁹ So the king of Israel and the king of Judah led their armies to Ramoth in Gilead.

³⁰ King Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "I will put on different clothes, in order that no one will recognize that I am the king. But you should wear your royal robe." So Ahab disguised himself, and they both went into the battle.

³¹ The King of Aram had said to his thirty-two men who were driving the chariots, "Attack only the king of Israel!" ³² So when the men who were driving the Aramean chariots saw Jehoshaphat wearing the royal robes, they pursued him. They shouted, "There is the king of Israel!" But when Jehoshaphat cried out, ³³ they realized that he was not the king of Israel. So they stopped pursuing him.

³⁴ But one Aramean soldier shot an arrow at Ahab, without knowing that it was Ahab. The arrow struck Ahab between the places where the parts of his armor joined together. Ahab told the driver of his chariot, "Turn the chariot around and take me out of here! I have been severely wounded!" ³⁵ The battle continued all the day. Ahab was sitting propped up in his chariot, facing the Aramean troops. The blood from his wound ran down to the floor of the chariot. And late in the afternoon he died. ³⁶ Just as the sun was going down, someone among the Israelite troops shouted, "The battle is ended! Everyone should return home!"

³⁷ So King Ahab died, and they took his body in the chariot to Samaria and buried his body there. ³⁸ They washed his chariot alongside the pool in Samaria, a pool where the prostitutes bathed. And dogs came and licked the king's blood, just like Yahweh had predicted would happen.

³⁹ The account of the other things that hap-

pened while Ahab was ruling, and about the palace decorated with much ivory that they built for him, and the cities that were built for him, was written in Book of the Events of the Kings of Israel. ⁴⁰ When Ahab died, his body was buried where his ancestors were buried. Then his son Ahaziah became king.

⁴¹ Before King Ahab died, when he had been ruling in Israel for four years, Asa's son Jehoshaphat started to rule in Judah.

⁴² Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he started to rule, and he ruled in Jerusalem for twenty-five years. His mother was Azubah, the daughter of Shilhi. ⁴³ Jehoshaphat was a good king, just like his father Asa had been. He did things that pleased Yahweh. But while he was king, he did not remove all the pagan altars that had been built upon the hills. So the people continued to offer sacrifices to idols on those altars and burned incense there. ⁴⁴ Jehoshaphat also made a peace treaty with the king of Israel.

⁴⁵ All the other things that happened while Jehoshaphat was ruling, and the great things that he did and the victories his troops won, are written in Book of the Events of the Kings of Judah. ⁴⁶ Jehoshaphat removed from the land the male prostitutes that still lived in that region. These were same the male prostitutes who had lived there in the time of his father Asa.

⁴⁷ At that time, there was no king in Edom. A ruler who had been appointed by Jehoshaphat ruled there.

⁴⁸ Jehoshaphat ordered some Israelite men to build a fleet of ships to sail south to the region of Ophir to get gold. But they were wrecked at Ezion Geber, so the ships never sailed. ⁴⁹ Before the ships were wrecked, Ahab's son Ahaziah suggested to Jehoshaphat, "Allow my sailors to go with your sailors," but Jehoshaphat refused.

⁵⁰ When Jehoshaphat died, his body was buried where his ancestors were buried in Jerusalem, the city where King David had ruled. Then Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram became king.

⁵¹ Before King Jehoshaphat died, when he had been ruling in Judah for seventeen years, Ahab's son Ahaziah began to rule in Israel. Ahaziah ruled in Samaria for two years. ⁵² He did many things that Yahweh said were evil, doing the evil things that his father and mother had done and the evil things that Jeroboam had done—the king who had induced all the Israelite people to sin by worshiping idols. ⁵³ Ahaziah bowed in front of Baal's idol and worshiped it. That caused Yahweh, the God who is the true God of the Israelite people as well as all the world, to become very angry, just as Ahaziah's father had caused Yahweh to become angry.

2 KINGS

Chapter 1

¹ After King Ahab died, the country of Moab rebelled against Israel. ² One day, Ahaziah, the new king of Israel, fell through the wooden slats in his upstairs room and was injured. So he sent for his messengers and commanded them, "Go and ask of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, whether or not I will recover from this injury."

³ But the angel from Yahweh said to Elijah, the prophet from the city of Tishbe, "The king of Samaria is sending some messengers to Ekron. Go and meet them and say to them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you wish to ask Baal-Zebub whether you will recover?' ⁴ Yahweh says that you should tell King Ahaziah that he will not recover from his being injured; he will surely die."

⁵ So Elijah went to meet the messengers and told that to them, and they returned to the king instead of going to Ekron. The king asked them, "Why have you come back so quickly?"

⁶ They replied, "A man came to meet us and said to us, 'Go back to the king who sent you and tell him that Yahweh says, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you wish to ask Baal-Zebub whether you will recover'? Go tell the king that he will not recover from being injured; instead, he will surely die.'"

⁷ The king said to them, "The man who came to meet you and told that to you, what did he look like?"

⁸ They replied, "He was wearing a cloak made from camel hair and had a wide leather belt around his waist." The king exclaimed, "That must be Elijah!"

⁹ Then the king sent an officer with fifty soldiers to seize Elijah. They found Elijah sitting on the top of a hill. The officer called out to him, "Prophet, the king commands that you come down here!"

¹⁰ But Elijah replied to the officer, "I am a prophet, so I command that fire come down from the sky and burn up you and your fifty soldiers!" Immediately, fire came down from the sky and completely burned up the officer and his fifty soldiers.

¹¹ When the king found out about that, he sent another officer with fifty more soldiers. They went to where Elijah was, and the officer called out to him, "Prophet, the king commands that you come down immediately!"

¹² But Elijah replied, "I am a prophet, so I command that fire come down from the sky and kill you and your soldiers!" Then a fire from God came down from the sky and killed that officer and his soldiers.

¹³ When the king heard about that, he sent still another officer with fifty more soldiers. They went to where Elijah was; the officer prostrated himself in front of Elijah and said to him, "Prophet, I plead with you, be kind to me and my fifty soldiers, and do not kill us! ¹⁴ We know that two times fire came down from the sky and killed officers and the soldiers with them. So now, please be kind to me!"

¹⁵ Then the angel from Yahweh said to Elijah, "Go down and go with him. Do not be afraid of him." So Elijah went with them to the king.

¹⁶ When Elijah arrived, he said to the king, "This is what Yahweh says: 'You sent messengers to go to Ekron to ask Baal-Zebub, their god, whether you would recover. You acted as though there is no God in Israel to consult. So you will not recover from being injured; instead, you are go-

ing to die!’” ¹⁷ So Ahaziah died, which is what Yahweh told Elijah would happen. Ahaziah’s younger brother Joram became the new king, at the same time that Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat, had been ruling Judah for almost two years. Ahaziah’s brother became the king because Ahaziah had no son to become the king.

¹⁸ If you want to know about all the other things that Ahaziah did, they are written in Book of the Events of the Kings of Israel.

Chapter 2

¹ When Yahweh was about to take the prophet Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and his fellow prophet Elisha were traveling south from Gilgal. ² Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here, because Yahweh has told only me to go to the city of Bethel.”

But Elisha replied, “Just as certainly as Yahweh lives and you live, I will not leave you!”

So they went down together to Bethel. ³ An association of prophets at Bethel came to Elisha and Elijah; they asked Elisha, “Do you know that Yahweh is going to take your master Elijah away from you today?”

Elisha answered, “Certainly I know that, but do not talk about it!” ⁴ Then Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here, because Yahweh has told only me to go to Jericho.”

But Elisha replied again, “Just as certainly as Yahweh lives and you live, I will not leave you!”

So they went together to the city of Jericho.

⁵ As they neared Jericho, another association of prophets who were from there came to Elisha and said to him, “Do you

know that Yahweh is going to take your master Elijah away from you today?”

He answered again, “Certainly I know that, but do not talk about it!”

⁶ Then Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here, because Yahweh has told only me to go to the Jordan River.”

But again Elisha replied, “As certainly as Yahweh lives and you live, I will not leave you!”

So they continued walking together.

⁷ Fifty men from the association of prophets who were from Jericho also went, but they watched from a distance as Elijah and Elisha stopped at the edge of the Jordan River. ⁸ Then Elijah rolled up his cloak and struck the water with it. A path opened up for them through the river, and they walked across as though they were on dry ground.

⁹ When they came to the other side, Elijah said to Elisha, “What do you want me to do for you before I am taken away?”

Elisha replied, “I want to receive twice as much of your power as the other prophets have.”

¹⁰ Elijah replied, “You have asked for something which is difficult for me to make happen. But if you see me when I am taken from you, you will get what you are requesting. But if you do not see me, then you will not get it.”

¹¹ As they were walking and talking, suddenly a chariot surrounded by fire pulled by horses surrounded by fire, appeared. The chariot driver drove the chariot between Elijah and Elisha and separated them. Then Elijah was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind. ¹² Elisha saw it. He cried out, “My father! My father! The Israelite chariots and their drivers have taken my master away!” They disappeared into the sky, and Elisha never saw Elijah again.

Then Elisha tore his own robe into two pieces to show that he was deeply saddened. ¹³ Elijah's cloak had fallen off when he was taken away, so Elisha picked it up and returned to the bank of the Jordan River. ¹⁴ He rolled up the cloak and struck the water with it, and cried out, "Is Yahweh, the God of Elijah, here with me, too?" Then the water separated, and a path opened up for him, and Elisha went across.

¹⁵ When the association of prophets from Jericho saw what happened, they exclaimed, "Elisha now has the power that Elijah had!" They walked over to Elisha and bowed down in front of him. ¹⁶ One of them said, "Sir, if you permit us, fifty of our strongest men will go and search for your master on the other side of the river. Perhaps the Spirit of Yahweh has left him on some mountain or in some valley."

Elisha replied, "No, do not send them."

¹⁷ But they continued to urge him. Finally he was tired of saying "No," and he said, "Very well, send them." So fifty men searched for three days, but they did not find Elijah. ¹⁸ They returned to Jericho, and Elisha was still there. He said to them, "I told you that you should not go, because you would not find him!"

¹⁹ Then the leaders of Jericho came to talk with Elisha. One of them said, "Our master, we have a problem. You can see that this is a very nice place to live in. But the water is bad, and as a result, crops will not grow on the land."

²⁰ Elisha said to them, "Put some salt in a new bowl and bring the bowl to me." So they brought it to him.

²¹ Then Elisha went out to the spring from which the people in the town got water. He threw the salt into the spring. Then he said, "This is what Yahweh says: 'I have made this water good. No one will die

anymore because of bad water, and the land will grow fruitful crops.'"

²² And the water became pure, just as Elisha said it would. Since that time it has always remained pure.

²³ Elisha left Jericho and went up to Bethel. As he was walking along the road, a group of young boys from Bethel saw him and started to make fun of him. They continued shouting, "Go away, you bald-headed man!" ²⁴ Elisha turned around and reprimanded them in the name of Yahweh. Immediately two female bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of them. ²⁵ Elisha left Bethel and went to Mount Carmel, and after that he returned to the city of Samaria.

Chapter 3

¹ After Jehoshaphat had been ruling Judah for almost eighteen years, Ahab's son Joram became the king of Israel. He ruled in the city of Samaria for twelve years. ² He did things that Yahweh said were evil, but he did not do as much evil as his father and mother had done, and he got rid of the stone pillar for worshiping Baal that his father had made. ³ But he committed the sins that King Jeroboam had committed and which induced the Israelite people to sin, and he did not stop committing the same sins.

⁴ Mesha, the king of Moab, raised sheep. Every year he was forced to give 100,000 lambs and the wool from 100,000 rams to the king of Israel, because his kingdom was controlled by the king of Israel. ⁵ But after King Ahab died, Mesha rebelled against the king of Israel. ⁶ So King Joram left Samaria to call together soldiers from across all Israel to go to war. ⁷ Then he sent this message to Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah: "The king of Moab has re-

belled against me. So will your army join my army and fight against the army of Moab?"

Jehoshaphat replied, "Yes, we will help you. We are ready to do whatever you want us to. My soldiers and my horses are ready to help you."

⁸ He asked, "On which road should we march to attack them?"

Joram replied, "We will go south to Jerusalem, where your army will join us. Then we will all go south of the Dead Sea and then turn north through the wilderness of Edom."

⁹ So the king of Israel and his army went with the kings of Judah and Edom and their armies. They marched for seven days. Then there was no water left for their soldiers or for their animals that carried supplies.

¹⁰ The king of Israel exclaimed, "This is a terrible situation! It seems that Yahweh will allow the three of us to be captured by the army of Moab!"

¹¹ Jehoshaphat said, "Is there a prophet here who can ask Yahweh for us what we should do?"

One of Joram's army officers said, "Elisha son of Shaphat, is here. He was Elijah's assistant."

¹² Jehoshaphat said, "It will be good to ask him, because he speaks what Yahweh tells him to say."

So those three kings went to Elisha. ¹³ Elisha said to the king of Israel, "Why do you come to me? Go and ask those prophets that your father and mother consulted!"

But Joram replied, "No, we want you to ask Yahweh, because it seems that Yahweh has brought us three kings together in order to allow the army of Moab to capture us."

¹⁴ Elisha replied, "I serve Yahweh, the commander of the armies of angels in heaven. As surely as he lives, if I did not respect Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not even think about doing anything to help you. ¹⁵ But bring a musician to me."

So they did that. When the musician played on his harp, the power of Yahweh came on Elisha. ¹⁶ He said, "Yahweh says that he will cause this dry streambed to be full of water. ¹⁷ The result will be that your soldiers and your animals that carry supplies and your livestock will have plenty of water to drink. ¹⁸ That is not difficult for Yahweh to do. But He will do more than that. He will also enable you to defeat the army of Moab. ¹⁹ You will conquer all their beautiful cities, cities that have high walls around them. You must cut down all their fruit trees, stop water from flowing from their springs, and ruin their fertile fields by covering them with rocks."

²⁰ The next morning, at the time when they offered the sacrifices of grain, they were surprised to see water flowing from Edom and covering the ground.

²¹ When the people of Moab heard that the three kings had come with their armies to fight against them, all the men who were able to fight in battles, from the youngest men to the oldest ones, were summoned, and they took their positions at the southern border of their land. ²² But when they rose early the next morning, they saw that the water across from them appeared to be as red as blood. ²³ They exclaimed, "It is blood! The three enemy armies must have fought and killed each other! So let us go and take everything that they have left!"

²⁴ But when they reached the area where the Israelite soldiers had set up their tents, the Israelites attacked the soldiers from Moab and forced them to retreat. The Israelite soldiers pursued the soldiers from

Moab and killed many of them. ²⁵ The Israelites also destroyed their cities. Whenever they passed fertile fields, they threw rocks on those fields until the fields were covered with rocks. They stopped water from flowing from the springs and cut down the fruit trees. Finally, only the capital city, Kir Hareseth, remained. The Israelite soldiers who threw stones with slings surrounded the city and attacked it. ²⁶ When the king of Moab realized that his army was being defeated, he took with him seven hundred men who fought with swords, and they tried to force a way through the Israelite lines of soldiers to escape to get help from the king of Edom, whom they hoped would join them, but they were unable to escape. ²⁷ Then the king of Moab took his oldest son, who would have become the next king, and killed him and offered him as a sacrifice to their god Chemosh, burning him on top of the city wall. Then God became very angry at the Israelite army, so the army left and went back to their own land.

Chapter 4

¹ One day the widow of one of Yahweh's prophets came to Elisha and cried out to him, "My husband, who worked with you, is dead. You know that he revered Yahweh very much. But now someone to whom he owed a lot of money has come to me. I cannot pay him back, so he is threatening to take away my two sons to be his slaves as payment!"

² Elisha replied, "What can I do to help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?"

She replied, "We have only a container of olive oil. We have nothing else."

³ Elisha said, "Go to your neighbors and borrow from them as many empty jars as

you can. ⁴ Then take the jars into your house with your sons. Shut the door. Then pour olive oil from your container into the other jars. When each jar is full, set it aside and fill another jar. Keep doing that until all the jars are full."

⁵ So she did what Elisha told her to do. Her sons kept bringing jars to her, and she kept filling them. ⁶ Soon all the jars were full. So she said to one of her sons, "Bring me another jar!" But he replied, "There are no more jars!" Right then the olive oil stopped flowing.

⁷ When she told Elisha what had happened, he said to her, "Now sell the oil. And with the money you get, pay what you owe, and there will be enough extra money to keep buying food for yourself and your sons." So she did that.

⁸ One day Elisha went to the city of Shunem. There was a wealthy woman who lived there with her husband. One day she invited Elisha to her house for a meal. Elisha went there, and from then on every time Elisha was in Shunem he went to their house to eat a meal. ⁹ One day the woman said to her husband, "I am sure that this man who often comes here is a prophet who brings messages from God. ¹⁰ I think we should make a small room for him on our flat roof, and put a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp in it. If we do that, whenever he comes here, he will have a place to stay." So they did that.

¹¹ One day Elisha returned to Shunem, and he went up to that room to rest. ¹² He said to his servant Gehazi, "Tell the woman that I want to speak to her." So the servant went and told her. When she came to the doorway of Elisha's room, ¹³ Elisha said to Gehazi, "Tell her that we are both grateful for all the kind things that she has done for us. Then ask her what we can do for her. Ask, 'Do you want me to go to the king or the army commander

to request something for you?”

Gehazi gave her this message. She replied, “No, your master does not need to do that, because my family are able to give me what I need.”

¹⁴ Later, Elisha asked Gehazi, “What do you think that we can do for that woman?”

He replied, “Well, she has no son, and her husband is an old man.”

¹⁵ Elisha told Gehazi, “Call her back again.” So Gehazi went and called her. And when the woman returned, as she stood in the doorway, ¹⁶ Elisha said to her, “About this time next year you will be holding your infant son in your arms.” But she protested, “Oh, Sir, you are a prophet who brings messages from God, so please do not deceive me by saying things like that!”

¹⁷ But a few months later, the woman became pregnant, and she gave birth to a son at that time the following year, just like Elisha had predicted.

¹⁸ When the child was growing up, one day he went out to the fields to see his father, who was working with the men who were harvesting grain. ¹⁹ Suddenly the boy exclaimed, “My head hurts! My head hurts!”

His father said to one of the servants, “Carry him home to his mother!” ²⁰ So the servant carried him home, and his mother held him on her lap. But at noontime the boy died. ²¹ She carried him up the steps to the prophet’s room and laid him on the bed. She left him there and went out and shut the door.

²² She then called out to her husband, saying, “Send to me one of the servants and a donkey so that I can ride on it quickly to the prophet, and then come back!” But she did not tell her husband that their son had died.

²³ Her husband called out to her and said,

“Why do you want to go today? This is not the day when we celebrate the festival of the new moon, and it is not a Sabbath day!”

But she only replied, “Just do what I requested and everything will be all right.”

²⁴ So she saddled the donkey and said to her servant, “Lead the donkey! Do not slow down for me unless I tell you to do so!” ²⁵ As they approached Mount Carmel, where Elisha was, Elisha saw her in the distance. He said to Gehazi, “Look, the woman from Shunem is coming!” ²⁶ Run to her, and ask her if everything is all right with her and her husband and with her child!”

So Gehazi ran to her and asked her, but she said nothing to Gehazi except, “Yes, everything is fine.”

²⁷ But when she came to where Elisha was, she prostrated herself on the ground in front of Elisha and took hold of his feet. Gehazi started to push her away, but Elisha said, “Do not push her away! Something is troubling her very much, but Yahweh has not told me what it is.”

²⁸ Then she said to Elisha, “O sir, I did not request you to enable me to give birth to a son, but I did say, ‘Do not lie to me.’”

²⁹ Then Elisha realized that something must have happened to her son. So he said to Gehazi, “Get ready to leave immediately. Take my staff stick and go to her home. Do not stop to talk to anyone on the way. Go quickly to where her son is and lay the staff on the child’s face. If you do that, perhaps Yahweh will cause him to live again.”

³⁰ But the boy’s mother said, “Just as certain as Yahweh lives and you live, I will not go home if you do not go with me.” So Elisha returned with her to her home.

³¹ But Gehazi hurried quickly ahead.

When he got to the woman's home, he laid the staff on the child's face, but the child did not move or say anything.

So Gehazi returned to meet Elisha along the road, and told him, "The child is still dead." ³² When Elisha reached the house, he saw that the boy was lying dead on his bed. ³³ Elisha went into the room by himself and shut the door and prayed to Yahweh. ³⁴ Then he lay down on the boy's body, and put his mouth on the boy's mouth, and put his eyes on the boy's eyes, and put his hands on the boy's hands. Then the boy's body started to become warm! ³⁵ Elisha got up and walked back and forth in the room several times. Then he stretched his body on the boy's body again. The boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes!

³⁶ Then Elisha summoned Gehazi. He said, "Call the boy's mother." So Gehazi went and called her, and when she came in, Elisha said, "Here, take your son." ³⁷ She gratefully prostrated herself at Elisha's feet. Then she picked up her son and carried him downstairs.

³⁸ Then Elisha returned to Gilgal. But at that time there was a famine in that area. One day as the association of prophets was sitting in front of Elisha listening to what he was teaching, he said to his servant, "Put a large pot on the fire and make some stew for these men."

³⁹ One of the prophets went out to the fields to gather some vegetables. But he gathered only some wild gourds and put them in his cloak and brought them back. He shredded them and put them in the pot, but he did not know that the gourds were poisonous. ⁴⁰ He served the stew to the prophets, but after the men had eaten only a couple bites, they cried out, "Our master, there is something in the pot that will kill us!"

So they would not eat it. ⁴¹ Elisha said, "Bring me some flour." They brought him some, and he threw it in the pot and he said, "It is all right now. You can eat it." And they ate it, and it did not harm them.

⁴² One day a man from the city of Baal Shalishah brought to Elisha a sack of freshly cut grain and twenty loaves of barley bread, made from the first grain that they had harvested that year.

Elisha said to his servant, "Give it to the group of prophets, so that they can eat it." ⁴³ But his servant exclaimed, "Do you think that we can feed a hundred of us prophets with only that much? How can I place this before them all?"

But Elisha replied, "Give it to the prophets so that they can eat it, because Yahweh says that there will be plenty for all of them, and there will be some left over!" ⁴⁴ After his servant gave it to the prophets, they ate all that they wanted, and there was food left over, just as Yahweh had promised.

Chapter 5

¹ A man named Naaman was the commander of the army of Aram. Yahweh had enabled him to win many victories, and the king of Aram admired and honored him. Naaman was also a strong and brave soldier, but he had leprosy.

² Some time previously, groups of soldiers had invaded the land of Israel, and they had captured a young girl and taken her to Aram. She became a servant for Naaman's wife. ³ One day, that girl said to her, "I wish that my master would go to see the prophet in the city of Samaria. That prophet would heal your husband from his leprosy."

⁴ Naaman's wife told her husband what

the girl from Israel had said, and Naaman told that to the king. ⁵⁻⁶ The king said to him, "Very well, go and see the prophet. I will write a letter for you to take to the king of Israel, saying that I sent you." The king wrote in the letter, "I am sending this letter with my army commander Naaman, who serves me faithfully. I want you to heal him of his disease." So Naaman, assuming that the king of Israel was the prophet, took the letter and 330 kilograms of silver, 66 kilograms of gold, and ten sets of clothing, to give to the king of Israel, and he went to Samaria, taking along several servants.

⁷ When he arrived in Samaria, he gave the letter to the king of Israel. The king read the letter. Then, being very dismayed, the king tore his clothes and said, "I am not God! I am not able to cause people to live or to die! Why does the one who wrote this letter request me to cure this man of his leprosy? I do not have power to cure leprosy. The king of Aram is merely looking for an excuse to attack us!"

⁸ The prophet Elisha heard why the king of Israel had torn his robe, so he sent a message to the king, saying, "Why are you upset? Send Naaman to me, and he will find out that I am a true prophet in Israel." ⁹ So Naaman went with his horses and chariots to Elisha's house and waited outside the door. ¹⁰ But Elisha did not come to the door. Instead, he sent a messenger to Naaman to tell him, "Go to the Jordan River and go down seven times into the water. Then your skin will be well, and you will no longer have leprosy."

¹¹ But Naaman became very angry. He said, "I thought that surely he would wave his hand over the leprosy, and pray to Yahweh, and heal me!" ¹² Surely the Abana River and the Pharpar River in Damascus in my own country of Aram have better water than any in Israel! Can I not go

into my rivers at home and be healed and cleansed?" So he turned and walked away in great disgust.

¹³ But his servants came to him, and one of them said, "Sir, if that prophet had told you to do something difficult, you would certainly have done it. So why do you refuse to do such a simple thing he asks, when he says, 'Go down seven times in the water and be clean?'" ¹⁴ So Naaman went down to the Jordan River and went into the water seven times, as the prophet had instructed, and his skin became healthy, like the smooth skin of a young child.

¹⁵ Then Naaman and those who were with him went back to talk to Elisha. They stood in front of him, and Naaman said, "Now I know that there are no real gods anywhere else in the world, but there is the true God here in Israel! So now please accept these gifts that I have brought to you!"

¹⁶ But Elisha replied, "Just as certainly as Yahweh, the one whom I serve, lives, I will not accept any gifts." Naaman kept urging him to accept the gifts, but Elisha kept refusing.

¹⁷ Then Naaman said, "Very well, but I have one request. This soil here in Israel is Yahweh's soil, so please allow me to take some soil from this place and put it in sacks on two mules. Then I will take it back home with me and make an altar on this soil. From now on, I will offer sacrifices to Yahweh on that altar. I will not offer sacrifices to any other god." ¹⁸ However, when my master, the king, goes into the temple of the god Rimmon to worship him, I ask that Yahweh will forgive me because I will have to bow down, too."

¹⁹ Elisha replied, "Go home, and do not worry about that." So Naaman and his servants started to travel home.

²⁰ But then Elisha's servant Gehazi said to himself, "It is not good that my master has allowed this Aramean man to leave like this. He should have accepted his gifts. So just as certainly as Yahweh lives, I will go and catch up with Naaman and get something from him."

²¹ So Gehazi hurried to catch up with Naaman. When Naaman saw Gehazi running toward him, he stopped the chariot in which he was riding, jumped out, and went to see what Gehazi wanted. He asked him, "Is everything all right?"

²² Gehazi replied, "Yes, but two young prophets from the hill country where the descendants of Ephraim live have just arrived. Elisha has sent me to tell you that he would like thirty-three kilograms of silver and two sets of clothing to give to them."

²³ Naaman replied, "Certainly! You can have sixty-six kilograms of silver!" He urged Gehazi to take it. He also gave him two sets of clothing. He tied up the silver in two bags and gave them to two of his servants to carry back to Elisha. ²⁴ But when they arrived at the hill where Elisha lived, Gehazi took the silver and the clothes from Naaman's servants and sent the servants back to Naaman. Then he took those things into his house and hid them. ²⁵ When he went to Elisha, Elisha asked him, "Where did you go, Gehazi?" Gehazi replied, "I did not go anywhere."

²⁶ Elisha asked him, "Do you not realize that my spirit was there when Naaman got out of his chariot to talk with you? This is certainly not the time to accept gifts of money and clothes and olive groves and vineyards and sheep and oxen and servants! ²⁷ Because you have done this, you and your children and all your descendants, forever, will have leprosy just like Naaman had!" When Gehazi left the room, he was a leper. His skin was as white as

snow.

Chapter 6

¹ One day the association of prophets said to Elisha, "Look, this place where we meet together with you is very small. ² Allow us to go to the Jordan River and cut down some trees to make logs to build a new meeting place." So Elisha said, "Very well, go."

³ One of them said to Elisha, "Please come with us." So Elisha replied, "Very well, I will go with you."

⁴ So they went together. When they reached the Jordan River they cut down some trees.

⁵ But while one of them was cutting down a tree, suddenly the axe head separated from the handle and fell into the water. He cried out to Elisha, "O, Master, what shall I do? The axe is not mine. I borrowed it!"

⁶ Elisha replied, "Where did it fall into the water?" After the man showed him the place, Elisha cut off a stick, threw it into the water, and the axe head rose to the water surface. ⁷ Elisha said, "Take it out of the water." So the man reached his hand down and picked up the axe head.

⁸ Whenever the king of Aram prepared to send his army to fight against Israel, he first consulted his officers, and then told them where they should set up their tents.

⁹ But each time Elisha would send a message to warn the king of Israel, telling him where the army of Aram was planning to attack them, saying, "Be sure that your army does not go near that place, because the army of Aram has set up their tents there." ¹⁰ So the king of Israel would send messengers to warn the people who

lived in that place, and the people would remain on guard. That happened several times.

¹¹ The king of Aram was very upset about this, so he summoned his army officers and said to them, "One of you is revealing our plans to the king of Israel. Which one of you is doing it?"

¹² One of his officers answered, "Your Majesty, it is not one of us. Elisha the prophet knows what we plan to do, and he tells the king of Israel everything. He even knows what you say in your own bedroom!"

¹³ The king of Aram replied, "Go and find out where he is, and I will send some men there to capture him." Someone told him, "People say that he is in the city of Dothan, north of Samaria." ¹⁴ So the king sent a large group of soldiers to Dothan with horses and chariots. They arrived at night and surrounded the city.

¹⁵ Early the next morning, Elisha's servant got up and went outside the house. He saw the soldiers of Aram with their horses and chariots surrounding the town. So he went inside the house and reported it to Elisha and exclaimed, "Oh, sir! What are we going to do?"

¹⁶ Elisha replied, "Do not be afraid! Those who are helping us are many more than those who are helping them!"

¹⁷ Then he prayed, "Yahweh, I request that you open my servant's eyes in order that he can see what is out there!" So Yahweh enabled the servant to look out and see that surrounding the hill on which the town was built was a huge number of horses and chariots; they seemed to be made of fire!

¹⁸ When the army of Aram prepared to attack Elisha, he prayed again, saying, "Yahweh, cause all these soldiers to become

blind!" Yahweh answered his prayer and caused them to be unable to see clearly.

¹⁹ Then Elisha went to them and said, "You are not on the right road. This is not the city that you are searching for. I will take you to the man whom you are searching for." But he led them to the city Samaria, the capital of Israel.

²⁰ As soon as they entered Samaria, Elisha prayed again, saying, "Yahweh, now enable these soldiers to see correctly again!" So Yahweh enabled them to see correctly, and they were surprised to see that they were inside Samaria.

²¹ When the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, "Sir, shall I tell my soldiers to kill them? Shall we kill all of them?"

²² Elisha replied, "No, you must not kill them. If your army captured many of your enemies in a battle, you would certainly not kill them. Give these men something to eat and drink, and then allow them to return to their king." ²³ So the king of Israel did that. He told his servants to provide a big feast for them. And when they had eaten and drunk plenty, he sent them away. They returned to the king of Aram and told him what had happened. So for a while after that, soldiers from Aram stopped raiding towns in Israel.

²⁴ But some time later, Ben Hadad the king of Aram, assembled his entire army, and they went to Samaria and surrounded the city for a long time. ²⁵ Because of that, after a while there was hardly any food left inside the city, so that eventually a donkey's head, which was usually worthless, cost eighty pieces of silver, and one cup of dove's dung cost five pieces of silver.

²⁶ One day when the king of Israel was walking on top of the city wall, a woman cried out to him, "Your Majesty, help me!"

²⁷ He replied, "If Yahweh will not help you, I certainly cannot. I do not have

any wheat or wine! ²⁸ What is your problem?" She replied, "Several days ago, that women over there said to me, 'Because we have nothing left to eat, let us kill your son today, in order that we can eat his flesh. Then tomorrow we can kill my son and eat his flesh.'

²⁹ So we killed my son and cut his body up and boiled his flesh and ate it. The next day, I said to her, 'Now give your son to me, in order that we can kill him and cook his flesh and eat it.' But she has hidden her son."

³⁰ When the king heard what the woman said, he tore his robe to show that he was very upset. The people who were standing close to the wall were able to see that the king was wearing rough cloth underneath his robe because he was very upset. ³¹ The king exclaimed, "I wish that God will strike me dead if I do not cut off the head of Elisha today, because he is the one who has caused these terrible things to happen to us!"

³² So the king sent an officer to get Elisha.

Before the officer arrived, Elisha was sitting in his house with some Israelite elders who were talking with him. Elisha said to them, "That murderer, the king of Israel, is sending someone here to kill me. Listen. When he arrives, shut the door and do not allow him to come in, because the king will be coming right behind that officer!" ³³ And while he was still speaking, the king and the officer arrived. The king said, "It is Yahweh who is allowing us to have all this trouble. I will no longer wait for him to help us."

Chapter 7

¹ Elisha replied to the king, "Listen to what Yahweh says: 'He says that by this

time tomorrow, at the marketplace here in Samaria, you will be able to buy seven liters of the best flour for one piece of silver, and fourteen liters of barley for one piece of silver.'"

² The officer accompanying the king said to Elijah, "That cannot happen! Even if Yahweh himself would open the windows of the sky and send grain down to us, that certainly could not happen!" Elisha replied, "Because you said that, you will see it happen, but you will not be able to eat any of the food!"

³ That day there were four men who had leprosy who were sitting outside the gate of the city of Samaria. They said to each other, "Why should we wait here until we die? ⁴ If we go into the city, we will die there, because there is no food there. If we remain sitting here, we will die here. So let us go to where the army of Aram has set up their tents. If they kill us, we will die. But if they allow us to remain alive, we will not die." ⁵ So when it was getting dark, those four men went to the camp where the army of Aram had set up their tents. But when they reached the camp, they saw that there was no one there.

⁶ What had happened was that Yahweh had caused the army of Aram to hear something that sounded like a large army marching with chariots and horses. So the soldiers said to each other, "Listen! The king of Israel has hired the kings of Egypt and the Hittites and their armies, and they have come to attack us!" ⁷ So they all ran away that evening at sundown and left their tents and their horses and donkeys there, because they were afraid that they would die if they stayed there.

⁸ When those four men with leprosy came to the edge of the area where the soldiers of Aram had set up their tents, they went into one tent and saw all the things that had been left there. So they ate and

drank what was there, and they took the silver and the gold and clothes. Then they went outside the tent and hid those things. Then they entered another tent and took things from there, and then went outside and hid them, also.

⁹ But then they said to each other, "We are not doing what is right. We have good news to tell others today. If we do not tell it to anyone now, and if we wait until morning to tell it, the people will certainly punish us. So let us go right now to the palace and tell it to the king's officials!"

¹⁰ So they went to the guards at the city gates and called out to them, "We went to where the army of Aram had set up their tents, but we did not see or hear anyone there. Their horses and donkeys were still tied up, but their tents were all deserted!"

¹¹ The guards shouted the news, and some people who heard it went to the palace and reported it there.

¹² It was in the night that the king heard this news. He got up out of his bed and said to his officials, "I will tell you what the army of Aram is planning to do. They know that we have no food here, so they have left their tents and are hiding in the fields. They think that we will leave the city to find some food, and then they will capture us and capture the city."

¹³ But one of his officials said, "Many of our people have already died from hunger. If those of us who are still alive all stay here, we also will die anyway. So let us send some men with five of our horses that are still alive to go and see what has really happened."

¹⁴ So they chose some men and told them to go in two chariots and find out what had happened to the army of Aram. ¹⁵ They went as far as the Jordan River. All along the road they saw clothes and equipment that the soldiers from Aram had

thrown away while they were running away. So the men returned to the king and reported what they had seen. ¹⁶ Then many of the people of Samaria also went out of the city and went to where the army of Aram had set up their tents. They entered all the tents and took everything. So there was now plenty of everything! As a result people could buy seven liters of the best flour for one piece of silver, and fourteen liters of barley for one piece of silver, which was what Yahweh had said would happen!

¹⁷ The king of Israel had ordered his assistant, the one who had spoken with Elisha, to supervise what was happening at the city gate. But as he was standing at the gate, all the people who were rushing outside the city trampled on him, and he died, which was what Elisha had said would happen to him. ¹⁸ Elisha had told him that by the next day there would be plenty of food, with the result that anyone could buy fourteen liters of barley for one piece of silver, and seven liters of the best flour for one piece of silver.

¹⁹ That officer had answered, "That certainly cannot happen! Even if Yahweh himself would open the sky and send down some grain, that could not happen." And Elisha had replied, "Because you said that, you will see it happen, but you will not be able to eat any of the food!" ²⁰ And that is what happened to him. The people who were rushing out of the city gate trampled on him, and he died.

Chapter 8

¹ After Elisha had caused the son of the woman from the city of Shunem to become alive again, he had told her that she should leave with her family and live somewhere else for a while, because Yah-

weh was going to send a famine in the land. He said that the famine would last for seven years. ² So the woman had done what Elisha told her to do. She and her family had gone to live in the region of Philistia for seven years.

³ After the seven years were ended, they returned to their home. The woman went to the king to request that her house and her land be given back to her. ⁴ When she arrived, the king was talking with Gehazi, Elisha's servant. The king was saying to him, "Tell me all the great things that Elisha has done." ⁵ While Gehazi was telling the king that Elisha had caused the son of a woman from Shunem to become alive again, that woman came in and requested the king to enable her to get her house and land back again. Gehazi exclaimed, "Your Majesty, this is the woman whose son Elisha caused to become alive again!"

⁶ When the king asked her about it, she told him that what Gehazi had said was true. The king summoned one of his officials and said to him, "Make sure that this woman gets back everything that she owned in the past, including the value of all the crops that have been harvested during these last seven years while she was away from her land." So the official did that.

⁷ Elisha went to Damascus, the capital of Aram, at the time when Ben Hadad, the king of Aram, was very sick. When someone told the king that Elisha was in Damascus, ⁸ the king told one of his officials named Hazael, "Go and talk to that prophet and take a present with you to give to him. Request him to ask Yahweh if I will recover from my illness."

⁹ So Hazael went to talk with Elisha. He took with him forty camels that were carrying many kinds of goods that were produced in Damascus. When Hazael met

him, he said to him, "Your friend Ben Hadad, the king of Aram, sent me to ask you whether you think he will recover from his illness."

¹⁰ Elisha said to Hazael, "Go and say to him, 'Yes, you will certainly not die from this illness,' but Yahweh has shown me that he will certainly die before he recovers." ¹¹ Then Elisha stared at him and had a terrified look on his face. That caused Hazael to feel uneasy. Then suddenly Elisha started to cry.

¹² Hazael said, "Sir, why are you crying?"

Elisha replied, "Because Yahweh has enabled me to know the terrible things that you will do to the people of Israel. Your soldiers will burn their cities that now have walls around them, kill their fine young men in battle, crush the heads of their children, and rip open the bellies of their pregnant women with swords."

¹³ Hazael replied, "I am as powerless as a dog. How could I do such terrible things?"

Elisha replied, "Yahweh has also revealed to me that you will become the king of Aram."

¹⁴ Then Hazael left and returned to his master the king, who asked him, "What did Elisha say?"

He replied, "He told me that you would certainly recover." ¹⁵ But the next day, while the king was sleeping, Hazael took a blanket and soaked it in water. Then he spread it on the king's face in order that he could not breathe, and he died. Then Hazael became the king of Aram instead of Ben Hadad.

¹⁶ After King Joram son of Ahab, had been ruling in Israel for almost five years, Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram became the king of Judah. ¹⁷ He was thirty-two years old when he became the king, and he ruled in Jerusalem for eight years. ¹⁸ His wife

was the daughter of King Ahab. Like everyone in Ahab's family, he continually did the evil things that the previous kings of Israel had done. He did many things that Yahweh said were evil. ¹⁹ But Yahweh did not want to get rid of the people of Judah, because of what he had promised David, who served him very well. He had promised David that his descendants would always rule Judah.

²⁰ During the time that Jehoram ruled, the king of Edom rebelled against Judah, and they appointed their own king. ²¹ So Jehoram went with his army and all their chariots to the city of Zair near the border of Edom. There the army of Edom surrounded them. But during the night, Jehoram and the commanders in their chariots were able to get through the enemy lines and escaped. And all his soldiers also fled to their homes. ²² So after that, Edom was no longer controlled by Judah, and it is still like that. During that same time, the people of the city of Libnah also freed themselves from being controlled by Judah.

²³ If you want to read about the other things that Jehoram did, they are written in Book of the Events of the Kings of Judah. ²⁴ Jehoram died and was buried where the other kings of Judah had been buried in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David. Then Jehoram's son Ahaziah became the king.

²⁵ After Ahab's son Joram has been ruling in Israel for almost twelve years, Jehoram's son Ahaziah became the king of Judah. ²⁶ Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he started to rule. He ruled in Jerusalem for only one year. His mother's name was Athaliah, the daughter of King Ahab and the granddaughter of King Omri of Israel. ²⁷ King Ahaziah conducted his life just like the members of Ahab's family had done. He did many things that Yah-

weh said were evil.

²⁸ Ahaziah's army joined the army of King Joram of Israel to fight against the army of King Hazael of Aram. Their armies started fighting at the city of Ramoth in the region of Gilead, and the soldiers of Aram wounded Joram. ²⁹ King Joram returned to the city of Jezreel in order to recover from his wounds. King Ahaziah went to visit him there.

Chapter 9

¹ Meanwhile, the prophet Elisha summoned one of the other prophets. He said to him, "Get ready and go to the city of Ramoth in the region of Gilead. Take this jar of olive oil with you. ² When you arrive there, search for a man named Jehu son of Jehoshaphat and grandson of Nimshi. Go with him into a room away from his companions, ³ and pour some of this oil on his head. Then say to him, 'Yahweh declares that he is appointing you to be the king of Israel.' Then open the door and run away as quickly as you can."

⁴ So the young prophet went to Ramoth. ⁵ When he arrived, he saw that the commanders of the army were having a conference. He looked at Jehu and said, "Sir, I have a message for one of you."

Jehu replied, "Which one of us is the message for?"

The young prophet replied, "It is for you, commander."

⁶ So Jehu got up and went with the young prophet into a house. There the young prophet poured some olive oil on Jehu's head and said to him, "Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, declares this: 'I am appointing you to be the king of my Israelite people. ⁷ You must kill your master King Joram son of Ahab, because I will

punish Ahab's wife Jezebel for murdering many of my prophets and other people who served me. ⁸ You must kill not only Joram but all of Ahab's family. I want to get rid of every male in the family, including young ones and old ones. ⁹ I will get rid of Ahab's family, like I got rid of the families of two other kings of Israel, Jeroboam and Baasha. ¹⁰ And when Jezebel dies, her corpse will not be buried. Dogs will eat her corpse there in the city of Jezreel."

After the young prophet said this, he left the room and ran. ¹¹ When Jehu came out of the room to where his other commanders were, they said to him, "Is everything all right? Why did that mad fellow come to you?"

He replied, "You know what kinds of things young prophets like him say."

¹² They said, "You are lying. Tell us what he said!"

He replied, "He told me several things, and then he told me that Yahweh said, 'I am appointing you to be the king of Israel.'"

¹³ Then they all spread their cloaks on the steps of the building for Jehu to walk out on, and they blew trumpets and shouted, "Jehu is now the king!"

¹⁴⁻¹⁵ King Joram and his army had been defending Ramoth against the attacks by the army of the king of Aram. King Joram had returned to the city of Jezreel, to recover from being wounded in the battle against the army of Hazael, the king of Aram. And Jehu made plans to kill Joram. He said to his other commanders, "If you really want to help me, then make sure that no one leaves this city to go to warn the people of Jezreel about what I am planning to do."

¹⁶ Then Jehu and his officers got into their chariots and rode to Jezreel, where Joram was still recovering. And King Ahaziah of Judah was there, visiting Joram.

¹⁷ A guard was standing in the watchtower in Jezreel. He saw Jehu and his men approaching. He called out, "I see a lot of men who are approaching!" King Joram heard what the watchman said, so he said to his soldiers, "Send someone on a horse to go and find out if they are coming peacefully or in order to attack us."

¹⁸ So a man riding a horse rode out to meet Jehu and said to him, "The king wants to know if you are coming peacefully."

Jehu replied, "This is not the time for you to be concerned about peace! Turn around and come behind me!"

So the guard in the watchtower reported that the messenger had reached the group that was approaching, but he was not returning alone.

¹⁹ So King Joram sent another messenger who asked Jehu the same question. Again Jehu replied, "This is not the time for you to be concerned about peace! Turn around and follow me!"

²⁰ Then the watchman reported again, "That messenger also reached them, but he is not coming back alone. And the leader of the group must be Jehu son of Nimshi, because he is driving his chariot furiously, as Jehu does!"

²¹ Joram said to his soldiers, "Get my chariot ready." So they did that. Then King Joram and King Ahaziah both rode toward Jehu, each one in his own chariot. And it happened that they met Jehu at the field that had previously belonged to Naboth!

²² When Joram met Jehu, he said to him, "Are you coming to act peacefully toward me?"

Jehu replied, "How can there be peace while you and your people are bowing down to idols and practicing very much witchcraft like your mother Jezebel did?"

²³ Joram cried out, "Ahaziah, they have de-

ceived us! They want to kill us!" So Joram turned his chariot around and tried to flee.

²⁴ But Jehu drew his bow with strength and shot an arrow that pierced Joram between his shoulder blades. The arrow went through Joram's body and pierced Joram's heart, and he slumped down dead in his chariot. ²⁵ Then Jehu said to his assistant Bidkar, "Take his corpse and throw it here into the field that belonged to Naboth. I am sure that you remember that when you and I were riding together in chariots behind King Joram's father Ahab that Yahweh said this about Ahab, ²⁶ 'Yesterday I saw Ahab murder Naboth and his sons here. And I solemnly promise that I will punish him right here in this same field!' So take Joram's corpse and throw it into that field! That will fulfill what Yahweh said would happen."

²⁷ When King Ahaziah saw what happened, he fled in his chariot toward the city of Beth Haggan. But Jehu pursued him and said to his other commanders, "Shoot him, also!" So they shot him with arrows while he was riding in his chariot on the road up to Gur, near the city of Ibleam. He continued going in his chariot until he reached the city of Megiddo, where he died. ²⁸ His officials took his corpse back to Jerusalem and buried it in the tombs in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David, where his ancestors had been buried. ²⁹ Ahaziah had become the king of Judah when Joram had been ruling Israel for almost eleven years.

³⁰ Then Jehu went to Jezreel. When Ahab's widow Jezebel heard what had happened, she put paint on her eyelids, and combed her hair to make it beautiful, and looked out the window of the palace toward the street below. ³¹ While Jehu was entering the city gate, she called out to him, "You are like Zimri! You are a murderer just

like him! I think you are certainly not coming to act peacefully toward me!"

³² Jehu looked up toward the window, and then he said, "Who is on my side? Anyone?" Two or three palace officials looked down at him from a window. ³³ Jehu said to them, "Throw her down here!"

So they threw her down and Jehu ordered that his men drive their chariots and horses over her body, and that is how she was killed. Some of her blood splattered on the city wall and on the horses that were pulling the chariots. ³⁴ Then Jehu went into the palace and ate and drank. Then he said to some of his men, "Take the corpse of that woman whom Yahweh has cursed and bury it, because she is a king's daughter and therefore should be buried properly." ³⁵ But when they went to get her corpse to bury it, all that was left was only her skull and the bones of her feet and her hands. Everything else was gone. ³⁶ When they reported this to Jehu, he said, "That is what Yahweh said would happen! He told his servant Elijah, 'In the city of Jezreel, dogs will eat the flesh of Jezebel's corpse.' ³⁷ Her bones will be scattered there in Jezreel like dung, with the result that no one will be able to recognize them and say, 'These are Jezebel's bones.'"

Chapter 10

¹ There were seventy descendants of King Ahab who were living in Samaria. Jehu wrote a letter and made copies of it and sent them to the rulers of the city, to the elders, and to those who raised and tutored Ahab's children. ² This is what he wrote: "You are the ones who are taking care of the king's descendants. You have chariots, horses, and weapons, and you live in cities that have walls around them. So as

soon as you receive this letter, ³ choose one of the king's descendants, the one who is the best qualified, and appoint him to be your king. Then prepare to fight to defend him."

⁴ But when they got those letters and read them, they became very afraid. They said, "King Joram and King Ahaziah could not resist him; how can we resist him?"

⁵ So the officer who was in charge of the palace and the mayor of the city sent a message to Jehu saying, "We want to serve you, and we are ready to do whatever you tell us to do. We will not appoint anyone to become our king. You do whatever you think is the best."

⁶ So Jehu sent a second letter to them, writing this: "If you are on my side, and if you are ready to obey me, kill King Ahab's descendants and cut off their heads and bring their heads to me here in Jezreel at this time tomorrow."

Now the seventy descendants of King Ahab were being brought up and supervised by the leaders of the city of Samaria.

⁷ When they received the letter from Jehu, they killed all seventy of Ahab's descendants and cut off their heads. They put their heads in baskets and sent them to Jehu at Jezreel. ⁸ A messenger came to Jehu and told him, "They have brought the heads of Ahab's descendants." So Jehu commanded that the heads should be put in two piles at the city gate and that the heads should stay there until the next morning.

⁹ The next morning he went out to the city gate and said to all the people, "I am the one who plotted against King Joram and killed him. You are not guilty of doing that. But it was Yahweh, not I, who commanded that all these descendants of Ahab should be killed. ¹⁰ I want you to know that everything that Yahweh said would happen

has happened. He has caused to happen what he told the prophet Elijah would happen." ¹¹ Then Jehu executed all the other relatives of Ahab in Jezreel, all Ahab's officers, close friends, and his priests. He did not allow any of them to remain alive.

¹² Then Jehu left Jezreel and went toward Samaria. While he was going there, at a place called Beth Eked, ¹³ he met some relatives of King Ahaziah of Judah. He asked them, "Who are you?"

They replied, "We are relatives of King Ahaziah. We are going to Jezreel to visit the children of Queen Jezebel and the other members of King Joram's family."

¹⁴ Jehu said to his men, "Seize them!" So they seized them and killed all of them at the well of Beth Eked. There were forty-two people whom they killed. They did not allow any of them to remain alive.

¹⁵ Then Jehu continued to travel toward Samaria. Along the road he was met by Jonadab, a son of Rechab. Jehu greeted him and said to him, "Are you thinking in the same way that I am thinking?"

Jonadab replied, "Yes, I am."

Jehu said, "If you are, join your hand to mine." So Jonadab joined hands with him, and Jehu helped him to get into his chariot.

¹⁶ Jehu said to him, "Come with me, and you will see how eager I am to obey Yahweh." So they rode together to Samaria.

¹⁷ When they arrived in Samaria, Jehu killed all of Ahab's relatives who were still alive. He did not spare any of them. That was what Yahweh told Elijah would happen.

¹⁸ Then Jehu summoned all the people of Samaria, and said to them, "King Ahab was devoted to your god Baal a little bit, but I will serve him much more. ¹⁹ So now summon all the prophets of Baal, all of Baal's priests, and all the others who

worship Baal. I am going to make a great sacrifice to Baal. I want all of them to be there. Any of them who is not there will be executed.” But Jehu was planning to trick them, because he was planning to kill all those who worshiped Baal.

²⁰ Then Jehu commanded, “Announce that we are going to set aside a day to honor Baal.” So they sent out a proclamation about that day. ²¹ Jehu decided what day they would gather and sent messages throughout Israel telling everyone what day to gather, and on that day, everyone who worshiped Baal came. No one stayed at home. They all went into the huge temple of Baal and filled it from one end to the other. ²² Jehu told the priest who took care of the sacred robes to bring them out and give them to the people who worshiped Baal. So the priest did that.

²³ Then Jehu went into the temple of Baal with Jonadab, and he said to the people who were there to worship Baal, “Be sure that only those who worship Baal are here. Be sure that no one who worships Yahweh has come in.” ²⁴ Then he and Jonadab prepared to offer sacrifices and other offerings to Baal that would be burned whole on the altar that was there in Samaria. But Jehu had stationed eighty of his men outside the temple, and had said to them, “I want you to kill all the people who are in the temple. Anyone who allows one of them to escape will be executed!”

²⁵ As soon as Jehu and Jonadab had finished killing the animals that would be completely burned to be an offering to Baal, they went outside and said to the guards and officers, “Go in and kill all of them! Do not allow any of them to escape!” So the guards and officers went in and killed them all with their swords. Then they dragged their corpses outside the temple. Then they went into the inner room of the temple, ²⁶ and they car-

ried out the sacred pillar of Baal that was there, and they burned it. ²⁷ So they destroyed that pillar that honored Baal, and then they burned down the temple, and made it a latrine. And that is what it is up to the present time.

²⁸ That is how Jehu got rid of the worship of Baal in Israel. ²⁹ But Jehu did not stop committing the kinds of sins that Jeroboam had committed, sins that led the people of Israel to sin by worshiping the gold statues of calves in the cities of Bethel and Dan.

³⁰ Then Yahweh said to Jehu, “You have done what pleased me by getting rid of all of Ahab’s descendants. So I promise you that your son and grandson and great-grandson and great-great-grandson will all be kings of Israel.” ³¹ But Jehu did not obey all the laws of Yahweh, the God of the Israelite people. He did not stop committing the sins that Jeroboam had committed, sins that induced the Israelite people to sin.

³² At that time, Yahweh began to cause the territory controlled by Israel to become smaller. The army of King Hazael of Aram conquered much of the Israelite territory. ³³ He conquered the parts east of the Jordan River, as far south as the city of Aroer on the Arnon River. That included the regions of Gilead and Bashan, where the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and half of the tribe of Manasseh lived.

³⁴ If you want to read more about all the other things that Jehu did, they are written in Book of the Events of the Kings of Israel.

³⁵ Jehu died, and was buried in Samaria. His son Jehoahaz became the king in place of his father. ³⁶ Jehu had ruled in Samaria as the king of Israel for twenty-eight years.

Chapter 11

¹ When King Ahaziah's mother Athaliah saw that her son had been killed, she commanded that all the members of Ahaziah's family who might become king must be executed. ² So Ahaziah's sons were all about to be murdered. But Jehosheba, who was King Jehoram's daughter and Ahaziah's half-sister, took Ahaziah's very young son Joash and hid him and his nursemaid in a bedroom in the temple. So he was not killed. ³ He stayed with Jehosheba for six years. All during that time, he remained hidden in the temple, while Athaliah ruled Judah.

⁴ Six years later, Jehoiada the high priest summoned the officers who supervised the royal bodyguards and the palace guards. He told them to come to the temple. There he required them to solemnly promise that they would do what he told them to do. And he showed King Ahaziah's son Joash to them. ⁵ He gave them these instructions: "There are three groups of you guards. When one group finishes their work on the Sabbath day, divide yourselves into three smaller groups. One group must guard the palace. ⁶ Another group must guard at the Sur Gate. The other group must guard at the gate behind the other groups. ⁷ The two groups that are not working on the Sabbath day must guard the temple to protect little King Joash. ⁸ You must stand around the king wherever he goes, with your weapons in your hands. You must kill anyone who comes near you."

⁹ The officers who supervised the guards did what Jehoiada told them to do. Each one brought to Jehoiada the guards that he supervised—the guards who were just finishing their work and those who were about to start their work on the Sabbath day. ¹⁰ The priest distributed to the com-

manders of the guards the spears and shields that had belonged to King David, that were kept in the temple. ¹¹ Then he commanded all the guards to stand in their positions, each one with his sword in his hand, all around the king.

¹² Then he brought Joash out. He put the crown on his head and gave him a scroll on which were written the rules that the kings needed to obey. Then he poured some olive oil on Joash's head and proclaimed that he was now the king. The people all clapped their hands and shouted, "We desire that the king will live for many years!"

¹³ When Athaliah heard the noise that was being made by the guards and the other people, she ran to the temple where the people were gathered. ¹⁴ She saw the new king standing there alongside one of the big pillars, which was the place at the temple where the kings usually stood. She saw that he was surrounded by the temple officers and men blowing trumpets, and that the people were shouting joyfully, and some of them were also blowing trumpets. She tore her clothes to show her distress and shouted, "You are traitors! You have betrayed me!" ¹⁵ Jehoiada immediately said, "Kill her, but do not do it here at the temple of Yahweh! Take her away between two rows of guards. And kill anyone who tries to rescue her!" ¹⁶ She tried to flee, but the guards seized her and took her to the palace, to the place where horses enter the courtyard. They killed her there.

¹⁷ Then Jehoiada made a covenant between the king and the people, that they would always obey Yahweh. He also made an covenant requiring the people to be loyal to Joash their king. ¹⁸ Then all the people of Israel who were there went to the temple of Baal and tore it down. They smashed the altars and the statues of Baal.

They also killed Mattan the priest of Baal, in front of the altars.

Jehoiada stationed guards at the temple of Yahweh. ¹⁹ Then he and the officers of the temple, the officers who supervised the royal bodyguards, and the king's bodyguards brought the king from the temple to the palace. All the people followed them. Joash entered the palace at the Guard Gate and sat down on the throne, where the kings had always sat. ²⁰ All the people of Judah rejoiced. And because Athaliah had been killed, the city was quiet.

²¹ Joash was seven years old when he became the king of Judah.

Chapter 12

¹ When Jehu had been ruling Israel for almost seven years, Joash became the king of Judah. He ruled in Jerusalem for forty years. His mother was Zibiah, from the city of Beersheba. ² All during the time that Joash was alive, he did what pleased Yahweh, because Jehoiada the priest instructed him. ³ But the places where the people worshiped Yahweh elsewhere in the land were not destroyed. They continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense at those places, instead of at the place that God had chosen for them in Jerusalem.

⁴ Joash said to the priests, "You must take all the money which the people give, both the money they are required to pay and the money that they themselves decide to give, as sacred offerings to buy things for the temple. ⁵ Each priest must take the money from the people who come to him, and he must use that money to repair the temple whenever he sees that there is something that needs to be repaired."

⁶ But after Joash had been ruling for al-

most twenty-three years, the priests still had not repaired anything in the temple. ⁷ So Joash summoned Jehoiada and the other priests and said to them, "Why are you not repairing things in the temple? Do not take any more money from those who are paying taxes. Take the money that was collected for the purpose of repairing the temple and pay that money to the workers who will do the repairs." ⁸ The priests agreed to do that, and they also agreed that they themselves would not do the repair work.

⁹ Then Jehoiada took a chest and bored a hole in the lid. He placed it alongside the altar for burning incense that was on the right as anyone enters the temple. The priests who guarded the entrance to the temple put in the box the money that was brought to the temple. ¹⁰ Whenever they saw that there was a lot of money in the chest, the king's secretary and the high priest would come and count the money. Then they would put it in bags and tie the bags shut. ¹¹ Then they would distribute the money to the men who supervised the work in the temple. The supervisors would use that money to pay the carpenters and builders who did the repair work in the temple, ¹² and the masons and the stone cutters. Also with some of that money they bought timber and stones that had been cut to be used in the repair work, and to pay all the other expenses for the repair work. ¹³ But they did not use any of that money to pay men to make silver cups or wick trimmers for the lamps or bowls or trumpets or any other items made of silver or gold to be used in the temple.

¹⁴ All that money was given to the men who were doing the work of repairing the temple. ¹⁵ The men who supervised the work always did things honestly, so the king's secretary and the high priest never required that the supervisors report what

they had spent the money for. ¹⁶ But the money that people gave to pay for sacrifices for their sins was not put in the chest. That money belonged to the priests.

¹⁷ At that time, Hazael, the king of Aram, went with his army and attacked the city of Gath and conquered it. Then he decided that they would attack Jerusalem.

¹⁸ So Joash, the king of Judah, took all the money that the previous kings, Jehoshaphat and Jehoram and Ahaziah, had dedicated to Yahweh. He added some of his own money, and all the gold that was in the rooms in the temple where valuable things were kept, and he sent it all to King Hazael to persuade him not to attack Jerusalem. So King Hazael took his army away from Jerusalem.

¹⁹ If you want to read more of what Joash did, it is all written in Book of the Events of the Kings of Judah. ²⁰⁻²¹ Joash's officials plotted against him, and two of them killed Joash on the road that goes down to the district of Silla. The two men who did that were Jozabad son of Shimeath, and Jehozabad son of Shomer. Joash was buried in the place where his ancestors were buried, in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David. Then Joash's son Amaziah became the king of Judah.

Chapter 13

¹ After Joash had been ruling Judah for almost twenty-three years, Jehu's son Jehoahaz became the king of Israel. He ruled in the city of Samaria for seventeen years.

² He did many things that Yahweh said were evil and committed the same kind of sins that Jeroboam had committed, sins that had induced the people of Israel to sin. He did not stop committing those sins. ³ So Yahweh became very angry with the Israelite people, and he allowed the army

of King Hazael of Aram and his son Ben Hadad to defeat the Israelites many times.

⁴ Then Jehoahaz prayed to Yahweh for help, and Yahweh listened to him, because he saw that the army of the king of Aram was oppressing the Israelites. ⁵ Yahweh sent a leader to Israel, who enabled them to be free from Aram's power. After that, the Israelites lived peacefully as they had done previously. ⁶ But they still continued to commit the same kind of sins that Jeroboam and his family had committed and that had led the Israelites to sin. Also, the statue of the goddess Asherah remained in Samaria.

⁷ Jehoahaz had only fifty men who rode on horses and ten chariots and ten thousand other soldiers, because the army of Aram had killed all the rest, walking over them as people walk over the ground.

⁸ If you want to read about everything else that Jehoahaz did, you can read about it in the book called The History of the Kings of Israel. ⁹ Jehoahaz died and was buried in Samaria. Then his son Jehoash became the king.

¹⁰ Jehoash son of Jehoahaz, started to rule in Israel after King Joash had been ruling in Judah for thirty-seven years. Jehoash ruled in Samaria for sixteen years. ¹¹ He did many things that Yahweh said were evil. He refused to stop worshiping idols, which was the sin that many years earlier King Jeroboam had led the Israelite people in committing.

¹² The other things that happened while Jehoash was king and all the things that he did are written in Book of the Events of the Kings of Israel. In that account they wrote about his army's victories, and their war with the army of King Amaziah of Judah. ¹³ When Jehoash died, he was buried in Samaria where the other kings of Israel were buried. Then his son Jeroboam be-

came king.

¹⁴ Then Elisha became very ill. Just before he died, King Joash went to Elisha and cried in front of him. Saying the same words that Elisha had said when Elijah was taken to heaven, he said, “My father! The chariots of us Israelite people and their drivers are taking my master away!”

¹⁵ Elisha said to him, “Bring to me a bow and some arrows!” So the king did that. ¹⁶ Then Elisha told the king to put his hands on the bow and prepare to shoot some arrows. And then Elisha put his own hands on the king’s hands.

¹⁷ Then Elisha told him, “Have someone open that window toward the east.” So a servant opened it. Then Elisha said, “Shoot!” So the king did. Then Elisha said, “That is the arrow that indicates that your army will defeat the Aramean army. Your army will completely defeat their army at the city of Aphek.”

¹⁸ Then Elisha said, “Pick up the other arrows and strike the ground with them!” So the king picked up the arrows and struck the ground three times. ¹⁹ But Elisha was angry with him. He exclaimed, “You should have struck the ground five or six times! If you had done that, your army would have defeated the Aramean army until they were completely wiped out! But now, because you struck the ground only three times, your army will defeat them only three times!”

²⁰ Then Elisha died and was buried.

Groups of raiders from Moab came to Israel each year during spring. ²¹ One year, when some Israelite people were burying a man’s body, they saw a group of those raiders. They were afraid, so quickly they threw that man’s body into the grave where Elisha had been buried, and they ran away.

But as soon as the man’s body touched Elisha’s bones, the dead man became alive again and jumped up!

²² King Hazael of Aram sent soldiers to oppress the Israelite people during all the years that Jehoahaz ruled Judah. ²³ But Yahweh was very kind to the Israelite people. He helped them because of the covenant that he had made with their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He would not get rid of the Israelites, and he still has not rejected them.

²⁴ When Hazael the king of Aram died, his son Ben Hadad became the king. ²⁵ The army of King Jehoash of Israel defeated the army of King Ben Hadad three times; they also recaptured the cities that Ben Hadad’s army had seized during the time that Jehoash’s father Jehoahaz was ruling Israel.

Chapter 14

¹ After Jehoash had been ruling Israel for almost two years, Joash’s son Amaziah became the king of Judah. ² He was twenty-five years old when he started to rule, and he ruled in Jerusalem for twenty-nine years. His mother was Jehoaddin. She was from Jerusalem. ³ Amaziah did many things that pleased Yahweh, but he did not do as many things that pleased Yahweh as King David had done. He did some of the good things that his father Joash had done.

⁴ But, like his father, he did not tear down the other places for worshiping Yahweh. The people continued to burn incense to honor Yahweh in those place instead of in Jerusalem, the place that Yahweh had appointed.

⁵ As soon as he was completely in control of his kingdom, he made his servants execute the officials who had murdered

his father. ⁶ But he did not tell his servants to execute those officials' children. He obeyed what was written in the laws that God gave to Moses, "Parents must not be executed for the crimes committed by their parents. People must be executed only for the sins that they themselves have committed."

⁷ Amaziah's soldiers killed ten thousand soldiers of the Edom people group in the Valley of Salt south of the Dead Sea, and they captured the city of Sela and gave it a new name, Joktheel. That is still its name.

⁸ Then Amaziah sent messengers to King Jehoash of Israel, saying, "Come here and let us and our armies fight each other in battle."

⁹ But King Jehoash replied with this parable to King Amaziah: "Once a thornbush growing in the mountains in Lebanon sent a message to a cedar tree, saying, 'Give your daughter to my son in order that he may marry her.' But a wild animal in Lebanon passed by the thornbush and trampled it." ¹⁰ The meaning of what I am saying is that your army has defeated the army of Edom, so now you have become very proud. But you should be content with defeating the people of Edom; you should allow your soldiers to stay at home. If you cause trouble by fighting against us, you will surely cause a disaster to happen to you and to your people."

¹¹ But Amaziah refused to pay attention to Jehoash's message. So Jehoash and Amaziah led their armies to Beth Shemesh in Judah, and it was there that their armies came together to fight each other.

¹² The Israelite army defeated the army of Judah, and all the soldiers of Judah fled and ran back home. ¹³ Jehoash's army also captured King Amaziah there, and they also marched to Jerusalem and tore down the wall that was around the city, from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate.

That was a section of wall about 180 meters long. ¹⁴ Jehoash's soldiers seized all the gold and silver that they found, all the objects that were in the temple, and all the valuable things that were in the palace; they took them to Samaria. They also took to Samaria some prisoners to make sure that Amaziah would cause them no more trouble.

¹⁵ If you want to know about all the other things that Jehoash did when he was king, including when he and his army fought against the army of King Amaziah of Judah, they are written in Book of the Events of the Kings of Israel. ¹⁶ Jehoash died, and he was buried in Samaria, where the other kings of Israel had been buried. Then his son Jeroboam became the king.

¹⁷ Amaziah, the king of Judah, lived for fifteen more years after Jehoash, the king of Israel, died. ¹⁸ If you want to know more about everything else that Amaziah did, it is written in Book of the Events of the Kings of Judah.

¹⁹ Some people in Jerusalem plotted against him, so he fled to the city of Lachish. But they followed him there and killed him. ²⁰ They took his corpse back to Jerusalem and buried it where his ancestors had been buried, in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David.

²¹ Then all the people of Judah appointed Azariah, whose father was Amaziah, to be their king. He became king when he was sixteen years. ²² After Amaziah's father Amaziah died, Azariah's army captured the city of Elath, and it came under the control of Judah again.

²³ When Amaziah had been ruling Judah for almost fifteen years, Jeroboam became the king of Israel. He ruled in the city of Samaria for forty-one years. ²⁴ He did many things that Yahweh said were evil. He did not stop committing the same

kind of sins that Jeroboam son of Nebat, had committed, sins that had induced the Israelite people to sin also. ²⁵ Jeroboam's soldiers conquered again some of the territory that had previously belonged to Israel, from the city of Hamath in the north to the Dead Sea in the south. That is what Yahweh, the God whom the Israelites worshiped, promised the prophet Jonah son of Amittai, from the city of Gath Hepher, would happen.

²⁶ That happened because Yahweh saw that the Israelites' enemies were causing the Israelites to suffer very much. And there was absolutely no one who would help them. ²⁷ But Yahweh said that he would not destroy Israel completely, so he enabled King Jeroboam to rescue them.

²⁸ If you want to know more about everything else that Jeroboam did, about how he courageously fought in battle, and about how he enabled the Israelites to capture again the cities of Damascus and Hamath, they are written in the book of the events of the Kings of Israel. ²⁹ Jeroboam died, and was buried where the other kings of Israel were buried, and his son Zechariah became the king.

Chapter 15

¹ After Jeroboam had been ruling Israel for almost twenty-seven years, Azariah, son of Amaziah king of Judah, began to rule. ² He was sixteen years old when he started to rule, and he ruled in Jerusalem for fifty-two years. His mother was Jeholiah. She was from Jerusalem. ³ He did things that Yahweh was pleased with, as his father Amaziah had done. ⁴ But the high places where the people continued to practice idolatry were not destroyed. They continued to burn incense as they worshiped their idols.

⁵ Yahweh caused Azariah to become a leper. Azariah was a leper all the remaining years that he lived. He was not allowed to live in the palace. He lived alone in a house, and his son Jotham ruled the land.

⁶ If you want to know about everything else that Azariah did, it is written in the book of the events of the Kings of Judah. ⁷ Azariah died and they buried him in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David, where his ancestors had been buried. Then his son Jotham became the king.

⁸ After Azariah had been ruling Judah for almost thirty-eight years, Zechariah son of Jeroboam, became the king of Israel. He ruled in the city of Samaria for only six months. ⁹ He did many things that Yahweh said were evil, like his ancestors had done. He committed the same kind of sins that the first Jeroboam had committed, sins that had induced the Israelite people to sin.

¹⁰ Then Shallum son of Jabesh, made plans to assassinate Zechariah. He killed him in the city of Ibleam, and then he became the king. ¹¹ Everything else that Zechariah did is written in the book of the events of the Kings of Israel. ¹² When Zechariah died, the dynasty of King Jehu was finished. This fulfilled what Yahweh said to King Jehu would happen, "Your son and grandson and great-grandson and great-great-grandson will all be kings of Israel."

¹³ Shallum son of Jabesh, became the king of Israel after King Amaziah had been ruling Judah for almost thirty-nine years. But Shallum ruled in Samaria for only one month. ¹⁴ Then Menahem son of Gadi, went up from the city of Tirzah to Samaria and assassinated Shallum. Then Menahem became the king of Israel.

¹⁵ Everything else that Shallum did, in-

cluding his killing King Zechariah, is written in the book of the events of the Kings of Israel.

¹⁶ At that time Menahem completely destroyed the city of Tiphseh and killed all the people who lived there and in the surrounding territory from Tirzah on. He did that because the people in the city refused to surrender to him. With his sword he even ripped open the bellies of pregnant women who lived there.

¹⁷ When King Azariah had been ruling Judah for almost thirty-nine years, Menahem son of Gadi, became the king of Israel. He ruled in Samaria for ten years. ¹⁸ He did many things that Yahweh said were evil. He committed the same kind of sins that King Jeroboam had committed, sins that induced the people of Israel to sin. He continued to commit those sins all during the years that he lived.

¹⁹ Then Pul (also known as Tiglath-Pileser) king of Assyria came with his army to attack Israel. So Menahem gave him about thirty-three metric tons of silver in order that the king of Assyria would help Menahem to continue to be king and rule his country more strongly. ²⁰ Menahem obtained that money from the rich men in Israel. He compelled each of them to contribute three-fifths of a kilogram of silver. So Tiglath-Pileser took that money and went back home.

²¹ If you want to know more about everything that Menahem did, it is written in the book of the events of the Kings of Israel. ²² Menahem died and was buried, and his son Pekahiah became the king of Israel.

²³ When King Azariah had been ruling Judah for almost fifty years, Menahem's son Pekahiah became the king of Israel. He ruled in Samaria for only two years. ²⁴ He did many things that Yahweh said were

evil. He committed the same kind of sins that King Jeroboam had committed, sins that induced the people of Israel to sin. ²⁵ Then one of Pekahiah's army commanders whose name was Pekah son of Remaliah, planned with fifty men, from the region of Gilead to kill Pekahiah and two of his assistants, Argob and Arieah. They assassinated the king in a fortified place in the king's palace in Samaria. Then Pekah became the king.

²⁶ Everything else that Pekahiah did is written in the book of the events of the Kings of Israel.

²⁷ When King Azariah had been ruling Judah for almost fifty-two years, Pekah son of Remaliah, became the king of Israel. He ruled in Samaria for twenty years. ²⁸ He also did many things that Yahweh said were evil. He committed the same kind of sins that King Jeroboam had committed, sins that induced the people of Israel to sin.

²⁹ While Pekah was the king, Tiglath-Pileser, the king of Assyria, came with his army and captured the cities of Ijon, Abel of Beth Maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, and the regions of Gilead, Galilee, and Naphtali. His army forced the Israelite people to leave their country and go to live in Assyria.

³⁰ Then Hoshea son of Elah, planned to kill Pekah. He assassinated him when Amaziah's son Jotham had been ruling Judah for almost twenty years. Then Hoshea became the king of Israel.

³¹ Everything else that Pekah did is written in the book of the events of the Kings of Israel.

³² When Pekah had been ruling Israel for almost two years, Azariah's son Jotham began to rule Judah. ³³ He was twenty-five years old when he started to rule, and he ruled from Jerusalem for sixteen years.

His mother was Jerusha, the daughter of Zadok. ³⁴ He did many things that pleased Yahweh, as his father Azariah had done. ³⁵ But he did not destroy the places where the people worshiped Yahweh, and the people continued to burn incense there to honor Yahweh. Jotham's workers built the Upper Gate of the temple.

³⁶ If you want to know more about everything else that Jotham did, it is written in the book of the events of the Kings of Judah. ³⁷ It was during the time that Jotham was the king that Yahweh sent King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah of Israel with their armies to attack Judah. ³⁸ Jotham died and was buried where his ancestors had been buried in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David. Then his son Ahaz became the king of Judah.

Chapter 16

¹ When Pekah had been ruling Israel for almost seventeen years, Ahaz son of Jotham, became the king of Judah. ² He was twenty years old when he became the king of Judah. He ruled from Jerusalem for sixteen years. He did not do things that pleased Yahweh his God, good things like his ancestor King David had done. ³ Instead, he was as sinful as the kings of Israel had been. He even sacrificed his son to be an offering to idols. That imitated the disgusting things that the people who previously lived there had done, people whom Yahweh had driven out as the Israelites were advancing through the land. ⁴ He offered sacrifices and burned incense to honor Yahweh at many different places, including on the tops of many hills and under many big trees, instead of in Jerusalem as Yahweh had commanded.

⁵ Then King Rezin of Aram, came along

with his army, and at that time Pekah (who was the son of King Remaliah of Israel) also came along with his army, and together their armies came up to attack Jerusalem, but King Ahaz led a fight to defend the city. The armies surrounded the city, but they could not conquer it. ⁶ It was at that time that the army that was commanded by King Rezin of Aram drove out the people of Judah who were living in the city of Elath, and the city came under the control of the Arameans. This was the time when some people from Aram began to live in Elath, and they are still living there.

⁷ King Ahaz sent messengers to King Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria, to tell this message to him: "I promise that I will completely do what you tell me to do, as though I were your son. Please come and rescue us from the armies of Aram and Israel who are attacking my country." ⁸ Ahaz took the silver and gold that was in the palace and in the temple and sent it to Assyria to be a present for the king of Assyria. ⁹ So Tiglath-Pileser did what Ahaz requested. His army marched to Damascus and captured it, and they took the people of Damascus as prisoners to live in the capital city of Assyria.

¹⁰ When King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet King Tiglath-Pileser, he saw the altar that was there. So he sent to Uriah, the high priest in Jerusalem, a drawing of the altar and a model that represented exactly the altar in Damascus. ¹¹ So Uriah built an altar in Jerusalem following the drawing that King Ahaz had sent. Uriah finished the altar before Ahaz returned to Jerusalem from Damascus. ¹² When the king returned from Damascus, he saw the altar. ¹³ He went up to it and burned animal sacrifices and a flour offering on it. He also poured a wine offering on it and threw on it the blood of the offerings to

promise friendship with God. ¹⁴ The old bronze altar that had been dedicated long ago to Yahweh was between the new altar and the temple, so Ahaz moved it to the north side of his new altar.

¹⁵ Then King Ahaz ordered Uriah: “Each morning put on this new altar the sacrifices that the priests will burn completely, and in the evening put on it the flour offering, along with my offering and the offerings that the people bring, ones that they will burn completely, and my flour offering and the people’s grain and wine offerings. Pour against the sides of the altar the blood of all the animals that are sacrificed. But the old bronze altar will be only for me to use for divination.” ¹⁶ So Uriah did what the king commanded him to do.

¹⁷ King Ahaz told his workers to take off the frames of the carts that were outside the temple and to take down the basins that were on them. They also took down the large bronze tank called “The Sea” and removed it from the backs of the bronze statues of the oxen and put it on a stone foundation. ¹⁸ Then to please the king of Assyria, Ahaz had them remove from the temple the roof under which the people walked into the temple on the Sabbath day, and closed up the private entrance into the temple for the kings of Judah.

¹⁹ If you want to know about the other things that Ahaz did, they are written in the book of the events of the Kings of Judah. ²⁰ Ahaz died, and he was buried in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David, where his ancestors had been buried. Then his son Hezekiah became the king.

Chapter 17

¹ Elah’s son Hoshea began to rule Israel after King Ahaz had ruled Judah for twelve

years. Hoshea ruled in Samaria for nine years. ² He did many things that Yahweh said were evil, but he did not do as many evil things as the previous kings of Israel had done—the ones who had ruled Israel previously.

³ The army of King Shalmaneser of Assyria attacked and defeated the army of King Hoshea. As a result, the Israelites were forced to pay much tribute to Assyria each year. ⁴ But several years later, Hoshea secretly planned to rebel against the rulers of Assyria. He sent messengers to So, king of Egypt, asking if his army could help the Israelites fight against Assyria. Hoshea also stopped paying the tribute that he had been paying Assyria every year. But the king of Assyria found out about those things, so he told his officers to put Hoshea in prison. ⁵ Then he brought the army of Assyria to Israel, and they attacked everywhere in that land. His army besieged the city of Samaria for three years. ⁶ Finally, after King Hoshea had been ruling Israel for nine years, the army of Assyria forcefully entered the city and captured the people. They took the Israelite people to Assyria and forced some of them to live in the city of Halah. They forced others to live near the Habor River in the district of Gozan. They forced others to live in the towns where the Mede people group lived.

⁷ Those things happened because the Israelite people had sinned against Yahweh their God. He had rescued their ancestors from the power of the king of Egypt and brought them safely out of Egypt, but later they began to worship other gods. ⁸ They imitated the things that the pagan peoples around them practiced. Those were the very peoples that Yahweh had driven out as the Israelites occupied their land. The people of Israel also did the evil things that most of the kings of Israel showed

them. ⁹ The Israelite people also secretly did many things that were not pleasing to Yahweh their God. They built places to worship their idols on the hills around all their cities, including small towns and big cities with walls around them. ¹⁰ They set up stone pillars to honor gods, and poles to worship the goddess Asherah at the top of every high hill and under every big tree. ¹¹ The Israelites burned incense in every place where they worshiped those gods, just like the peoples who lived there previously had done—the groups that Yahweh had driven out from the land. The Israelites did many wicked things that caused Yahweh to become angry. ¹² Yahweh warned them many times that they should not worship idols, but they did it anyway. ¹³ Yahweh frequently sent his prophets and seers to warn the people of Israel and the people of Judah. The message that Yahweh gave them was, “Stop doing all the evil things you have been doing. Obey my commands and my laws, the laws that I told your ancestors to obey and that I told the prophets who served me to tell to you again.”

¹⁴ But the Israelite people would not pay attention. They were stubborn, just as their ancestors were. Just as their ancestors did, they refused to trust in Yahweh their God. ¹⁵ They rejected Yahweh’s laws and the covenant that he had made with their ancestors. They ignored Yahweh’s warnings. They worshiped worthless idols and as a result they themselves became worthless. Although Yahweh had commanded them not to imitate the behavior of the peoples that lived near them, they disobeyed that command.

¹⁶ The Israelite people disobeyed all of Yahweh’s commands. They made two metal calves to worship. They set up two poles to worship the goddess Asherah, and they worshiped the god Baal, and the sun, the

moon, and the stars. ¹⁷ They also burned their own sons and daughters to be sacrifices to those gods. They went to fortune tellers and they practiced sorcery. They continually chose to do all kinds of evil things that caused Yahweh to become angry.

¹⁸ So because Yahweh was very angry with the Israelite people, he allowed their enemies to take them away from their country. Only the people of the tribe of Judah were left in the land. ¹⁹ But even the people of Judah did not obey the commands of Yahweh their God. They imitated the evil customs that the Israelites had introduced. ²⁰ So Yahweh rejected all the people of Israel and of Judah. He punished them by allowing the armies of other nations to defeat them and take them away. He got rid of all of them.

²¹ Earlier, when Yahweh had forced the ten tribes of Israel away from the rule of David’s descendants, those tribes had chosen Jeroboam son of Nebat, to be their king. Then Jeroboam enticed the people of Israel to stop worshiping Yahweh and to worship idols instead. He induced them to commit great sins. ²² And the Israelite people continued to do the evil things that Jeroboam introduced. They did not turn away from those sins, ²³ so finally Yahweh got rid of them. That was just what his prophets had warned would happen. The Israelite people were taken away to the land of Assyria, and they are still there.

²⁴ The king of Assyria ordered his soldiers to take groups of people from the cities of Babylon, Kuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim to the region of Samaria, and to resettle them in the cities there, to take the place of the Israelites who lived there previously. Those people took control over Samaria and lived in the cities of Samaria. ²⁵ But those people who came from other countries did not worship Yah-

weh when they first arrived in Samaria. So Yahweh sent lions to kill some of them.

²⁶ Then those people sent a message to the king of Assyria. They wrote, "We people who have resettled in the towns of Samaria do not know how to worship the God that the Israelites worshiped in this land. So he has sent lions among us to kill us, because we have not worshiped him correctly."

²⁷ When the king of Assyria read this letter, he commanded his officers, "Send one of the priests whom you brought here from Samaria to go back there. Tell him to teach the people who are now living there how to worship correctly the God whom the Israelites worshiped in that land." ²⁸ So the officers did that. They sent one of the Israelite priests back to Samaria. That priest went to live in the city of Bethel, and he taught the people there how to worship Yahweh.

²⁹ But all those people continued to make their own idols. They took their idols and placed them in the houses that the Samaritan people had built upon the hills all around. Each group of people made their own gods that they worshiped, and each of the gods had a name. ³⁰ The people from Babylon made idols to represent their god Succoth Benoth. The people from Kuthah made idols to represent their god Nergal. The people from Hamath made idols to represent their god Ashima. ³¹ The people from Avva made idols to represent their gods Nibhaz and Tartak. The people from Sepharvaim sacrificed their own children. They completely burned them on altars to be offerings to their gods Adrammelek and Anammelek. ³²

But those people also worshiped Yahweh, but they also appointed from among their own groups many people to be priests at the places where idols were worshiped on the hills, and these priests could would

offer sacrifices for them upon the high places.

³³ So they revered Yahweh, but they also worshiped their own gods, just as their people living in their home countries did.

³⁴ These people in Samaria still keep their old customs. They really do not worship Yahweh, and they do not obey all the laws and decrees that Yahweh gave to the descendants of Jacob, to whom he gave the new name Israel. ³⁵ Yahweh had previously made an covenant with the ancestors of Israel, commanding them not to worship other gods or bow down to honor them or do other things to please them or offer sacrifices to them. ³⁶ He had said to them, "You must have a sincere respect for me, Yahweh, the one who brought you out of Egypt with my very great power. I am the one whom you must bow down to honor, and I am the one to whom you must offer sacrifices. ³⁷ You must always obey the laws and decrees that I told Moses to write for you. You must not worship other gods. ³⁸ And you must not forget the covenant that I made with your ancestors. You must not fear or respect other gods. ³⁹ Instead, you must have a sincere respect for me, Yahweh, your God. If you do that, I will rescue you from the power of all your enemies."

⁴⁰ But, the Israelites refused to pay attention to what Yahweh said. Instead, they continued to adhere to their old customs. ⁴¹ So, those people worshiped Yahweh, but they also worshiped their idols. And their descendants still do the same thing.

Chapter 18

¹ After King Hoshea had been ruling Israel for almost three years, Hezekiah son of Ahaz, began to rule Judah. ² He was twenty-five years old when he became

the king of Judah and he ruled from Jerusalem for twenty-nine years. His mother was Abijah, the daughter of a man whose name was Zechariah. ³ Hezekiah did things that Yahweh said are right, like his ancestor King David had done. ⁴ He destroyed the places where people worshiped Yahweh, and he broke into pieces the poles for worshiping the goddess Asherah. He also broke into pieces the bronze replica of a snake that Moses had made. He did that because the people had named it Nehushtan, and they were burning incense in front of it to honor it.

⁵ Hezekiah trusted in Yahweh, the God whom the Israelites worshiped. There was no king who ruled Judah before him or after him who was as devoted to Yahweh as he was. ⁶ He remained loyal to Yahweh and never disobeyed him. He carefully obeyed all the commandments that Yahweh had given to Moses. ⁷ Yahweh always helped Hezekiah. He was successful in everything he did. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and refused to do what the king of Assyria wanted him to do. ⁸ His army defeated the soldiers of Philistia as far south as the city of Gaza and the nearby villages. They conquered the entire area, from the smallest village with only a watchtower to the largest cities surrounded by walls.

⁹ After King Hezekiah had been ruling Judah for almost four years, and when King Hoshea had been ruling Israel for almost seven years, the army of King Shalmaneser of Assyria invaded Israel and surrounded the city of Samaria. ¹⁰ In the third year they captured the city. That was when Hezekiah had been ruling Judah for almost six years, and when Hoshea had been ruling Israel for almost nine years. ¹¹ The king of Assyria commanded that the people of Israel be taken to Assyria. Some of them were taken

to the city of Halah, some were taken to a place near the Habor River in the region of Gozan, and some were taken to cities where the Mede people group live. ¹² That happened because the Israelites did not obey Yahweh their God. They had disobeyed the covenant that Yahweh had made with their ancestors, and all the laws that Moses, the man who served Yahweh very well, had told them to obey. They would not obey those laws. They would not even listen to them.

¹³ After King Hezekiah had been ruling Judah for almost fourteen years, the army of King Sennacherib of Assyria attacked all the cities in Judah that had walls around them. They did not capture Jerusalem, but they captured all the other cities. ¹⁴ King Hezekiah sent a message to Sennacherib, while Sennacherib was in the city of Lachish, saying, "What I have done was wrong. Please tell your soldiers to stop attacking us. If you do that, I will pay you whatever you tell me to." So the king of Assyria said that Hezekiah must pay to him 10,000 kilograms (or about ten metric tons) of silver and 1,000 kilograms (about one metric ton) of gold.

¹⁵ So Hezekiah gave to him all the silver that was in the temple and that was stored in his palace.

¹⁶ Hezekiah's men also stripped the gold from the doors of the temple and the gold that he himself had put on the doorposts, and he sent all that gold to the king of Assyria. ¹⁷ But the king of Assyria sent a large army with some of his important officials from the city of Lachish to persuade King Hezekiah to surrender. When they arrived at Jerusalem, they stood alongside the aqueduct in which water flows from the upper pool into Jerusalem, near the road to the field where the women wash clothes. ¹⁸ They sent a message requesting King Hezekiah to come to them, but

the king sent three of his officials to talk to them. He sent Hilkiyah's son Eliakim, who supervised the palace, Shebna, the official secretary, and Asaph's son Joah, who communicated the king's messages to the people.

¹⁹ One of Sennacherib's important officials told them to take this message to Hezekiah:

"This is what the king of Assyria, the great king, says: 'What are you trusting in to rescue you?' ²⁰ You say that you have weapons to fight us and that some country has promised to help you, but that is only talk. Who do you think will help you to rebel against my soldiers from Assyria? ²¹ Listen to me! You are relying on the army of Egypt. But that is like using a broken reed for a walking stick on which you could lean. It would pierce the hand of anyone who would lean on it! That is what the king of Egypt would be like for anyone who relied on him for help. ²² But perhaps you will say to me, 'No, we are relying on Yahweh our God to help us.' I would reply, 'Is he not the one whom you insulted by tearing down his houses on the hills where the idols were worshiped and the altars on which you offered sacrifices, forcing everyone in Jerusalem and other places in Judah to worship only in front of the altar in Jerusalem?'"

²³ So I suggest that you make a deal between you and my master, the king of Assyria. I will give you two thousand horses, but I do not think that you are able to find two thousand of your men who can ride on them! ²⁴ You are hoping that the king of Egypt will send chariots and men riding horses to assist you. But they certainly would not be able to defeat even the most unimportant official in my army! ²⁵ Furthermore, do you think that we have come to destroy Jerusalem without Yahweh's help? It is Yahweh himself who told

us to come here and destroy this land!"

²⁶ Then Eliakim, Shebna and Joah said to the official from Assyria, "Sir, please speak to us in your Aramaic language, because we understand it. Do not speak to us in our Hebrew language, because the people who are standing on the wall will understand it and be frightened."

²⁷ But the official replied, "Do you think that my master sent me to say these things only to you and not to the people who are standing on the wall? If you reject this message, the people in this city will soon need to eat their own dung and drink their own urine, just like you will, because there will be nothing more for you to eat or drink."

²⁸ Then the official stood up and shouted in the Hebrew language to the people sitting on the wall. He said, "Listen this message from the great king, the king of Assyria. He says this: ²⁹ 'Do not allow Hezekiah to deceive you. He will not be able to rescue you from my power. ³⁰ Do not allow him to persuade you to rely on Yahweh, saying that Yahweh will rescue you, and that the army of Assyria will never capture this city!'"

³¹ Do not pay attention to what Hezekiah says! This is what the king of Assyria says: 'Come out of the city and surrender to me. If you do that, I will arrange for each of you to drink the juice from your own grapevines, and to eat figs from your own trees, and to drink water from your own wells. ³² You will be able to do that until we come and take you to a land that is like your land—a land where there is grain to make bread and vineyards to produce grapes for making wine. It will be a land that has plenty of olive trees and honey.' If you do what the king of Assyria commands, you will not die. You will continue to live.

Do not allow Hezekiah to persuade you to trust in Yahweh, saying that he will rescue you! ³³ The gods that people of other nations worship have never rescued them from the power of the king of Assyria! ³⁴ Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah? Did any of their gods deliver Samaria out of my hand? ³⁵ None of these gods kept their people from being destroyed by the king of Assyria. Do you think your God Yahweh, can do any better?

³⁶ But the people who were listening were silent. No one said anything, because King Hezekiah had told them, "When the official from Assyria talks to you, do not answer him."

³⁷ Then Eliakim and Shebna and Joah went back to Hezekiah with their clothes torn because they were extremely distressed, and they told him what the official from Assyria had said.

Chapter 19

¹ When King Hezekiah heard what they reported, he tore his clothes and put on clothes made of rough cloth because he was very distressed. Then he went to the temple to ask God what to do. ² Then he summoned Eliakim and Shebna and the older priests, who were also wearing clothes made of rough sackcloth, and told them to talk to Isaiah the prophet, son of Amoz. ³ He said to them to say these things to Isaiah: "King Hezekiah says that this is a day when we have great distress. Other nations are causing us to be insulted and disgraced like a woman who is about to give birth to a child, but she is not strong enough to do it. ⁴ Perhaps Yahweh our God has heard everything that the official from Assyria said. Perhaps

he knows that his master, the king of Assyria, sent him to insult the all-powerful God and that Yahweh will punish him for what he said. And Hezekiah requests that you pray for the few of us who are still alive here in Jerusalem."

⁵ When the messengers from Hezekiah came to Isaiah, and ⁶ Isaiah instructed them to go back to their master and tell him what Yahweh says: "Those messengers from the king of Assyria have said evil things about me. But you should not be disturbed because of what they said. ⁷ Listen to this: I will cause Sennacherib to hear a rumor that will worry him, that other armies are about to attack his country. So he will return to his own country, and there I will cause him to be assassinated by some men."

⁸ The official from Assyria found out that the King of Assyria and his army had left the city of Lachish, and that they were attacking Libnah, which was a nearby city. So the official went there to report to him what had happened in Jerusalem.

⁹ Soon after that, King Sennacherib received a report that King Tirhakah of Ethiopia was leading his army to attack them. But before King Sennacherib left Libnah to fight against the army from Ethiopia, he sent other messengers to King Hezekiah with a letter. ¹⁰ In the letter he wrote this to Hezekiah: "Do not allow your god on whom you are relying to deceive you by promising that my army will never capture Jerusalem. ¹¹ You have certainly heard what the armies of the kings of Assyria have done to all the other countries. Our armies have completely destroyed them. So do you think that you will escape? ¹² Did the gods of the nations that were about to be destroyed by the armies of the previous kings of Assyria rescue them? Did those gods rescue the people in the region of Gozan or in the

cities of Haran and Rezeph in northern Aram? Did they rescue the people of Eden who had been deported to the city of Tel Assar? None of the gods of those cities was able to rescue them. ¹³ What happened to the kings of the cities of Hamath, Arpad, Sepharvaim, and Ivvah? They are all dead."

¹⁴ Hezekiah received the letter that the messengers gave him, and he read it. Then he went up to the temple and spread out the letter in front of Yahweh. ¹⁵ Then Hezekiah prayed this: "Yahweh, the God to whom we Israelites belong, you are seated on your throne above the statues of creatures with wings, above the sacred chest. Only you are truly God. You rule all the kingdoms on this earth. You are the one who created everything on the earth and in the sky. ¹⁶ So, Yahweh, please listen to what I am saying, and look at what is happening. And listen to what King Sennacherib has said to insult you, the all-powerful God.

¹⁷ Yahweh, it is true that the armies of the kings of Assyria have completely destroyed many nations and ruined their lands. ¹⁸ And they have thrown the idols of those nations into fires and burned them. But that was not difficult to do, because they were not gods. They were only statues made of wood and stone, idols that were shaped by humans, and that is why they were destroyed easily. ¹⁹ So now, Yahweh our God, please rescue us from the power of the king of Assyria, in order that the people in all the kingdoms of the world may know that you, Yahweh, are the only one who is truly God."

²⁰ Then Isaiah sent this message to Hezekiah to tell him what Yahweh, the God to whom the Israelites belonged, said in response: "I have heard what you prayed to me about Sennacherib, the king of Assyria. ²¹ This is what I say to that king:

The people of Jerusalem
despise you and make fun of you.
They wag their heads
to mock you.

²² Who do you think that you were despising and ridiculing?

Who do you think you were shouting at?

Who do you think you were looking at very proudly?

It was I, the holy God whom the Israelites worship.

²³ The messengers whom you sent made fun of me.

You said, 'With my many chariots

I have gone to the highest mountains,
to the highest mountains in Lebanon.
We have cut down its tallest cedar trees
and its best cedar trees.

We have been to the most distant peaks
and to its densest forests.

²⁴ We have dug wells in other countries
and drunk water from them.

And by marching through the streams of Egypt,

we dried them all up!

²⁵ But I reply, 'Have you never heard that long ago

I planned that those things would happen?

I planned it long ago,
and now I have been causing it to occur.

I planned that your army
would have the power to capture many cities
that were surrounded by high walls,

and cause them to become piles of rubble.

²⁶ The people who lived in those cities have no power,

and as a result they became dismayed and discouraged.

They are as frail as plants and grass in the fields,

as frail as grass that grows on the roofs of houses

and is scorched before it can grow tall.

²⁷ But I know everything about you.

I know when you are in your house
and when you go outside;

I also know that you are raging against me.

²⁸ So, because you have raged against me,

and because I have heard you do this,
it will be as though I will put a hook in your nose,

and I will put an iron bit in your mouth,

in order that I can take you where I want you to go.

I will force you to return to your own country

on the same road on which you came here,

without conquering Jerusalem.'

²⁹ Now I say this to Hezekiah:

'This is what will happen to prove that I am telling the truth:

This year and next year you and your people

will be able to harvest only wild grain.

But the following year, you Israelites will be able

to plant grain and harvest it,

and to plant vineyards and eat the grapes.

³⁰ The people in Judah who remain alive will prosper

and have many children;

they will be like plants whose roots go deep down into the ground

and which produce much fruit.

³¹ There will be many people in Jerusalem

who will remain alive,

because I, Yahweh, commander of the armies,

have planned it to happen.

³² So this is what I, Yahweh, say

about the king of Assyria:

"His armies will not enter this city;

they will not even shoot any arrows into it.

His soldiers will not march outside the city gates carrying shields,

and they will not even build high mounds of earth

against the city walls

to enable them to attack the city.

³³ Their king will return to his own country

on the same road on which he came here.

He will not enter this city.

That will happen because I, Yahweh, have said it!

³⁴ I will defend this city and prevent it from being destroyed.

I will do this for the sake of my own reputation

and because of what I promised to King David,

who served me well.”

³⁵ That night, an angel from Yahweh went out to where the army of Assyria had put up their tents, and killed 185,000 of their soldiers. When the rest of the soldiers woke up the next morning, they saw that there were corpses everywhere. ³⁶ Then King Sennacherib left and went home to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria.

³⁷ One day, when he was worshiping in the temple of his god Nisrok, his two sons, Adrammelek and Sharezer, killed him with their swords. Then they escaped and went to the region of Ararat, northwest of Nineveh. And another of Sennacherib's sons, Esarhaddon, became the king of Assyria.

Chapter 20

¹ About that time, Hezekiah became very ill. He thought that he was about to die. Isaiah the prophet came to him and said, “This is what Yahweh says: ‘You should tell the people in your palace what you want them to do after you die, because you are not going to recover from this illness. You are going to die.’”

² Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall and prayed this: ³ “Yahweh, do not forget that I have always served you faithfully with all my inner being, and I have done things that pleased you.” Then Hezekiah started to cry loudly.

⁴ Isaiah left the king, but before he had crossed the middle courtyard of the palace, Yahweh gave him a message. ⁵ He said, “Go back to Hezekiah, the ruler of

my people, and say to him, ‘I, Yahweh, the God whom your ancestor King David worshiped, have heard what you prayed. And I have seen your tears. So, listen, I am going to heal you. Two days from now you will be able to go up to my temple. ⁶ I will enable you to live for fifteen more years. And I will rescue you and this city again from the power of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city for the sake of my own reputation and because of what I promised King David, who served me well.’”

⁷ Isaiah returned to the palace and told Hezekiah what Yahweh had said. Then he said to Hezekiah's servants, “Bring a paste made of boiled figs. Put some of it on his boils, and he will get well.” The servants did that, and the king recovered.

⁸ Then Hezekiah replied to Isaiah, “What will Yahweh do to prove that he will heal me and that two days from now I will be able to go up to the temple?”

⁹ Isaiah replied, “Yahweh will do something that will prove to you that he will do what he promised. Do you want him to cause the shadow on the stairway to go back ten steps or to go forward ten steps?”

¹⁰ Hezekiah replied, “It is easy for the shadow to move forward, because that is what it always does. Ask Yahweh to make it move backward ten steps on the stairway that King Ahaz ordered his servants to build.”

¹¹ So Isaiah prayed earnestly to Yahweh, and Yahweh caused the shadow to go backward ten steps.

¹² At that time, King Marduk-Baladan son of Baladan, the previous king of Babylonia, heard a report that King Hezekiah had been very sick. So he wrote some letters and gave them to some messengers to take to Hezekiah, along with a

gift. ¹³ When the messengers arrived, Hezekiah welcomed them gladly. Then he showed them all the treasure that was in his palace and treasuries—the silver and gold, the spices, the nice-smelling olive oil, and all the weapons for his soldiers. There were no valuable things in his storerooms or anywhere else in his kingdom that he did not show them.

¹⁴ Then the prophet Isaiah went to Hezekiah and asked him, “Where did those men come from, and what did they say to you?”

Hezekiah replied, “They came from a country very far from here. They came from Babylonia.”

¹⁵ Isaiah asked, “What did they see in your palace?”

Hezekiah replied, “They saw everything. I showed them absolutely everything that I own—all my valuable things.”

¹⁶ Isaiah knew that Hezekiah had done a very foolish thing. So Isaiah said to him, “Listen to what Yahweh says to you.

¹⁷ There will be a time when everything that is still in your palace, all the valuable things that were put there by you and your ancestors, will be carried away to Babylon. There will be nothing left here! That is what Yahweh says to you! ¹⁸ Furthermore, some of your own descendants will be forced to go there, and they will be castrated in order that they may become servants in the palace of the king of Babylon.”

¹⁹ Then Hezekiah replied to Isaiah, “The message from Yahweh that you have given to me is good.” He said that because he was thinking, “Even if that happens, there will be peace and security in Israel all during the remaining time that I remain alive.”

²⁰ If you want to know more about all the other things that Hezekiah did, about his

brave deeds in battle, about how he commanded his people to build a reservoir in the city and a tunnel to be dug to bring water into the reservoir, they are all written in the book of the events of the Kings of Judah. ²¹ Later Hezekiah died, and his son Manasseh became the king.

Chapter 21

¹ Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to rule. He ruled Judah for fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother was Hephzibah. ² He did many things that Yahweh said were evil. He imitated the disgusting things that were formerly done by the people of the nations that Yahweh had driven out from the land of Israel as his people advanced through the land. ³ He commanded his workers to rebuild the places of idol worship built on the hills. Those were the very high places that his father Hezekiah had destroyed. He directed his workers to build altars to offer sacrifices of living creatures to Baal. Manasseh made a statue of the goddess Asherah, as Ahab the king of Israel had done previously. And Manasseh worshiped the stars and he served them. ⁴ He directed his workers to build altars for worshiping foreign gods in the temple of Yahweh, even though Yahweh had said, “It is here in Jerusalem where I want people to worship me, forever.” ⁵ He directed that altars for worshiping the stars be built in both of the courtyards in the temple grounds. ⁶ He even sacrificed his own son and burned him in the fire. He performed rituals to practice sorcery and spells. He also went to people who consulted the spirits of dead people to find out what would happen in the future. He did many things that Yahweh said are extremely evil, things that caused Yahweh to become very angry.

⁷ He placed the statue of the goddess Asherah in the temple, the place about which Yahweh had said to David and his son Solomon, "My temple will be here in Jerusalem. This is the city that I have chosen from all the territory of the twelve tribes of Israel, where I want people to worship me forever." ⁸ And if the Israelite people obey all my commands and all the laws that I gave to Moses, the man who served me very well, I will not again force them to leave this land that I gave to their ancestors." ⁹ But the people did not pay attention to Yahweh. Manasseh persuaded them to commit sins that were more evil than the sins that were committed by the people of the nations that Yahweh had driven from the land as the Israelite people advanced.

¹⁰ These are some of the things that Yahweh said through his prophets. Many times Yahweh had given them these messages: ¹¹ "Manasseh, the king of Judah, has done these abominable things, things that are much worse than the things that the Amor people group did in this land long ago. He has lead the people of Judah to sin against Yahweh by worshiping the idols that he worshiped. ¹² Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh, the God whom you Israelite people worship, says to you: I am about to cause disaster to come to Jerusalem and the rest of Judah. It will be terrible, with the result that everyone who hears about it will be stunned. ¹³ I will judge and punish the people of Jerusalem as I punished the family of King Ahab of Israel. I will remove the people of Jerusalem as people wipe a plate clean and then turn it upside down to show that they are now satisfied. ¹⁴ And I will abandon the people who remain alive, and I will allow their enemies to conquer them and steal everything valuable from their land. ¹⁵ I will do this because my people have done things that I say are very

evil, things which have caused me to become very angry. They have caused me to become angry continually, ever since the time that their ancestors left Egypt."

¹⁶ Manasseh commanded his officials to kill many innocent people in Jerusalem, with the result that their blood flowed in the streets. He did this in addition to persuading the people of Judah to do many things that Yahweh said were evil.

¹⁷ If you want to know more about all the things that Manasseh did, they are written in the book of the events of the Kings of Judah. ¹⁸ Manasseh died and was buried in the garden outside his palace, the garden that Uzza had made. Then his son Amon became the king.

¹⁹ Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king. He ruled Judah from Jerusalem for only two years. His mother's name was Meshullemeth. She was from the city of Jotbah, and was the daughter of Haruz. ²⁰ He did many things that Yahweh said were evil, as his father Manasseh had done. ²¹ He imitated the behavior of his father, and he worshiped the same idols that his father had worshiped. ²² He abandoned Yahweh, the God whom his ancestors had worshiped, and did not behave as Yahweh wanted him to behave. ²³ Then one day some of his officials made plans to kill him. They assassinated him in the palace.

²⁴ But then the people of Judah killed all those who had assassinated King Amon, and they appointed his son Josiah to be their king.

²⁵ If you want to read about the other things that Amon did, they are written in the book of the events of the Kings of Judah. ²⁶ Amon was also buried in the tomb in the garden that Uzza had made. Then his son Josiah became the king.

Chapter 22

¹ Josiah was eight years old when he became the king of Judah. He ruled from Jerusalem for thirty-one years. His mother was Jedidah and his grandfather was Adaiah from the city of Bozkath. ² Josiah did things that were pleasing to Yahweh and conducted his life as his ancestor King David had done. He fully obeyed all the laws of God.

³ After Josiah had been ruling for almost eighteen years, he sent his secretary Shaphan son of Azaliah and grandson of Meshullam, to the temple with these instructions: ⁴ "Go to Hilkiah, the high priest, and tell him to give me a report, telling me how much money the men who guard the doors of the temple have collected from the people as offerings. ⁵ Then tell him to give all that money to the men who are supervising the work of repairing the temple. ⁶ They must give that money to the carpenters, the builders, and the masons, and they should also buy the timber and the stones that they will use to repair the temple." ⁷ But the men who supervise the work will not be required to make a report on the money that is given to them, saying what they spent it for, because those men are completely honest.

⁸ After Shaphan the king's secretary said that to Hilkiah, Hilkiah said to Shaphan, "I have found in the temple a scroll on which is written the laws that God gave to Moses!" Hilkiah gave the scroll to Shaphan, and he started to read it. ⁹ Then Shaphan took the scroll to the king and said to him, "Your temple guards have taken the money that was in the temple, and they have given it to the men who will supervise the work of repairing the temple." ¹⁰ Then Shaphan said to the king, "I have brought to you a scroll that Hilkiah gave to me." And Shaphan started to read

it to the king.

¹¹ When the king heard the laws that were written in the scroll that Shaphan was reading to him, he tore his clothes because he was very upset. ¹² Then he gave these instructions to Hilkiah, to Shaphan's son Ahikam, to Micaiah's son Akbor, and to Asaiah, the king's special advisor: ¹³ "Go and ask Yahweh for me and for all the people of Judah, about what is written in this scroll that has been found. Because it is clear that Yahweh is very angry with us because our ancestors disobeyed the things that are written on this scroll, things that we should have done."

¹⁴ So Hilkiah, Ahikam, Akbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to consult a woman whose name was Huldah, who was a prophetess who lived in the newer part of Jerusalem. Her husband Shallum son of Tikvah and grandson of Harhas, took care of the robes that were worn in the temple. Those five men told her about the scroll.

¹⁵ She then told them what Yahweh the God whom the Israelites worship says, "Yahweh has a message for the king who sent you to me, and this is what Yahweh says: ¹⁶ 'Listen to this carefully. I am going to bring a disaster on Jerusalem and all the people who live here, which is what was written in the scroll that the king has read. ¹⁷ I will do that because they have abandoned me, and they burn incense to honor other gods. They have caused me to become very angry by all the idols that they have made, and my anger is like a fire that will not be put out. ¹⁸ The king of Judah sent you to inquire what I, Yahweh, want him to do. This is what you should say to him, "You have paid attention to what was written in the scroll. ¹⁹ Also, you have repented and humbled yourself when you heard what I threatened to do to punish this city and the people who live here, I have heard what you prayed. I

said that I would cause this city to be abandoned. It will be a city whose name people will use when they curse someone. But because you tore your robes and wept in my presence, I have heard you. ²⁰ So I will allow you to die and be buried peacefully. I will cause a great disaster to come to this place, but you will not be alive to see it.”

After the men heard that, they returned to King Josiah and gave him that message.

Chapter 23

¹ Then the king summoned all the elders of Jerusalem and of the other places in Judah. ² They went together to the temple, along with the priests and the prophets, and many other people, from the most important people to the least important people. And while they listened, the king read to them all of the laws that Moses had written. He read from the scroll that had been found in the temple. ³ Then the king stood next to the pillar where the kings stood when they made important announcements, and, while Yahweh was listening, he repeated his promise to sincerely obey with his inner being the covenant. And all the people also promised to obey the covenant.

⁴ Then the king gave a command to Hilkiah, the high priest, to all the other priests who assisted him, and to the men who guarded the entrance to the temple. He told them to bring out from the temple all the items that people had been using to worship Baal, the goddess Asherah, and the stars. After they carried them out, they burned all those things outside the city in the Kidron Valley. Then they took all the ashes to Bethel. ⁵ There were many pagan priests whom the previous kings of Judah had appointed to burn incense on the altars scattered throughout

the region of Judah and to worship on the high places that were build on the hills. They had been offering sacrifices to Baal, to the sun, to the moon, the planets, and the stars. The king stopped them from doing those things. ⁶ He commanded that the statue of the goddess Asherah be taken out of the temple. Then they took it outside Jerusalem, down to the Kidron Valley, and burned it. Then they pounded the ashes to powder and scattered that over the graves of ordinary people. ⁷ He also took everything out of the rooms in the temple where the temple male prostitutes lived. That was where women wove robes that were used to worship the goddess Asherah.

⁸⁻⁹ Josiah also brought to Jerusalem all the priests who were offering sacrifices in the other cities of Judah. He also desecrated the places on the hills where the priests had burned incense to honor idols, from Geba in the north to Beersheba in the south. Those priests were not allowed to offer sacrifices in the temple, but they were allowed to eat the unleavened bread that the priests who worked in the temple ate. He also commanded that the altars that were near the gate built by Joshua, the mayor of Jerusalem, be destroyed. Those altars were at the left of the main gate into the city.

¹⁰ Josiah also desecrated the place named Topheth, in the Ben Hinnom Valley, in order that no one could offer his son or daughter there to be completely burned on the altar as a sacrifice to the god Molech. ¹¹ He also removed the horses that the previous kings of Judah had dedicated to worshiping the sun, and he burned the chariots that were used in that worship. Those horses and chariots were kept in the courtyard outside the temple, near the entrance to the temple, and near the room where one of Josiah's officials

lived, whose name was Nathan-Melek.

¹² Josiah also commanded his servants to tear down the altars that the previous kings of Judah had built on the palace roof, above the room where King Ahaz had stayed. They also tore down the altars that had been built by King Manasseh in the two courtyards outside the temple. He commanded that they be smashed to pieces and thrown down into the Kidron Valley. ¹³ He also commanded that the altars that King Solomon had built east of Jerusalem, south of the Mount of Olives—the so-called Mount of Corruption—be desecrated. Solomon had built them for the worship of the disgusting idols—the statue of the goddess Ash-toreth worshiped by the people in the city of Sidon, Chemosh the god of the Moab people group, and Molech the god of the Ammon people group. ¹⁴ They also broke into pieces the stone pillars that the Israelite people worshiped, and cut down the poles that honored the goddess Asherah, and they scattered the ground there with human bones to desecrate it.

¹⁵ Furthermore, he commanded them to tear down the place of worship that was near the city of Bethel, the very same place of worship that had been built by King Jeroboam (whose father was Nebat, the same man who made Israel to sin against Yahweh). Josiah led the people of Israel to tear down that altar that was on the high hill, and they also burned the wooden pole used in the worship of the idol that had the name “Asherah.” ¹⁶ Then Josiah looked around and saw some tombs on the hill. He commanded his men to take the bones out of those tombs and burn them on the altar. By doing that, he desecrated the altar. These events were predicted many years before when Yahweh gave his word to Israel by his prophet.

¹⁷ Josiah asked, “Whose tomb is that?” The people of Bethel replied, “It is the tomb of the prophet who came from Judah and predicted that these things that you have just now done to this altar would happen.”

¹⁸ Josiah replied, “Allow his tomb to remain as it is. Do not remove the prophet’s bones from the tomb.”

So the people did not remove those bones, or the bones of the other prophet, the one who had come from Samaria.

¹⁹ In every city in Israel, at Josiah’s command, they tore down the houses build on hills to worship idols. The ones that had been built by the previous kings of Israel, which had caused Yahweh to become very angry. He did to all those places of idols worship the same thing that he had done to the altars at Bethel. ²⁰ He ordered that all the priests who offered sacrifices on the places built on the hills where they worshiped idols, and they were to be killed on those altars. Then he burned human bones on every one of those altars to desecrate them. Then he returned to Jerusalem.

²¹ Then the king commanded all the people to celebrate the Passover festival to honor Yahweh their God, which was written in the law of Moses that they should do every year. ²² During all the years that leaders ruled Israel and during all the years that kings of Israel and the kings of Judah, they had not celebrated that festival. ²³ But now, after Josiah had been ruling for almost eighteen years, to honor Yahweh they celebrated the Passover festival in Jerusalem.

²⁴ Furthermore, Josiah removed from Jerusalem and other places in Judah all the people who practiced sorcery and those who asked the spirits of dead people to tell them what they should do. He also removed from Jerusalem and from

the other places in Judah all the household idols and all the other idols and abominable things. He did those things in order to obey what had been written in the scroll that Hilkiah had found in the temple. ²⁵ Josiah was devoted to Yahweh with all that he felt and thought and with all his strength. There had never been in Judah or Israel a king like him. He obeyed all the laws of Moses. And there has never since then been a king like Josiah.

²⁶ But Yahweh had become extremely angry with the people of Judah because of all the things that King Manasseh had done to provoke him, and he continued to be very angry. ²⁷ He said, "I will do to Judah what I have done to Israel. I will drive away the people of Judah, with the result that they will never enter my presence again. And I will reject Jerusalem, the city that I chose to belong to me, and I will reject the temple, the place where I said that I should be worshiped."

²⁸ If you want to know more about all the other things that Josiah did, they are written in the book of the events of the Kings of Judah.

²⁹ While he was the king of Judah, King Necho of Egypt led his army north to the Euphrates River to help the king of Assyria. King Josiah tried to stop the army of Egypt at the city of Megiddo, but he was killed in a battle there. ³⁰ His officials placed his corpse in a chariot and took it back to Jerusalem, where it was buried in his own tomb.

Then the people of Judah poured olive oil on Josiah's son Joahaz, to appoint him to be the new king.

³¹ Joahaz was twenty-three years old when he became the king of Judah, but he ruled from Jerusalem for only three months. His mother was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah from the city of Lib-

nah. ³² Joahaz did many things that Yahweh said were evil, just like many of his ancestors had done. ³³ King Necho's army captured him and tied him up with chains and took him as a prisoner to the city of Riblah in the district of Hamath, to prevent him from continuing to rule in Jerusalem. Necho forced the people of Judah to pay to him about 3.3 metric tons of silver and thirty three kilograms of gold. ³⁴ King Necho appointed another son of Josiah, Eliakim, to be the new king, and he changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim. Then he took Joahaz to Egypt, and later Joahaz died there in Egypt.

³⁵ King Jehoiakim collected a tax from the people of Judah. He collected more from the rich people and less from the poor people. He collected silver and gold from them, in order to pay to the king of Egypt what he commanded them to give.

³⁶ Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became the king of Judah, and he ruled from Jerusalem for eleven years. His mother was Zebidah, the daughter of Pedaiah from the city of Rumah. ³⁷ He did many things that Yahweh said were evil, as his ancestors had done.

Chapter 24

¹ While Jehoiakim was ruling Judah, the army of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon invaded Judah. They defeated the Judean army, and as a result, Jehoiakim was required to pay much tribute to King Nebuchadnezzar. But after three years, Jehoiakim rebelled. ² Then Yahweh sent raiders from Babylonia and Aram, and from the Moab and Ammon people groups, to attack the people of Judah and kill them, just as Yahweh had told his prophets to warn the people would happen. ³ These things happened to the

people of Judah just as Yahweh had commanded. He decided to destroy the people of Judah because of the many sins that King Manasseh had committed. ⁴ Manasseh had even caused many innocent people in Jerusalem to be killed, and Yahweh would not forgive that.

⁵ The other things that happened while Jehoiakim was king, and all the things that he did, are written in the book of the events of the Kings of Judah. ⁶ When Jehoiakim died, his son Jehoiachin became the king.

⁷ The army of the king of Babylon defeated the army of Egypt. The king of Babylon took control of all the area that the Egyptians formerly controlled, from the brook at the border of Egypt in the south to the Euphrates River in the north. So the army of the king of Egypt did not return to attack Judah again.

⁸ Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became the king of Judah. His mother's name was Nehushta. She was the daughter of a man from Jerusalem named El-nathan. Jehoiachin ruled in Jerusalem for only three months. ⁹ Jehoiachin did many things that Yahweh said were evil, all the evil things that his father had done.

¹⁰ While Jehoiachin was king, some officers of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came along with the whole Babylonian army to Jerusalem, and they surrounded the city. ¹¹ While they were doing that, Nebuchadnezzar himself came to the city. ¹² Then King Jehoiachin, his mother, his advisors, important officers, palace officials all surrendered to the Babylonian army.

When Nebuchadnezzar had been king for eight years, he captured Jehoiachin and took him to Babylon. ¹³ Just as Yahweh had said would happen, Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers took to Babylon all the valu-

able things from Yahweh's temple and from the king's palace. They cut up all the gold items that King Solomon had put in the temple. ¹⁴ They took from Jerusalem to Babylon ten thousand people, including the important officials and the best soldiers and the people who made and repaired things that were made of metal. Only the very poor people were left in Judah.

¹⁵ Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers seized King Jehoiachin and took him to Babylon, along with his wives and officials, his mother, and all the important people. ¹⁶ They also took to Babylon all seven thousand soldiers and one thousand men who knew how to make and repair things that are made from metal. All of these people whom they took were able to fight in battle. ¹⁷ Then the king of Babylon appointed Jehoiachin's uncle, Mattaniah, to be the king of Judah, and he changed Mattaniah's name to Zedekiah.

¹⁸ When Zedekiah was twenty-one years old, he became king, and he ruled in Jerusalem for eleven years. His mother's name was Hamutal. She was the daughter of a man named Jeremiah from the city of Libnah. ¹⁹ But Zedekiah did many things that Yahweh said were evil, just as Jehoiakim had done. ²⁰ Because Yahweh was very angry, he finally drove the people out of Jerusalem and the other places in Judah and sent them to Babylon.

This is what happened when Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

Chapter 25

¹ After Zedekiah had been ruling for nine years, on the tenth day of the tenth month of that year, King Nebuchadnezzar arrived with his whole army. They surrounded Jerusalem. Against the walls of

the city, they built ramps made of earth, so that they could climb up and attack the city. ² It took them two years to do that. ³ After Zedekiah had been ruling for eleven years, by the ninth day of the fourth month of that year, the famine had become very bad. All the people's food was gone. ⁴ Then the Babylonian soldiers broke through part of the city wall, and that enabled them to enter the city. All the soldiers of Judah tried to escape. But the Babylonian soldiers surrounded the city, so the king and the soldiers of Judah waited until it was nighttime. Then they fled through the gate that was between the two walls near the king's park. They ran across the fields and started to go down to the plain along the Jordan River.

⁵ But the Babylonian soldiers chased after them. They caught the king when he was by himself in the plains of Jericho. He was by himself because all his soldiers had abandoned him. ⁶ The Babylonian soldiers took King Zedekiah to the city of Riblah in Babylonia. There the king of Babylon decided what they would do to punish him. ⁷ The king of Babylon forced Zedekiah to watch as the Babylonian soldiers killed all of Zedekiah's sons. Then they gouged out Zedekiah's eyes. They put bronze chains on his hands and feet and took him to the city of Babylon.

⁸ On the seventh day in the fifth month of that year, after Nebuchadnezzar had been ruling for nineteen years, Nebuzaradan arrived in Jerusalem. He was one of King Nebuchadnezzar's officials; he was in command of the men who guarded the king. ⁹ He ordered his soldiers to burn down Yahweh's temple, the king's palace, and all the houses in Jerusalem. So they burned down all the important buildings in the city. ¹⁰ Then Nebuzaradan supervised the Babylonian soldiers as they tore down the walls surrounding Jerusalem.

¹¹ After that, he and his soldiers took to

Babylon the people who were still living in the city, the other people who lived in the region of Judah, and the soldiers who had previously surrendered to the Babylonian army. ¹² But Nebuzaradan allowed some of the very poor people to stay in Judah to take care of the vineyards and to plant crops in the fields.

¹³ The Babylonian soldiers broke into pieces the bronze pillars, the bronze stands with wheels, and the large bronze tank known as "The Sea," all of which were in the temple courtyard, and they took all the bronze to Babylon. ¹⁴ They also took the pots, the shovels, the instruments for snuffing out the lamps, the dishes, and all the other bronze items that the Israelite priests had used for offering sacrifices in the temple. ¹⁵ The soldiers also took away the pans for the ashes of the sacrifices, the basins, and all the other items made of gold or silver.

¹⁶ The bronze from the two pillars, the bronze stands with wheels, and the huge tank that was called "The Sea," were all so very heavy that they could not be weighed. These things had been made for the temple when Solomon was the king of Israel. ¹⁷ Each of the pillars was eight and one-third meters high. The bronze capital of each pillar was one and one-third meters high. They were each decorated all around with something that looked like a net made of bronze chains connecting bronze pomegranates.

¹⁸ Nebuzaradan took with him to Babylon Seraiah, the high priest; Zephaniah, his assistant; and the three men who guarded the entrance to the temple. ¹⁹ From the people who were still left in Jerusalem, he took one officer from the Judean army, five of the king's advisors, the chief secretary of the army commander who was in charge of recruiting men to join the army, and sixty other important Judean men. ²⁰

Nebuzaradan took them all to the king of Babylon at the city of Riblah. ²¹ There at the city of Riblah, in the province of Hamath, the king of Babylon commanded that they all be executed.

That is what happened when the people of Judah were taken forcefully from their land to Babylon.

²² Then King Nebuchadnezzar appointed a man named Gedaliah to be the governor of the people who he still allowed to live in Judah. Gedaliah was a son of Ahikam and a grandson of Shaphan. ²³ When all the army commanders in Judah and their soldiers found out that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah to be the governor, they met with him at the city of Mizpah. These commanders were Ishmael son of Nethaniah; Johanan son of Kareah; Seraiah son of Tanhumeth, from the city of Netophah; and Jaazaniah, from the region of Maacah.

²⁴ Gedaliah solemnly promised them that the officials from Babylon were not planning to harm them. He said, "You may live in this land without being afraid; you should obey the king of Babylon. If you do, everything will go well for you."

²⁵ But in the seventh month of that year, Ishmael, whose grandfather Elishama was in the family descended from King David, went to Mizpah along with ten other men. They assassinated Gedaliah and all the men with him. There were also men from Judah and men from Babylon whom they assassinated. ²⁶ Then many of the people from Judah, important people and unimportant ones, and the army commanders were very afraid of what the Babylonians would do to them, so they fled to Egypt.

²⁷ Thirty-seven years after King Jehoiachin of Judah had been taken to Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar's son Awel-Marduk

became the king of Babylon. He was kind to Jehoiachin, and on the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month of that same year, he released Jehoiachin from prison. ²⁸ He always spoke kindly to Jehoiachin and honored him more than the other kings who had been taken to Babylon. ²⁹ He gave Jehoiachin new clothes to replace the clothes that he had been wearing in prison, and he allowed Jehoiachin to eat at the king's table every day for the rest of his life. ³⁰ The king of Babylon also gave him money every day, so that he could buy the things that he needed. The king continued to do that until Jehoiachin died.

1 CHRONICLES

Chapter 1

These are the descendants of Adam

¹ The first person God created was Adam. Adam's son was Seth. Seth's son was Enosh. Enosh's son was Kenan. ² Kenan's son was Mahalalel. Mahalalel's son was Jared. Jared's son was Enoch. ³ Enoch's son was Methuselah. Methuselah's son was Lamech. Lamech's son was Noah. ⁴ Noah's sons were Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

These are the sons of Japheth.

⁵ The sons of Japheth were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras.

⁶ The sons of Gomer were Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah.

⁷ The sons of Javan were Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Rodanim.

These are the sons of Ham.

⁸ The sons of Ham were Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan.

⁹ The sons of Cush were Seba, Havilah, Sabta, Raamah, and Sabteka.

The sons of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan.

¹⁰ Another son of Cush was Nimrod. When he grew up, he became a mighty warrior on the earth.

¹¹ Egypt was the ancestor of the Lud, the Anam, the Lehab, the Naphtuh, ¹² the Pathrus, the Kasluh, and the Caphtor people groups. The people of the region of

Philistia were descended from the Kasluh people group.

¹³ Canaan's first son was Sidon. He was also the ancestor of the people groups of the Hethites, ¹⁴ the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, ¹⁵ the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, ¹⁶ the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites.

These are the descendants of Shem

¹⁷ The sons of Shem were Elam, Ashur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram.

Aram's sons were Uz, Hul, Gether, and Meshech.

¹⁸ Arphachshad was the father of Shelah, who was the father of Eber.

¹⁹ Eber had two sons. One was named Peleg which sounds like the word that means 'divided' because during the time that he lived, the people on the earth were divided into various language groups. Peleg's younger brother was Joktan.

²⁰ Joktan was the ancestor of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, ²¹ Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, ²² Obal, Abimael, Sheba, ²³ Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab.

²⁴ These are the descendants of Shem, in order from him to Abraham: Arphaxad, Shelah, ²⁵ Eber, Peleg, Reu, ²⁶ Serug, Nahor, Terah, ²⁷ and Abram, whose name was later changed to Abraham.

These are the descendants of Abraham.

²⁸ Abraham's sons were Isaac and Ishmael.

²⁹ The son of Abraham's slave wife Hagar was Ishmael. Ishmael's twelve sons were Nebaioth, his firstborn, then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, ³⁰ Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema, ³¹ Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah.

³² After Abraham's wife Sarah died, he took another wife named Keturah. Her sons were Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.

Jokshan's sons were Sheba and Dedan.

³³ Midian's sons were Ephah, Ephher, Hanok, Abida, and Eldaah.

These are the descendants of Esau.

³⁴ The son of Abraham's wife Sarah was Isaac, and Isaac's sons were Esau and Jacob, whose name was later changed to Israel.

³⁵ The sons of Esau were Eliphaz, Reuel, Jeush, Jalam, and Korah.

³⁶ The sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, Kenaz, Timna, and Amalek.

³⁷ Reuel's sons were Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah.

These are the descendants of Seir.

³⁸ Another descendant of Esau was Seir. His descendants lived in the region of Edom. Seir's sons were Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan.

³⁹ Lotan's sons were Hori and Homam, and Lotan's sister was Timna.

⁴⁰ Shobal's sons were Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam.

Zibeon's sons were Aiah and Anah.

⁴¹ Anah's son was Dishon.

¹ Dishon's sons were Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Keran.

⁴² Ezer's sons were Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan.

Dishan's sons were Uz and Aran.

These are the kings of Edom.

⁴³ These are the names of the kings who ruled the region of Edom before any kings ruled over Israel:

Bela son of Beor, was king in Edom, and the name of the city in which he lived was Dinhabah.

⁴⁴ When Bela died, Jobab son of Zerah, from the city of Bozrah, became the king.

⁴⁵ When Jobab died, Husham became the king. He was from the region where the Teman people group lived.

⁴⁶ When Husham died, Hadad son of Bedad, became the king. He ruled in the city of Avith. Hadad's army defeated the army of the Midian people group in the region of Moab.

⁴⁷ When Hadad died, Samlah became the king. He was from the city of Masrekah.

⁴⁸ When Samlah died, Shaul became the king. He was from the city of Rehoboth Hannahar.

⁴⁹ When Shaul died, Baal-Hanan son of Akbor became the king.

⁵⁰ When Baal-Hanan died, Hadar became the king. He was from the city of Pau. His wife's name was Mehetabel; she was the daughter of Matred and the granddaughter of Me-Zahab. ⁵¹ Then Hadad died.

The chiefs of the Edom people group were Chiefs Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, ⁵² Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, ⁵³ Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, ⁵⁴ and Magdiel. These were the chiefs of Edom.

Chapter 2

¹ The sons of Jacob were Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, ² Dan,

Joseph, Benjamin, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher.

Jether, a descendant of Ishmael, and their son was Amasa,

These are the descendants of Judah.

³ Judah's sons were Er, Onan, and Shelah. Their mother was the daughter of Shua from the Canaan people group. When Judah's oldest son Er grew up, he did something that Yahweh considered to be very wicked, so Yahweh caused him to die. ⁴ Judah and his daughter-in-law Tamar had twin boys named Perez and Zerah. So altogether Judah had five sons.

⁵ The sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul.

⁶ Zerah had five sons: Zimri, Ethan, Heman, Kalkol, and Darda.

⁷ One of the sons of Zimri was Karmi. Karmi's son Achar caused the people of Israel to experience much trouble, because he stole some of the things that were to be destroyed because they were dedicated to God.

⁸ Ethan's son was Azariah.

⁹ Hezron's sons were Jerahmeel, Ram, and Caleb.

¹⁰ Ram was the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab was the father of Nahshon. Nahshon was a leader of the tribe of Judah.

¹¹ Nahshon was the father of Salmon, who was the father of Boaz. ¹² Boaz was the father of Obed, and Obed was the father of Jesse.

¹³ Jesse's oldest son was Eliab. His other sons were Abinadab, Shimea, ¹⁴ Nethanel, Raddai, ¹⁵ Ozem. The youngest was David.

¹⁶ Their sisters were Zeruiah and Abigail. Zeruiah's three sons were Abishai, Joab, and Asahel. ¹⁷ Abigail's husband was

Descendants of Hezron

¹⁸ Hezron's younger son Caleb had two wives. One of them, Azubah, gave birth to three sons, Jeshur, Shobab, and Ardon. (The other wife's name was Jerioth.) ¹⁹ When Azubah died, Caleb married Ephrath. Their son was Hur. ²⁰ Hur was the father of Uri, and Uri was the father of Bezalel.

²¹ When Hezron was sixty years old, he married a daughter of Makir, who was also the father of Gilead. The son of Hezron and Makir was Segub. ²² Segub was the father of Jair. Jair's army controlled twenty-three cities in the region ruled by Gilead.

²³ But the armies of Geshur and Aram captured those towns controlled by Jair. They also captured the city of Kenath and the nearby towns; altogether they captured sixty towns. The people who lived there were all descendants of Makir, the father of Gilead.

²⁴ Shortly after Hezron died, Caleb slept with Ephrathah, his father's widow. She bore a son for Caleb, whose name was Ashhur. Ashhur became the father of Tekoa.

Jerahmeel's descendants

²⁵ Hezron's oldest son was Jerahmeel. His sons were Ram, Bunah, Oren, Ozem, and Ahijah. Jerahmeel's oldest son was Ram. ²⁶ Jerahmeel had another wife named Atarah. Their son was Onam.

²⁷ The sons of Ram, Jerahmeel's oldest son, were Maaz, Jamin, and Eker.

²⁸ Onam's sons were Shammai and Jada.

Shammai's sons were Nadab and Abishur.

²⁹ Abishur's wife was Abihail. The sons of Abishur and Abihail were Ahban and Molid.

³⁰ Nadab's sons were Seled and Appaim. Seled did not have any children.

³¹ Appaim's son was Ishi; Ishi's son was Sheshan. One of Sheshan's daughters was Ahlai.

³² Shammai's younger brother was Jada. Jada's sons were Jether and Jonathan. Jether did not have any children.

³³ Jonathan's sons were Peleth and Zaza.

Those were the descendants of Jerahmeel.

³⁴ Sheshan did not have any sons; he had only daughters. He had a servant from Egypt whose name was Jarha. ³⁵ Sheshan allowed his daughter to marry Jarha, and their son was Attai.

³⁶ Attai was the father of Nathan.

Nathan was the father of Zabad.

³⁷ Zabad was the father of Ephlal.

Ephlal was the father of Obed.

³⁸ Obed was the father of Jehu.

Jehu was the father of Azariah.

³⁹ Azariah was the father of Helez.

Helez was the father of Eleasah.

⁴⁰ Eleasah was the father of Sismai.

Sismai was the father of Shallum.

⁴¹ Shallum was the father of Jekamiah.

And Jekamiah was the father of Elishama.

Caleb's descendants

⁴² Jerahmeel's younger brother was Caleb.

Caleb's oldest son was Mesha. Mesha was the father of Ziph. Ziph was the father

of Mareshah. Mareshah was the father of Hebron. ⁴³ Hebron's sons were Korah, Tappuah, Rekem, and Shema. ⁴⁴ Shema was the father of Raham. Raham was the father of Jorkeam. Rekem was the father of Shammai.

⁴⁵ Shammai was the father of Maon. Maon was the father of Beth Zur.

⁴⁶ Caleb had a slave wife who was named Ephah. Caleb and Ephah's sons were Haran, Moza, and Gazez. Haran had a son whom he also named Gazez.

⁴⁷ Ephah's father was Jahdai. Jahdai was the father of six sons: Regem, Jotham, Geshan, Pelet, Ephah, and Shaaph.

⁴⁸ Caleb had another slave wife whose name was Maacah. Caleb and Maacah's sons were Sheber, Tirhanah, ⁴⁹ Shaaph, and Sheva. Shaaph was the father of Madmannah. Sheva was the father of Makbannah and Gibeah. Caleb's daughter was Akisah.

⁵⁰⁻⁵¹ These people were also descendants of Caleb: Caleb had another wife whose name was Ephrathah. Their oldest son was Hur. Hur's sons were Shobal, Salma, and Hareph. Shobal started the city of Kiriath Jearim. Salma started the city of Bethlehem. Hareph started the city of Beth Gader.

⁵² Shobal's descendants were Haroeh, and half of the Manahath people group. ⁵³ His descendants also included these clans that lived in Kiriath Jearim: Ithri, Put, Shumath, and Mishra. The clans of Zorath and Eshtaol were descendants of the clan of Mishra.

⁵⁴ Salma's descendants in Bethlehem were the Netophath clan, the clan of Atroth Beth Joab, the other half of the clan of Manahath, and the clan of Zor.

⁵⁵ Salma's descendants also included the families in the city of Jabez who wrote and copied important documents. These were

the clan of Tirath, the clan of Shimeath, and the clan of Sucath. They were all from the Kenite people group who came from the city of Hammath, and who had married members of the family of Rekab.

Chapter 3

The sons of King David

¹ Six sons of King David were born in the city of Hebron.

His oldest son was Amnon, whose mother Ahinoam was from the city of Jezreel.

His next son was Daniel, whose mother was Abigail from the city of Carmel. ² His next son was Absalom, whose mother was Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, the king who ruled in the city of Geshur.

His next son was Adonijah, whose mother was Haggith. ³ The next son was Shephatiah, whose mother was Abital.

His youngest son was Ithream, whose mother was Eglah.

⁴ They were all born in Hebron, where David ruled for seven and one-half years.

After that, David ruled in Jerusalem for thirty-three years. ⁵ Many of David's children were born in Jerusalem.

Bathshua, daughter of Ammiel, gave birth to four of his sons: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon.

⁶ Nine other sons of David were also born there. They were Ibhar, Elishua, Elphelet, ⁷ Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, ⁸ Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet.

⁹ In addition to all those sons, David's slave wives also gave birth to sons. David also had a daughter named Tamar.

The kings of Judah

¹⁰ Solomon's son was King Rehoboam.

Rehoboam's son was King Abijah.

Abijah's son was King Asa.

Asa's son was King Jehoshaphat.

¹¹ Jehoshaphat's son was King Jehoram.

Jehoram's son was King Ahaziah.

Ahaziah's son was King Joash.

¹² Joash's son was King Amaziah.

Amaziah's son was King Azariah.

Azariah's son was King Jotham.

¹³ Jotham's son was King Ahaz.

Ahaz's son was King Hezekiah.

Hezekiah's son was King Manasseh.

¹⁴ Manasseh's son was King Amon.

Amon's son was King Josiah.

¹⁵ Josiah's oldest son was Johanan. His other sons were Jehoiakim, Zedekiah, and Shallum.

¹⁶ Jehoiakim's son was Jehoiachin. The last king was Zedekiah.

Other descendants of King David after the people of Judah were exiled

¹⁷ Jehoiachin was captured and taken to Babylon. His sons were Shealtiel, ¹⁸ Malkiram, Pedaiah, Shenazzar, Jekamiah, Hoshama, and Nedabiah.

¹⁹ Pedaiah's sons were Zerubbabel and Shimei.

Two of Zerubbabel's sons were Meshulam and Hananiah, and their sister was Shelomith. ²⁰ Zerubbabel's five other sons were Hashubah, Ohel, Berehiah, Hasadiah, and Jushab-Hesed.

²¹ The sons of Hananiah were Pelatiah and Jeshaiah. Jeshaiah's son was Rephaiah. After him, other descendants of Hananiah were Arnan, Obadiah, and Shecaniah.

²² Shecaniah's son was Shemaiah. Shemaiah's five sons were Hattush, Igal, Bariah, Neariah, and Shaphat.

²³ Neariah's three sons were Elioenai, Hizkiah, and Azrikam.

²⁴ Elioenai's seven sons were Hodaviah, Eliashib, Pelaiah, Akkub, Johanan, Delaiah, and Anani.

Chapter 4

Other clans descended from Judah

¹ The descendants of Judah were Perez, Hezron, Karmi, Hur, and Shobal.

² Shobal's son was Reaiah. Reaiah was the father of Jahath, and Jahath was the father of Ahumai and Lahad. They were the ancestors of the Zorath people group.

³ What follows are the names of the three men who started the clans that lived in the city of Etam: Jezreel, Ishma, and Idbash—and they had a sister named Hazzelelponi. ⁴ Hur was the firstborn son of Ephrathah; he founded the city of Bethlehem. Hur had these descendants: Penuel and Ezer. Penuel started the clans that lived in the city of Gedor, and Ezer started the clans living in the city of Hushah.

⁵ Hezron's son Ashhur, the father of Tekoa, had two wives whose names were Helah and Naarah.

⁶ The sons of Asshur and his wife Naarah were Ahuzzam, Hepher, Temeni, and Haahashtari.

⁷ The sons of Ashhur and his wife Helah were Zereth, Zohar, Ethnan, ⁸ and

Koz. Koz was the father of Anub, Haz-zobebah, and the ancestor of the clans descended from Aharhel. Aharhel was the son of Harum.

⁹ There was another descendant of Judah whose name was Jabez. He was more respected than his brothers were. His mother named him Jabez which means 'pain' because she said, "I was enduring much pain when I gave birth to him." ¹⁰ One day he prayed to God whom his fellow Israelites worshiped, saying, "Please greatly bless me and increase my land. Remain with me, and do not allow anyone to harm me. If you do that for me, I will not have any pain." And God did what Jabez requested him to do.

¹¹ Another descendant of Judah was Shuhah. His younger brother Kelub was the father of Mehir. Mehir was the father of Eshton. ¹² Eshton was the father of Beth Rapha, Paseah, and Tehinnah. Tehinnah started the city of Nahash, but their families lived in a place called Rekah.

¹³⁻¹⁵ Another descendant of Judah was Jephunneh. His son was Caleb. Caleb's sons were Iru, Elah, and Naam. Elah's son was Kenaz. The sons of Kenaz were Othniel and Seraiah.

Othniel's sons were Hathath and Meonothai. Meonothai was the father of Ophrah.

Seraiah was the father of Joab. Joab was the ancestor of the people who lived in Craftsmen's Valley. The valley was named that because many of the people who lived there were craftsmen.

¹⁶ Another descendant of Judah was Jehallelel. His sons were Ziph, Ziphah, Tiria, and Asarel.

¹⁷⁻¹⁸ Another descendant of Judah was Ezrah. Ezrah's sons were Jether, Mered, Ephraim, and Jalon. Mered married Bithiah, who was the daughter of the king of Egypt.

The children of Mered and Bithiah were Miriam, Shammai and Ishbah. Ishbah was the father of Eshtemoa. Mered had a wife from Judah. She gave birth to Jered, Heber, and Jekuthiel. Jered was the father of Gedor; Heber was the father of Soko, and Jekuthiel was the father of Zanoah.

¹⁹ Hodiah's wife was Naham's sister. Hodiah's wife was the mother of two sons. One of them was the father of Keilah, the ancestor of the Gar people group, and the other one was the father of Eshtemoa, the ancestor of the Maacath people group.

²⁰ Another descendant of Judah was Shimon. Shimon's sons were Amnon, Rinnah, Ben-Hanan, and Tilon.

Another descendant of Judah was Ishi. His descendants were Zoheth and Ben-Zoheth.

²¹ One of Judah's sons was Shelah. Shelah's descendants were Er the father of Lekah, Laadah the father of Mare-shah and the families of those who made things from linen at Beth Ashbea, ²² Jokim, and the men of the city of Kozeba, and Joash and Saraph, two men who married women from the region of Moab and ruled in Jashubi Lehem. All their names and a record of what they did are written in scrolls. ²³ Some of these descendants of Shelah made pottery for the king. Some of them lived in the city of Netaim, and some lived in the city of Gederah.

²⁴ Simeon's sons were Nemuel, Jamin, Jarib, Zerah, and Shaul.

²⁵ Shaul's son was Shallum. Shallum's son was Mibsam. Mibsam's son was Mishma.

²⁶ Mishma's son was Hammuel. Hammuel's son was Zaccur. Zaccur's son was Shimei.

²⁷ Shimei had sixteen sons and six daughters, but none of his brothers had many

children. So the descendants of Simeon never were as many as the descendants of his younger brother Judah. ²⁸ The descendants of Simeon lived in these cities and towns: Beersheba, Moladah, Hazar Shual, ²⁹ Bilhah, Ezem, Tolad, ³⁰ Bethuel, Hormah, Ziklag, ³¹ Beth Markaboth, Hazar Susim, Beth Biri, and Shaaraim. They lived in those places until David became king. ³² They also lived in villages near those towns: Etam, Ain, Rimmon, Token, and Ashan. ³³ There were other villages where they lived, as far southwest as the city of Baalath. Those were the places where they lived, and they wrote down the names of their family members.

³⁴⁻³⁸ The men in the following list were the leaders of their clans: Meshobab, Jamlech, Joshah son of Amaziah, Joel, and Jehu son of Joshibiah. Joshibiah was son of Seraiah and grandson of Asiel. Other clan leaders were Elioenai, Jaakobah, Jeshohaiah, Asaiah, Adiel, Jesimiel, Benaiah, and Ziza. Ziza was son of Shiphi and grandson of Allon son of Jedaiah, who was the son of Shimri, who was son of Shemaiah.

The members of those families became very numerous. ³⁹ They went near the city of Gedor on the east side of the valley to look for pastureland for their flocks of sheep. ⁴⁰ They found good pastureland with plenty of grass. The place was peaceful and quiet.

Previously the descendants of Noah's son Ham had lived there. ⁴¹ But while Hezekiah was the king of Judah, those leaders of the tribe of Simeon came to Gedor and fought against the descendants of Ham and destroyed their tents. They also fought against the descendants of Meun who were living there and they killed all of them. So now there are no descendants of Meun living there. The descendants of Simeon started to live there, because there was good pastureland there

for their sheep.

⁴² Ishi's four sons Pelatiah, Neariah, Rephaiah and Uzziel led five hundred other descendants of Simeon and attacked the people who were living in the hill country of Edom. ⁴³ They killed the few descendants of Amalek who were still alive. From that time until now, the descendants of Simeon have lived in the region of Edom.

Chapter 5

These are the descendants of Reuben.

¹ Reuben was the oldest son of Jacob. Therefore, he should have received the special rights that belonged to firstborn sons. But he slept with his father's slave wife, so his father gave those rights to the sons of his younger brother Joseph. And in the family records, Reuben is not mentioned first, as the firstborn sons always are. ² Although Judah became more influential than his brothers, and a ruler of Judah descended from him, Joseph's family received the rights that belonged to firstborn sons. ³ But Reuben was Jacob's oldest son.

Reuben's sons were Hanok, Pallu, Hezron, and Karmi.

⁴ Another descendant of Reuben was Joel. Joel's son was Shemaiah. Shemaiah's son was Gog. Gog's son was Shimei. ⁵ Shimei's son was Micah. Micah's son was Reaiah. Reaiah's son was Baal. ⁶ Baal's son was Beerah. Beerah was a leader of the tribe of Reuben. But Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria captured him and took him to Assyria.

⁷ The names of these clans are listed here according to what is written in their family records.

The names written were: Jeiel (the leader), then Zechariah, ⁸ and then Bela son of Azaz, son of Shema, son of Joel. Reuben's clan was very large. Some of them lived near the city of Aroer as far north as the city of Nebo and the city of Baal Meon. ⁹ Some of them lived further east, as far as the edge of the desert south of the Euphrates River. They went there because they had a huge amount of cattle, with the result that there was not enough pastureland for them in the region of Gilead.

¹⁰ When Saul was king of Israel, the men in the tribe of Reuben fought against the descendants of Hagar and defeated them. After that, they lived in the tents that the descendants of Hagar had lived in previously, in all the area east of the region of Gilead.

¹¹ The tribe of Gad lived near the tribe of Reuben; they lived in the region of Bashan, all the way east to the city of Salekah. ¹² Joel was their leader; Shapham was his assistant; other leaders were Janai and Shaphat in Bashan.

¹³ Other members of the tribe belonged to seven clans, whose leaders were Michael, Meshullam, Sheba, Jorai, Jakan, Zia, and Eber.

¹⁴ They were descendants of Abihail. Abihail was son of Huri, Huri was the son of Jaroah, Jaroah was the son of Gilead, Gilead was son of Michael, Michael was the son of Jeshishai, Jeshishai was the son of Jahdo, and Jahdo was the son of Buz.

¹⁵ Ahi was Abdiel's son. Abdiel was Guni's son. Ahi was the leader of their clan.

¹⁶ The descendants of Gad lived in the towns in the regions of Gilead and Bashan, and on all the pastureland on the Plain of Sharon. ¹⁷ All of those names were written in the records of the clans of Gad during

the time that Jotham was the king of Judah and Jeroboam was the king of Israel.

These are the armies of the tribes that lived east of the Jordan River.

¹⁸ There were 44,760 soldiers in the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the eastern half of the tribe of Manasseh. They all carried shields and swords and bows and arrows. They were all trained to fight well in battles. ¹⁹ They attacked the descendants of Hagar and the people in the cities of Jetur, Naphish, and Nodab. ²⁰ The men from those three tribes prayed to God during the battles, requesting him to help them. So he helped them, because they trusted in him. He enabled them to defeat the descendants of Hagar and all those who were helping them. ²¹ They took the animals that belonged to the descendants of Hagar: They took fifty thousand camels, 250,000 sheep, and two thousand donkeys. They also captured 100,000 people. ²² But many descendants of Hagar were killed because God helped the people of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh. After that, those three tribes lived in that area until the army of Babylon captured them and took them away to Babylon.

These are those who lived with eastern half of the tribe of Manasseh

²³ There were many people who belonged to the eastern half of the tribe of Manasseh. They lived in the region of Bashan east of the Jordan River, as far north as Baal Hermon, Senir, and Mount Hermon.

²⁴ Their clan leaders were Ephraim, Ishi, Eliel, Azriel, Jeremiah, Hodaviah, and Jahdiel. They were all strong, brave, and famous soldiers, and leaders of their clans. ²⁵ But they sinned against God,

the one whom their ancestors had worshiped. They began to worship the gods that the people of that region had worshiped, the people whom God had enabled them to destroy. ²⁶ So the God whom the Israelites worshiped incited Pul, the king of Assyria, to want to conquer those tribes. Pul's other name was Tiglath-Pileser. His army captured the people of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the eastern half of the tribe of Manasseh, and took them to various places in Assyria: Halah, Habor, Hara and near the Gozan River. They have lived in those places from that time to the present time.

Chapter 6

These are the descendants of Levi.

¹ Levi's sons were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

² Kohath's sons were Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.

³ Amram's children were Miriam and her younger brothers Aaron and Moses.

Aaron's sons were Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

⁴ Eleazar was the father of Phinehas. Phinehas was the father of Abishua.

⁵ Abishua was the father of Bukki. Bukki was the father of Uzzi.

⁶ Uzzi was the father of Zerachiah. Zerachiah was the father of Meraioth.

⁷ Meraioth was the father of Amariah. Amariah was the father of Ahitub.

⁸ Ahitub was the father of Zadok. Zadok was the father of Ahimaaz.

⁹ Ahimaaz was the father of Azariah. Azariah was the father of Johanan.

¹⁰ Johanan was the father of Azariah. Azariah was a priest in the temple that Solomon commanded to be built in Jerusalem.

¹¹ Azariah was the father of Amariah. Amariah was the father of Ahitub.

¹² Ahitub was the father of Zadok. Zadok was the father of Shallum.

¹³ Shallum was the father of Hilkiah. Hilkiah was the father of Azariah.

¹⁴ Azariah was the father of Seraiah.

Seraiah was the father of Jozadak.
¹⁵ Jozadak was forced to leave his home when Yahweh sent King Nebuchadnezzar's army to capture many people in Jerusalem and other places in Judah and compel them to go to Babylonia.

¹⁶ Levi's sons were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

¹⁷ Gershon's sons were Libni and Shimei.

¹⁸ Kohath's sons were Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.

¹⁹ Merari's sons were Mahli and Mushi. Here is a list of the descendants of Levi, who became leaders of their clans.

²⁰ Gershon's oldest son was Libni.

Libni's son was Jahath.

Jehath's son was Zimmah.

²¹ Zimmah's son was Joah.

Joah's son was Iddo.

Iddo's son was Zerah.

Zerah's son was Jeatherai.

²² Kohath's other son was Amminadab.

Amminadab's son was Korah.

Korah's son was Assir.

²³ Assir's son was Elkanah.

Elkanah's son was Ebiasaph.

Ebiasaph's son was Assir.

²⁴ Assir's son was Tahath.

Tahath's son was Uriel.

Uriel's son was Uziah.

Uziah's son was Shaul.

²⁵ Elkanah's sons were Amasai, Ahimoth,

²⁶ and a son also named Elkana.

Elkanah's son was Zophai.

Zophai's son was Nahath.

²⁷ Nahath's son was Eliab.

Eliab's son was Jeroham.

Jeroham's son was Elkanah.

²⁸ Samuel's oldest son was Joel; his other son was Abijah.

²⁹ Merari's oldest son was Mahli.

Mahli's son was Libni.

Libni's son was Shimei.

Shimei's son was Uzzah.

³⁰ Uzzah's son was Shimea.

Shimea's son was Haggiah.

Haggiah's son was Asaiah.

These are the temple musicians.

³¹ After the sacred chest was brought to Jerusalem, King David appointed some of the men who were descendants of Levi to be in charge of the music in the place where the people worshiped Yahweh. ³² Those musicians first sang and played their instruments in the sacred tent, which was also called the tent of meeting, and they continued to do that until Solomon's workers built the temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem. In all their work, they obeyed the instructions that David had given them.

³³ Here is a list of the musicians and their sons:

From Kohath's descendants there was Heman, the leader of the singers.

Heman was the son of Joel.

Joel was the son of Samuel.

³⁴ Samuel was the son of Elkanah.

Elkanah was the son of Jeroham.

Jeroham was the son of Eliel.

Eliel was the son of Toah.

³⁵ Toah was the son of Zuph.

Zuph was the son of Elkanah.

Elkanah was the son of Mahath.

Mahath was the son of Amasai.

³⁶ Amasai was the son of another man whose name was Elkanah.

Elkanah was the son of Joel.

Joel was the son of Azariah.

Azariah was the son of Zephaniah.

³⁷ Zephaniah was the son of Tahath.

Tahath was the son of Assir.

Assir was the son of Ebiasaph.

Ebiasaph was the son of Korah.

³⁸ Korah was the son of Izhar.

Izhar was the son of Kohath.

Kohath was the son of Levi.

Levi was the son of Jacob.

³⁹ Heman's helper was Asaph. His group stood at the right side of Heman.

Asaph was the son of Berekiah.

Berekiah was the son of Shimea.

⁴⁰ Shimea was the son of Michael.

Michael was the son of Baaseiah.

Baaseiah was the son of Malkijah.

⁴¹ Malkijah was the son of Ethni.

Ethni was the son of Zerah.

Zerah was the son of Adaiah.

⁴² Adaiah was the son of Ethan.

Ethan was the son of Zimmah.

Zimmah was the son of Shimei.

⁴³ Shimei was the son of Jahath.

Jahath was the son of Gershon,

and Gershon was the son of Levi.

⁴⁴ A group of singers from Merari's family helped Heman and Asaph. They stood at the left of Heman. The leader of this group was Ethan son of Kishi.

Kishi was the son of Abdi.

Abdi was the son of Malluk.

⁴⁵ Malluk was the son of Hashabiah.

Hashabiah was the son of Uziah.

Uziah was the son of Hilkiah.

⁴⁶ Hilkiah was the son of Amzi.

Amzi was the son of Bani.

Bani was the son of Shemer.

⁴⁷ Shemer was the son of Mahli.

Mahli was the son of Mushi.

Mushi was the son of Merari,

and Merari was the son of Levi.

⁴⁸ The other descendants of Levi were appointed to do other work in the sacred tent, the place where the people worshiped God.

⁴⁹ Aaron and his descendants were the ones who placed on the altar the sacrifices that were to be burned completely, and they burned incense on another altar. Those sacrifices were in order that Yahweh would no longer be angry with the people of Israel for having sinned. Those men also did other work in the very holy

place in the sacred tent, obeying the instructions that Moses, who served God well, had given to them.

⁵⁰ These were the descendants of Aaron:

Aaron's son was Eleazar.

Eleazar's son was Phinehas.

Phinehas's son was Abishua.

⁵¹ Abishua's son was Bukki.

Bukki's son was Uzzi.

Uzzi's son was Zerahiah.

⁵² Zerahiah's son was Meraioth.

Meraioth's son was Amariah.

Amariah's son was Ahitub.

⁵³ Ahitub's son was Zadok,
and Zadok's son was Ahimaaz.

This is the land for the descendants of Levi.

⁵⁴ Here is a list of the places where Aaron's descendants lived. Those who were descendants of Kohath were the first group to be allotted cities to live in.

⁵⁵ They were allotted the city of Hebron in Judah and the pastureland around the city, ⁵⁶ but the fields farther from the city and the villages near the city were given to Caleb's son of Jephunneh.

⁵⁷ The descendants of Aaron who were descendants of Kohath were allotted Hebron, one of the cities to which people could flee and be protected if they accidentally killed someone. They also were allotted the towns and pastureland near Libnah, Jattir, Eshtemoa, ⁵⁸ Hilen, Debir, ⁵⁹ Ashan, Juttah, and Beth Shemesh. ⁶⁰ They were also allotted the cities of Gibeon, Geba, Alemeth, and Anathoth from the tribe of Benjamin.

Altogether, these clans descended from Kohath were allotted thirteen cities.

⁶¹ The other clans descended from Kohath were allotted ten cities from the clans of the tribe of Manasseh that lived west of the Jordan River.

⁶² The descendants of Gershon were allotted thirteen cities and towns from the tribes of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and the part of the tribe of Manasseh that lived in the region of Bashan on the east side of the Jordan River.

⁶³ The descendants of Merari were allotted twelve cities and towns from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun.

⁶⁴ The leaders of Israel allotted those towns and the nearby pasturelands to the descendants of Levi. ⁶⁵ They also allotted to them the cities and towns from the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin that were listed previously.

⁶⁶ Some of the descendants of Kohath were allotted towns from the tribe of Ephraim.

⁶⁷ They were allotted Shechem, which was one of the cities to which people could flee and be protected if they accidentally killed someone, along with the nearby pastureland in the hills of Ephraim. They were also allotted these towns and pastureland near them: Gezer, ⁶⁸ Jokmeam, Beth Horon, ⁶⁹ Aijalon, and Gath Rimmon.

⁷⁰ The other descendants of Kohath were allotted the cities of Aner and Bileam and the nearby pastureland from the part of the tribe of Manasseh that lives west of the Jordan River.

⁷¹ The descendants of Gershon, who were part of the tribe of Manasseh, lived east of the Jordan River. They were allotted the cities and towns and pastureland near them: Golan in the regions of Bashan and

Ashtaroth.

⁷² From the tribe of Issachar they were allotted cities and towns and pastureland near Kedesh, Daberath, ⁷³ Ramoth, and Anem.

⁷⁴ From the tribe of Asher they were allotted cities and towns and pastureland near Mashal, Abdon, ⁷⁵ Hukok, and Rehob.

⁷⁶ From the tribe of Naphtali they were allotted cities and towns and pastureland near Kedesh in the region of Galilee, and the cities of Hammon and Kiriathaim.

⁷⁷ The other descendants of Levi, those descended from Merari, were allotted towns and pasturelands from the tribe of Zebulun near Jokneam, Kartah, Rimmono, and Tabor.

⁷⁸⁻⁷⁹ From the tribe of Reuben they were allotted cities and towns and pastureland near Bezer in the wilderness, Jahzah, Kedemoth, and Mephaath. The tribe of Reuben lived east of the Jordan River, across from Jericho.

⁸⁰ From the tribe of Gad, they were allotted cities and towns and pastureland near Ramoth in the region of Gilead, Mahanaim, ⁸¹ Heshbon, and Jazer. Be-

³ Uzzi's son was Izrahiah. Izrahiah's five sons were Michael, Obadiah, Joel, and Ishiah. Izrahiah and his sons were all leaders of their clans.

⁴ In the record of Izrahiah's descendants were the names of thirty-six thousand men who were able to be in the army because they had many wives and children.

⁵ In the records of the clans descended from Issachar were the names of eighty-seven thousand men able to be in the army.

The descendants of Benjamin are listed next.

⁶ These are the descendants of Benjamin. The three sons of Benjamin were Bela, Beker, and Jediahel.

⁷ Bela's five sons were Ezbon, Uzzi, Uzziel, Jerimoth, and Iri. They were all leaders of clans.

In the records of the clans descended from Bela there were names of 22,034 men who were able to be in the army.

⁸ Beker's sons were Zemirah, Joash, Eliezer, Elioenai, Omri, Jeremoth, Abijah, Anathoth, and Alemeth.

⁹ In the records of the clans descended from Beker were the names of 20,200 men and leaders of the clans who were able to be in the army.

¹⁰ Jediahel's son was Bilhan. Bilhan's sons were Jeush, Benjamin, Ehud, Kenaanah, Zethan, Tarshish, and Ahishahar.

¹¹ They were all leaders of clans descended from them.

There were 17,200 of them who were able to be in the army.

¹² Shuppin and Huppin were also members of this clan.

Chapter 7

These are the descendants of Issachar.

¹ Issachar's four sons were Tola, Puah, Jashub, and Shimron.

² Tola's sons were Uzzi, Rephaiah, Jeriel, Jahmai, Ibsam, and Samuel. They were all leaders of the clans descended from them.

In the record of Tola's descendants were the names of 22,600 men who were able to be in the army during the time that David was the king of Israel.

One of the descendants of Dan was Hushim.

The descendants of Naphtali are listed next.

¹³ These are the descendants of Naphtali. Naphtali's sons were Jahziel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem. They were all descendants of Jacob's slave wife Bilhah.

The descendants of Manasseh are listed next.

¹⁴ These are the descendants of Manasseh. Manasseh had a slave wife who was from Aram. She was the mother of Asriel and Makir.

Makir was the father of Gilead.

¹⁵ Makir had two wives. They were from the clans of Huphim and Shuphim.

One of Makir's wives was named Maacah.

Makir had another son whose name was Zelophehad. Zelophehad had no sons; he had only daughters.

¹⁶ Makir's wife Maacah gave birth to two sons whom she named Peresh and Sheresh. Sheresh's sons were Ulam and Rakem.

¹⁷ Ulam's son was Bedan.

Those were descendants of Gilead son of Makir and grandson of Manasseh.

¹⁸ Makir's sister was Hammoleketh, who was the mother of Ishhod, Abiezer, and Mahlah.

¹⁹ Another son of Gilead was Shemida, whose sons were Ahian, Shechem, Likhi, and Aniam.

The descendants of Ephraim are listed next.

²⁰ These are the descendants of Ephraim.

One son of Ephraim was Shuthelah.

Shuthelah's son was Bered.

Bered's son was Tahath.

Tahath's son was Eleadah.

Eleadah's son was also named Tahath.

²¹ Tahath's son was Zabad.

Zabad's son was Shuthelah.

Ephraim's other sons, Ezer and Elead, went to the city of Gath to steal some cows and sheep. But they were both killed by some of the men from that city. ²² Their father Ephraim cried for them for many days, and his family came to comfort him.

²³ Then he and his wife slept together again; she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. Ephraim named him Beriah which resembles the word 'trouble' because of the trouble that his family had experienced. ²⁴ Ephraim's daughter was Sheerah. Her workers built three towns: Lower Beth Horon, Upper Beth Horon, and Uzzen Sheerah.

²⁵ Another son of Ephraim was Rephah.

Rephah's son was Resheph.

Resheph's son was Telah.

Telah's son was Tahan.

²⁶ Tahan's son was Ladan.

Ladan's son was Ammihud.

Ammihud's son was Elishama.

²⁷ Elishama's son was Nun.

Nun's son was Joshua, the man who led the Israelites after Moses died.

²⁸ This is a list of the cities and areas where the descendants of Ephraim lived:

Bethel and the nearby villages;

Naaran to the east;

Gezer to the west and the nearby villages; and

Shechem and the nearby villages. Those villages extended north as far as Ayyah and the nearby villages.

²⁹ Along the border of the area where the descendants of Manasseh lived were these towns: Beth Shan, Taanach, Megiddo, and Dor, and the nearby villages.

The people who lived in all those places were descendants of Jacob's son Joseph.

These are the descendants of Asher.

³⁰ Asher's sons were Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, and Beriah. Their sister was Serah.

³¹ Beriah's sons were Heber and Malkiel.

Malkiel was the father of Birzaith

³² Heber was the father of Japhlet, Shomer, and Hotham. Their sister was Shua.

³³ Japhlet's sons were Pasak, Bimhal, and Ashvath.

³⁴ Japhlet's younger brother was Shomer. Shomer's sons were Rohgah, Hubbah, and Aram.

³⁵ Shomer's younger brother was Helem. Helem's sons were Zophah, Imna, Shelesh, and Amal.

³⁶ Zophah's sons were Suah, Harnepher, Shual, Beri, Imrah, ³⁷ Bezer, Hod, Shamma, Shilshah, Ithran whose other name was Jether, and Beera.

³⁸ Jether's sons were Jephunneh, Pispah, and Ara.

³⁹ Another descendant of Asher was Ulla, whose sons were Arah, Hanniel, and Rizia.

⁴⁰ All those men were descendants of Asher, and they were all leaders of their clans. They were brave warriors and excellent leaders. In the record of the clans that are descended from Asher are the names of twenty-six thousand men who were able to be in the army.

Chapter 8

These are the descendants of Benjamin.

¹ Benjamin had five sons: Bela, Ashbel, Aharah, ² Nohah, and Rapha.

³ Bela's sons were Addar, Gera, Abihud, ⁴ Abishua, Naaman, Ahoah, ⁵ Gera, Shephuphan, and Hiram.

⁶ One of Gera's sons was Ehud. The descendants of Ehud were leaders of their clans who lived in the city of Geba, but they were forced to move to the city of Manahath. ⁷ Ehud's sons were Naaman, Ahijah, and Gera.

Gera was the one who led them when they moved to Manahath. Gera was the father of Uzza and Ahihud.

⁸⁻¹¹ Another descendant of Benjamin was Shaharaim. He and his wife Hushim had two sons, Abitub and Elpaal. In the region of Moab, Shaharaim divorced Hushim and his other wife Baara. Then he married a woman whose name was Hodesh, and they had seven sons: Jobab, Zibia, Mesha, Malkam, Jeuz, Sakia, and Mirmah. They were all leaders of their clans.

¹²⁻¹³ Elpaal's sons were Eber, Misham, Shemed, Beriah, and Shema. Shemed built the cities of Ono and Lod and their nearby villages. Beriah and Shema were leaders of their clans, who lived in the city of Aijalon. They forced the people who lived in the city of Gath to leave their city.

¹⁴⁻¹⁶ Beriah's sons were Ahio, Shashak, Jeremoth, Zebadiah, Arad, Eder, Michael, Ishpah, and Joha.

¹⁷⁻¹⁸ Other descendants of Elpaal were also named Zebadiah, Meshullam, Hizki, Heber,

Ishmerai, Izliah, and Jobab.

¹⁹⁻²¹ Another descendant of Benjamin was Shimei. Shimei's descendants included Jakim, Zicri, Zabdi, Elienai, Zillethai, Eliel, Adaiah, Beraiah, and Shimrath.

²²⁻²⁵ Shashak's sons were Ishpan, Eber, Eliel, Abdon, Zicri, Hanan, Haniah, Elam, Anthothijah, Iphdeiah, and Penuel.

²⁶⁻²⁷ Another descendant of Benjamin was Jeroham, whose sons were Shamsherai, Shehariah, Athaliah, Jaareshiah, Elijah, and Zicri.

²⁸ In the records of these clans it is written that all those men were leaders of their clans, and they lived in Jerusalem.

²⁹ Another descendant of Benjamin was Jeiel. He lived in the city of Gibeon, and he was the leader of those who lived there. His wife was Maakah. ³⁰ His oldest son was Abdon. His other sons were Zur, Kish, Baal, Ner, Nadab, ³¹ Gedor, Ahio, Zeker, and Mikloth.

³² Mikloth was the father of Shimeah. All these sons of Jeiel also lived near their relatives in Jerusalem.

³³ Ner was the father of Kish, and Kish was the father of King Saul.

Saul was the father of Jonathan, Malki-Shua, Abinadab, and Esh-Baal.

³⁴ Jonathan's son was Merib-Baal.

Merib-Baal was the father of Micah.

³⁵ Micah's sons were Pithon, Melek, Tarea, and Ahaz.

³⁶ Ahaz was the father of Jehoaddah.

Jehoaddah was the father of Alemeth, Azmaveth, and Zimri.

Zimri was the father of Moza.

³⁷ Moza was the father of Binea.

The son of Binea was Raphah.

The son of Raphah was Eleasah.

The son of Eleasah was Azel.

³⁸ Azel had six sons: Azrikam, Bokeru, Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadiah, and Hanan.

³⁹ Azel's younger brother was Eshek.

Eshek's oldest son was Ulam. His other sons were Jeush and Eliphelet.

⁴⁰ Ulam's sons were brave warriors and good archers. Altogether they had 150 sons and grandsons.

All these were the descendants of Benjamin.

Chapter 9

¹ The names of all the people of Israel were listed in the scroll named "The Record of the Kings of Israel."

Many of the people of Judah were captured and forced to go to Babylon. That happened because of the sins they had committed. ² The first people who returned to Judah many years later and lived in their own land and in their own cities and towns were some Israelite priests, other descendants of Levi, and men who worked in the temple.

³ Other people from the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh also returned to Judah and lived in Jerusalem. What follows is a list of those people of the tribe of Judah.

⁴ The tribe of Judah: Uthai son of Ammi-hud; Ammihud son of Omri; Omri son of

Imri; Imri son of Bani; Bani was a descendant of Perez; Perez son of Judah.

⁵ Asaiah and his sons were descendants of Shelan. Asaiah was the oldest son in his family.

⁶ Jeuel and others of his relatives in Zerah's clan. There were 690 people in this clan.

⁷ From the tribe of Benjamin: Sallu son of Meshullam; Meshullam son of Hodaviah; Hodaviah son of Hassenuah;

⁸ Ibneiah son of Jeroham;

Elah son of Uzzi; Uzzi son of Mikri;

Meshullam son of Shephatiah; Shephatiah son of Reuel; Reuel son of Ibniyah.

⁹ In other records of the people descended from Benjamin, there are the names of 956 people who were living in Jerusalem. All these were leaders of their clans.

¹⁰ Some of the priests who returned to Judah were:

Jedaiah, Jehoiarib, Jakin,

¹¹ and Azariah son of Hilkiyah.

Hilkiyah son of Meshullam;

Meshullam son of Zadok,

Zadok son of Meraioth;

Meraioth son of Ahitub;

Ahitub, who was in charge of all the men who took care of the temple.

¹² Adaiah son of Jeroham;

Jerohamson of Pashhur;

Pashhur son of Malchijah;

Maasai son of Adiel;

Adiel son of Jahzerah;

Jahzerah son of Meshullam;

Meshullam son of Meshillemith;

Meshillemith son of Immer.

¹³ Altogether there were 1760 priests who returned to Judah. They were leaders of their clans, and they all were responsible for doing work in the temple of God.

¹⁴ From the descendants of Levi who returned to Judah there was: Shemaiah son of Hasshub;

Hasshub son of Azrikam;

Azrikam son of Hashabiah;

Hashabiah was a descendant of Levi's youngest son Merari.

¹⁵ Other descendants of Levi who returned to Judah were: Bakbakkar, Heresh, Galal, and Mattaniah son of Mika;

Mika son of Zicri;

Zicri son of Asaph;

¹⁶ There was also Obadiah son of Shemaiah;

Shemaiah son of Galal;

Galal son of Jeduthun;

There was also Berekiah son of Asa;

Asa son of Elkanah, who lived in one of the villages where the Netophath people lived.

¹⁷ From the descendants of Levi who returned to Judah who guarded the temple gates there were Shallum, Akkub, Talmon, Ahiman, and some of their relatives. Shallum was their leader. ¹⁸ Those gatekeepers from the tribe of Levi stood at the King's Gate on the east side of the city:

¹⁹ Shallum son of Kore:

Kore son of Ebiasaph;

Ebiasaph son of Korah.

Shallum and his relatives were gatekeepers, and they were responsible to guard the gates of the temple of Yahweh, as their ancestors had done.

²⁰ Previously Phinehas son of Eleazar, had supervised the gatekeepers, and Yahweh was with Phinehas.

²¹ Zechariah son of Meshelemiah was the gatekeeper at the entrance of the temple.

²² Altogether, there were 212 men who were chosen to guard the gates. Their names were written in the records of the clans in their villages. King David and the prophet Samuel appointed those men because those men were dependable. ²³ The work of those gatekeepers and their descendants was to guard the gates of the temple of Yahweh. The temple was built to replace the sacred tent. ²⁴ There were gatekeepers on each of the four sides of the temple, toward the east, west, north, and south. ²⁵ Sometimes it was necessary for the relatives of the gatekeepers who lived in those villages to come and help them. Each time some of them came, they helped the gatekeepers for seven days. ²⁶ There were four descendants of Levi who worked every day, and they supervised the gatekeepers. They also took care of the storerooms and other rooms in the temple of God. ²⁷ They remained awake all during the night to guard the temple, and each morning they opened the gates.

²⁸ Some of the gatekeepers took care of the articles that were in the temple. They also took care of the flour, wine, olive oil, incense, and spices that were used in the sacrifices. ²⁹ Other gatekeepers were appointed to take care of the other things in the temple. ³⁰ But some of the priests had the work of mixing the spices. ³¹ There was a descendant of Levi named Mattithiah, the oldest son of Shallum, who was a descendant of Korah. He was very dependable so they gave him the work of baking the bread that was used in the offerings on the altar. ³² Some of the gatekeepers who were descended from Ko-

hath prepared the new loaves of bread to display before God, the loaves that were placed on the table inside the temple every Sabbath day.

³³ Some of the descendants of Levi were musicians who worked in the temple. The leaders of those families stayed in the rooms of the temple. They did not do any other work in the temple because they they were responsible to serve as musicians day and night.

³⁴ Those are the names of the leaders of the clans descended from Levi. Their names were written in the records of the clans. They all lived in Jerusalem.

³⁵ One of the descendants of Benjamin, Jeiel, lived in the city of Gibeon. He was the city leader. His wife's name was Maacah.

³⁶ His oldest son was Abdon.

His other sons were Zur, Kish, Baal, Ner, Nadab, ³⁷ Gedor, Ahio, Zechariah, and Mikloth.

³⁸ Mikloth was the father of Shimeam. Jeiel's family lived near their relatives in Jerusalem.

³⁹ Ner was the father of Kish. Kish was the father of King Saul. Saul was the father of Jonathan, Malki-Shua, Abinadab, and Esh-Baal.

⁴⁰ Jonathan's son was Merib-Baal. Merib-Baal was the father of Mikah.

⁴¹ Mikah's sons were Pithon, Melek, Tahrea, and Ahaz.

⁴² Ahaz was the father of Jadah. Jadah was the father of Alemeth, Azmaveth, and Zimri.

Zimri was the father of Moza. ⁴³ Moza was the father of Binea.

The son of Binea was Rephaiah. The son of Rephaiah was Eleasah. The son of Eleasah was Azel.

⁴⁴ Azel had six sons: Azrikam, Bokeru, Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadiah, and Hanan.

Chapter 10

¹ The army of Philistia again fought against the Israelites. The Israelite soldiers ran away from them, and many Israelites were killed on Mount Gilboa. ² The soldiers of Philistia caught up with Saul and his sons, and they killed his sons Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malki-Shua. ³ The fighting was very fierce around Saul, and the archers shot Saul and wounded him severely.

⁴ Saul said to the man who was carrying his weapons, "Take out your sword and kill me with it, in order that these heathen Philistines will not be able to injure me further and make fun of me while I am dying." But the man who was carrying Saul's weapons was terrified and refused to do that. So Saul took his own sword and fell on it and died.

⁵ When the man carrying his weapons saw that Saul was dead, he also threw himself on his own sword and died. ⁶ So Saul and three of his sons all died, and none of his descendants ever became king.

⁷ When the Israelites who were living in the valley saw that their army had run away and that Saul and his three sons were dead, they left their towns and ran away. Then the soldiers from Philistia came and occupied those towns.

⁸ The next day, when the Philistines came to take away the weapons of the dead Israelite soldiers, they found the corpses of Saul and his three sons on Mount Gilboa.

⁹ They took the clothes off Saul's corpse and cut off his head and took it and Saul's armor. ¹⁰ Then they sent messengers throughout their land, to proclaim the

news throughout their own area, to their idols and to the other people. They put Saul's armor in the temple where their idols were, and they hung Saul's head in the temple of their god Dagon.

¹¹ All the people who lived in Jabesh in the region of Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul's corpse. ¹² So the bravest men of Jabesh went and got the corpses of Saul and his sons and brought them back to Jabesh. They buried their bones under a large tree in Jabesh. Then the people of Jabesh fasted for seven days.

¹³ Saul died because he did not faithfully obey what Yahweh told him to do. He even went to a woman who talks to the spirits of dead people and asked her what he should do, ¹⁴ instead of asking Yahweh what he should do. So Yahweh caused him to die, and he appointed David son of Jesse, to be the king of Israel.

Chapter 11

¹ Then the people of Israel came to David at the city of Hebron and said to him, "Listen, we have the same ancestors that you have. ² In the past, when Saul was our king, it was you who led our Israelite soldiers in our battles. You are the one to whom Yahweh our God promised, 'You will be the leader of my people; you will be their king.'"

³ So all the Israelite elders came to David at Hebron. There David made a sacred agreement with them while Yahweh was listening. They anointed him with olive oil to set him apart to be the king of the Israelite people. That is what Yahweh had previously told the prophet Samuel would happen.

⁴ David and all the Israelite soldiers went

to Jerusalem. At that time, Jerusalem was called Jebus, and the people who lived there were the Jebus people group.⁵ They said to David, "Your soldiers will not be able to get inside our city!" But David's soldiers captured the city, even though it had strong walls around it, and since then it has been called the city of David.

⁶ What happened was this: David said to his soldiers, "The one who leads our soldiers to attack the Jebus people group will become the commander of all my army." Joab son of Zeruiah, led the soldiers, so he became the commander of all the army.

⁷ After they captured the city with its strong walls around it, David moved there. That is why they named it the city of David.

⁸ David's workers rebuilt the city, starting where the land was filled in and extending to the wall that was around the city. Joab's men repaired the other parts of the city.⁹ David became more and more powerful because Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, was with him.

¹⁰ Yahweh had promised that David would become the king. And all the Israelite people were happy that David was their king.

There were many soldiers who helped David's kingdom to remain strong.¹¹ This is a list of David's most outstanding warriors:

Jashobeam was from the Hachmon clan. He was the leader of the officers. One time he fought against three hundred enemies and killed them all with his spear.

¹² Next was Eleazar son of Dodo, from the clan of Ahoh. He was one of David's three mighty men.¹³ One day he was with David at Pas Dammim when the soldiers of Philistia gathered there for the battle. There was a field of barley there. At first the Israelite soldiers ran away from the soldiers of Philistia,¹⁴ but then David and Eleazar stopped in the middle of the field

and fought to defend it and killed many of the soldiers of Philistia. Yahweh enabled them to win a great victory on that day.

¹⁵ One time three of David's thirty greatest warriors came to David when he was camping next to the huge rock outside the cave near Adullam. At that same time, the army of Philistia had camped in the Valley of Rephaim.¹⁶ David was in a fortress, and some of the soldiers of Philistia were occupying Bethlehem.¹⁷ One day David very much wanted some water to drink and said, "I wish that someone would bring me some water from the well near the gate at Bethlehem!"¹⁸ So the three greatest warriors forced through the camp of Philistia soldiers and drew some water from the well, and brought it to David. But he would not drink it. Instead, he poured it out on the ground to be an offering to Yahweh.¹⁹ He said, "Yahweh, it would certainly not be right for me to drink this water! That would be like drinking the blood of these men who were willing to die for me!" So he refused to drink it.

That was one of the things that David's three greatest warriors did.

²⁰ Joab's younger brother Abishai was the leader of the greatest warriors (called "The Three") and they gave him the great honor. One time Abishai fought three hundred enemy soldiers with his spear, and he killed them all.²¹ So he became as famous as the three greatest warriors (called "The Three"). He became their commander, even though "The Three" did not count him in their number.

²² Jehoiada's son Benaiah was a brave soldier from the city of Kabzeel who did great deeds. He killed two of the best warriors from the Moab people group. One day he went down into a pit when snow was falling on the ground and killed a lion there.²³ He also killed a soldier from

Egypt who was two and one-third meters tall. The soldier from Egypt carried a spear that was as long as a weaver's rod. Benaiah had only a club, but he grabbed the other man's spear and killed him with it. ²⁴ Those are some of the things that Benaiah did. So he became as famous as the three greatest warriors. ²⁵ He was more honored than the other members of the group of thirty great warriors, but he did not become a member of the group of three most outstanding warriors. David appointed him to be the leader of his bodyguards.

²⁶ These are the names of the great warriors:

Asahel, younger brother of Joab;

Elhanan son of Dodo, from Bethlehem;

²⁷ Shammoth, from the Harod;

Helez, from the Pelon;

²⁸ Ira son of Ikkesh, from Tekoa;

Abiezer, from Anathoth;

²⁹ Sibbekai, from Hushah;

Ilai from Ahoh;

³⁰ Maharai, from Netophah;

Heled, the son of Baanah, also from Netophah;

³¹ Ithai, son of Ribai, from Gibeah in the land that belonged to the tribe of Benjamin;

Benaiah, from Pirathon town;

³² Hurai, from the valleys near Mount Gaash;

Abiel from the clan of Arabah;

³³ Azmaveth, from Baharum;

Eliabba, from Shaalbon;

³⁴ The sons of Hashem from Gizon;

Jonathan son of Shagee from the Harar;

³⁵ Ahiam son of Sharar from Harar;

Eliphal son of Ur;

³⁶ Hephher from the Mekerath clan;

Ahijah from the Pelon;

³⁷ Hezro from Carmel;

Naarai son of Ezbai;

³⁸ Joel the younger brother of Nathan;

Mibhar son of Hagri;

³⁹ Zelek from the Ammon people group;

Naharai, the man who carried Joab's weapons, from Beeroth;

⁴⁰ Ira and Gareb from Jattir;

⁴¹ Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, from the Heth people group;

Zabad son of Ahlai;

⁴² Adina son of Shiza, a leader from the tribe of Reuben, who had thirty soldiers with him;

⁴³ Hanan son of Maacah;

Joshaphat from Mithna;

⁴⁴ Uzzia from Ashterath;

Shama and Jeiel, sons of Hotham, from Aroer.

⁴⁵ Jediahel son of Shimri

and his younger brother Joha, from Tiz town;

⁴⁶ Eliel from Mahavah;

Jeribai and Joshaviah, sons of Elnaam;

Ithmah from the Moab;

⁴⁷ Eliel and Obed,

and Jaasiel from Zobah.

Chapter 12

¹ David went to the city of Ziklag to escape from King Saul. While he was there, many warriors came and joined him, and they helped him when he fought battles. ² They carried bows and arrows. They were able to shoot arrows and to sling stones. They could use either their right arms or their left arms to do that. They were relatives of Saul from the tribe of Benjamin.

³ Their leader was Ahiezer. Next in command was Joash. They were both sons of Shemaah from the city of Gibeah. These are the names of some of those warriors:

Jeziel and Pelet, sons of Azmaveth;
Berakah;

Jehu from the city of Anathoth;

⁴ Ishmaiah from the city of Gibeon, who was the leader of the thirty greatest warriors;

Jeremiah, Jahaziel, Johanan, and Jozabad from the city of Gederah;

⁵ Eluzai, Jerimoth, Bealiah, Shemariah, and Shephatiah from the city of Haruph;

⁶ Elkanah, Isshiah, Azarel, Joezer and Jashobeam, who were descendants of Korah;

⁷ Joelah and Zebadiah, sons of Jeroham, from the city of Gedor.

⁸ Some men from the tribe of Gad east of the Jordan River joined David when he was at his fortress in the caves in the desert. They were brave warriors who were trained for fighting battles and able to use shields and spears well. They were as fierce as lions, and they could run as fast as deer on the hills.

⁹ Ezer was their leader.

Next in command was Obadiah.

Next was Eliab.

¹⁰ Next was Mishmannah.

Next was Jeremiah.

¹¹ Next was Attai.

Next was Eliel.

¹² Next was Johanan.

Next was Elzabad.

¹³ Next was another man whose name was Jeremiah.

The last was Macbannai.

¹⁴ Those men from the tribe of Gad were all army officers. Some of them commanded one thousand soldiers, and some of them commanded one hundred soldiers. ¹⁵ They crossed to the west side of the Jordan River during March, at the time of the year when the river was flooded. They chased from there all the people who lived in the valleys on both sides of the river.

¹⁶ Some other men from the tribe of Benjamin and from Judah also came to David in his fortress. ¹⁷ David went out of the cave to meet them and said to them, "If you have come peacefully to help me, I am eager to have to join with me. But if you have come to enable my enemies to capture me, even though I have not done anything to harm you, I hope that the God whom our ancestors worshiped will see it and condemn you."

¹⁸ Then God's Spirit came on Amasai, who was the leader of the thirty greatest warriors, and he said,

"David, we want to be with you;

you who are the son of Jesse, we will join you.

We know that things will go very well for you and for those who are with you,

because your God is helping you." So David welcomed those men, and he appointed them to be leaders of his soldiers.

¹⁹ Some men from the tribe of Manasseh also joined David when he went with the soldiers of Philistia to fight against Saul's army. But David and his men did not really help the army of Philistia. After the leaders of Philistia talked about David and his soldiers, they sent David away. They said, "If David joins his master Saul again, we will all be killed." ²⁰ When David went to Ziklag, these were the men from the tribe of Manasseh who went with him: Adnah, Jozabad, Jediael, Michael, another man whose name was Jozabad, Elihu, and Zillethai. Each of them had been a commander of one thousand men in Saul's army. ²¹ They were all brave soldiers, and they helped David to fight against the groups of men who roamed throughout the country, robbing people. So those men became commanders in David's army. ²² Every day more men joined David's men, and his army became large, like the army of God.

²³ These are the numbers of soldiers who were ready for battle who joined David at the city of Hebron. They came to help him to become the king of Israel instead of Saul, as Yahweh had promised would happen.

²⁴ There were 6,800 men from Judah, who carried shields and spears.

²⁵ There were 7,100 men from the tribe of Simeon. They were all strong warriors trained to fight battles.

²⁶ There were 4,600 men from the tribe of Levi.

²⁷ Jehoiada, who was a leader descended from Aaron, was in that group of descendants of Levi, and there were 3,700 men with him.

²⁸ Zadok, a strong young soldier, was also in that group, and there were 22 other leaders from his clan who came with him.

²⁹ There were three thousand men from

the tribe of Benjamin who were Saul's relatives. Most of them had previously wanted one of Saul's descendants to be the king.

³⁰ There were 20,800 men from the tribe of Ephraim who were all brave warriors and trained for fighting battles and famous in their own clans.

³¹ There were eighteen thousand men from the half of the tribe of Manasseh that lived west of the Jordan River. They were all chosen to go and help David become the king.

³² There were two hundred men who were leaders from the tribe of Issachar along with their relatives. They always knew what the Israelites should do, and they knew the right time to do it. Their relatives were with them, commanded by their leaders.

³³ There were fifty-five thousand men from the tribe of Zebulun. They were all experienced warriors and knew how to use all kinds of weapons well. They were completely loyal to David.

³⁴ There were one thousand officers from the tribe of Naphtali. With them were thirty-seven thousand soldiers, each carrying shields and spears.

³⁵ There were 28,600 soldiers from the tribe of Dan, all trained to fight battles.

³⁶ There were forty-seven thousand experienced soldiers from the tribe of Asher, all trained to fight battles.

³⁷ There were also 120,000 soldiers from the area east of the Jordan River who joined David. They were from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the eastern half of the tribe of Manasseh. They had all kinds of weapons.

³⁸ All those men were soldiers who volunteered to be in David's army. They came to Hebron wanting very much to enable

David to be the king of all of the Israelite people. ³⁹ The men spent three days there with David, eating and drinking, because their families had given them food to take with them. ⁴⁰ Also, their fellow Israelites came from as far away as the area where the tribes of Issachar, Zebulun, and Naphtali lived, bringing food on donkeys, camels, mules, and oxen. They brought a lot of flour, fig cakes, raisins, wine, olive oil, cattle and sheep. And throughout Israel, the people were very joyful.

Chapter 13

¹ One day David talked with all his army officers. Some of them were commanders of one hundred soldiers and some were commanders of one thousand soldiers. ² Then he summoned the other Israelite leaders and said to all of them, "If it seems to you to be a good thing for us to do, and if it is what Yahweh our God wants, let us send a message to our fellow Israelites in all the areas of our country, including the priests and descendants of Levi who are living among them in their towns and in the nearby pasturelands, to come and join us, ³ because we want to bring the sacred chest of our God back to us. While Saul was the king, we did not ask God what we should do." ⁴ All the people agreed with David, because they all thought that it was the right thing to do.

⁵ So David gathered all the Israelite people, from the Shihor River in Egypt to the city of Lebo Hamath in the north, and told them that he wanted them to help bring the sacred chest of God back to Jerusalem from the city of Kiriath Jearim. ⁶ David went with all the Israelite people to the city of Baalah, which is another name for Kiriath Jearim, to get the sacred chest. The people believed that God ruled from between the statues of winged creatures that

was above the lid of the sacred chest, and the sacred chest belongs to Yahweh.

⁷ The people put the sacred chest on a new cart and carried it from Abinadab's house. Uzzah and Ahio were guiding the oxen that were pulling the cart. ⁸ David and all the Israelite people were celebrating in God's presence. They were singing with all their strength, and playing lyres, harps, tambourines, and cymbals, and blowing trumpets.

⁹ But when David's men came to the place where Kidon threshed grain, the oxen stumbled. So Uzzah reached out with his hand to prevent the sacred chest from falling off the cart. ¹⁰ Yahweh immediately became very angry with Uzzah, and as he was watching, he suddenly killed Uzzah. This was because Uzzah had put his hand on the sacred chest, although Yahweh had commanded that only the descendants of Levi who help the priests should touch the sacred chest.

¹¹ David was angry because Yahweh had punished Uzzah. And now that place where Uzzah died is called "The Punishment of Uzzah."

¹² That day, David was afraid of God. He asked himself, "How can I bring God's sacred chest to my city?" ¹³ So the men with David did not take the sacred chest to Jerusalem. Instead, they took it to the house of Obed Edom, who was from the city of Gath. ¹⁴ The sacred chest stayed with Obed Edom's family in his house for three months. During that time Yahweh blessed Obed Edom's family and everything that he owned.

Chapter 14

¹ One day Hiram, the king of the city of Tyre, sent some messengers to David to

talk about making an agreement between their countries. Then Hiram sent cedar logs, bricklayers, and carpenters to build a palace for David. ² When that happened, David knew that Yahweh had truly caused him to be the king of Israel, and that he had caused his kingdom to be greatly respected. Yahweh did this because he loved his Israelite people.

³ David married more women in Jerusalem, and those women gave birth to more sons and daughters for him. ⁴ The names of the children that were born to him there in Jerusalem are Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, ⁵ Ibhar, Elishama, Elpelet, ⁶ Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, ⁷ Elishama, Beeliada, and Eliphelet.

⁸ When the army of Philistia heard that David has been appointed to be king of all of Israel, they went to try to capture him. But David heard that they were coming, so he and his soldiers went out to fight against them. ⁹ The army of Philistia had attacked the people in the Valley of Rephaim southwest of Jerusalem and had robbed them. ¹⁰ David asked God, "Should my men and I go and attack the army of Philistia? If we go, will you enable us to defeat them?"

Yahweh replied, "Yes, go, and I will enable you to defeat them."

¹¹ So David and his men went up to a town where the soldiers of Philistia were staying and defeated the soldiers of Philistia. Then David said, "God has completely defeated my enemies by using me and my army." So they named that place "Baal Perazim," which means "The Lord breaks through." ¹² As the soldiers of Philistia fled, they left their idols there. So David commanded his soldiers to burn those idols.

¹³ But soon the army of Philistia attacked the people in that valley again. ¹⁴ So again

David prayed to God to ask him what he should do, and God replied, saying "Do not attack the army of Philistia from the front. Instead, go around them, and attack them from the rear in front of the balsam trees. ¹⁵ When you hear something in the tops of the balsam trees that sounds like soldiers marching, attack them. I, God, will have gone ahead of you to enable you to defeat the army of Philistia." ¹⁶ So David did what God commanded him to do, and he and his army defeated the army of Philistia, all the way from the city of Gibeon west to the city of Gezer.

¹⁷ So David became famous in all the nearby countries, and Yahweh caused the leaders of all the nations to be afraid of him.

Chapter 15

¹ David commanded his workers to build houses for himself in Jerusalem. He also told them to set up a tent in which to put the sacred chest. ² He said, "Only the descendants of Levi are permitted to carry God's sacred chest, because they are the ones whom Yahweh chose to carry it and to serve him forever."

³ David summoned all the people of Israel to come to Jerusalem. He wanted the sacred chest of Yahweh to be put in the place that he had made for it. ⁴ He summoned the descendants of Aaron, who was the first high priest, and the descendants of Levi.

⁵ 120 descendants of Kohath, who was Levi's second son, came, with Uriel their leader.

⁶ There were 220 descendants of Merari, Levi's third son, who came, with Asaiah their leader.

⁷ There were 130 descendants of Gershon, Levi's first son, who came, with Joel their leader.

⁸ Also, there were 200 people from Elizaphan's clan who came, with Shemaiah their leader.

⁹ There were 80 people from Hebron's clan who came, with Eliel their leader.

¹⁰ And there were 112 people from Uzziel's clan who came, with Amminadab their leader.

¹¹ David summoned the priests Zadok and Abiathar and these descendants of Levi: Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel, and Amminadab. ¹² David said to them, "You are the leaders of the clans descended from Levi. You and the other descendants of Levi must purify yourselves, in order to be able to do this special work for Yahweh. You must bring the sacred chest of Yahweh, the God of us Israelites, up to the place that I have made for it here in Jerusalem. ¹³ The first time that we tried to bring it, we did not ask Yahweh how we should carry it. You descendants of Levi were not the ones who carried it, so Yahweh our God punished us."

¹⁴ Then the priests and the descendants of Levi performed the rituals to purify themselves, in order that it would be proper for them to do the work of carrying the sacred chest of Yahweh, the God of the Israelite people. ¹⁵ The descendants of Levi fastened poles to the sacred chest so that they could carry it by fastening poles to it and putting it on their shoulders, as Moses had commanded, and as Yahweh had said that they should.

¹⁶ David told the leaders of the descendants of Levi to appoint some of their relatives to sing and play lyres, harps, and cymbals, and to sing joyful songs while they were carrying the sacred chest.

¹⁷ So they appointed Heman and his rel-

atives Asaph and Ethan. Heman son of Joel; Asaph son of Berekiah. Ethan son of Kushaiah, was a descendant of Merari. ¹⁸ There was also another group of descendants of Levi who were appointed: Zechariah, Jaaziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, and two of the temple gatekeepers, Obed Edom and Jeiel.

¹⁹ Heman, Asaph and Ethan sang, but also played bronze cymbals. ²⁰ Zechariah, Aziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Maaseiah, and Benaiah played lyres. ²¹ Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, Obed Edom, Jeiel and Azaziah played harps. ²² Kenaniah, the leader of the descendants of Levi, directed the singing because he was very capable of doing that.

²³ Berekiah and Elkanah were two of the men who guarded the sacred chest. ²⁴ The priests Shebaniah, Joshaphat, Nethanel, Amasai, Zechariah, Benaiah, and Eliezer were appointed to blow trumpets in front of the sacred chest. Obed Edom and Jehiah also guarded the sacred chest.

²⁵ David and the Israelite leaders and the officers who commanded one thousand soldiers went to get the sacred chest. They went to bring it from Obed Edom's house. They went very joyfully. ²⁶ God helped the descendants of Levi who carried the sacred chest of Yahweh; therefore David and the leaders sacrificed seven bulls and seven rams to thank him. ²⁷ All the descendants of Levi who carried the sacred chest, all the singers, and Kenaniah, the man who directed those who sang, all wore robes of fine white linen and sacred vests made of fine linen. David also wore a waistcloth made of white linen. ²⁸ So all the of Israelite people joined in bringing the sacred chest up to Jerusalem. They shouted, blew horns and trumpets, and played cymbals, lyres, and harps.

²⁹ While they were bringing the sacred chest into Jerusalem, Saul's daughter Michal watched them, looking out of a window. When she saw King David dancing and celebrating, she despised him.

Chapter 16

¹ They brought the sacred chest to Jerusalem and put it inside the sacred tent that David had told his workers to set up. Then they brought offerings to be completely burned on the altar and offerings to enable them to promise friendship with God. ² When David had finished presenting all those offerings, he asked Yahweh to bless the people. ³ He gave a loaf of bread, some dates, and some raisins to every Israelite man and woman who was there.

⁴ Then David appointed some of the descendants of Levi to stand in front of the sacred tent in which the sacred chest had been placed, to lead the people who worshiped and thanked and praised Yahweh, the God of the Israelite people. ⁵ Asaph, who played the cymbals, was their leader. Zechariah was his assistant. The other descendants of Levi who helped Asaph were Jaaziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, Obed-Edom, and Jeiel. They played lyres and harps. ⁶ Benaiah and Jahaziel were priests who blew trumpets frequently in front of the sacred tent in which was the sacred chest.

⁷ On that day, David gave to Asaph and his helpers this psalm to praise Yahweh:

⁸ Thank Yahweh and pray to him.

Tell the people of all nations what he has done.

⁹ Sing to him; sing songs to praise him.

Tell about all his miraculous deeds.

¹⁰ Be glad that you belong to him.

Those who want to know Yahweh better should rejoice.

¹¹ Ask Yahweh to help you and give you his strength,

and always seek to be with him!

¹² Do not forget the wonderful things that he has done,

the miracles and the just laws that he has decreed for us.

¹³ We people are the descendants of his servant Jacob;

we are the people of Israel whom he has chosen.

¹⁴ Yahweh is our God.

His just laws are known by people throughout the world.

¹⁵ He never forgets the covenants that he has made;

he made a promise that will last for a thousand generations.

¹⁶ That is the covenant that he made with Abraham,

and he repeated that covenant to Isaac.

¹⁷ It was an covenant for the Israelite people,

and he wanted that covenant to endure forever.

¹⁸ What he said was, "I will give the region of Canaan to you,

to belong to you and your descendants forever."

¹⁹ When Yahweh's people were only a few in number,

a tiny group of people who were living in that land like strangers,

²⁰ they continued to wander from one place to another,

from one kingdom to another.

²¹ He did not allow others to oppress them,

and he warned kings by saying to them,

²² "Do not harm the people whom I have chosen!

Do not harm my prophets!"

²³ You people throughout the world, sing to Yahweh.

Every day proclaim to others that he has saved us.

²⁴ Tell among the nations that he is great;

tell all the people groups the marvelous things that he has done.

²⁵ Yahweh is great, and he deserves to be praised very much.

He should be revered more than all the gods,

²⁶ because all the gods that the other people groups worship are only idols,

but Yahweh is truly great; he created the skies.

²⁷ God shows his splendor and majesty; they shine from where he rules.

Strength and beauty are in the place where he lives.

²⁸ You people in nations all over the world, praise Yahweh!

Praise Yahweh for his glorious power!

²⁹ Praise Yahweh with the glory his name deserves.

Come before him with offerings to give to him!

Bow down and worship Yahweh because he is holy and his holiness shines out from him with wonderful beauty.

³⁰ Be very afraid in his presence, because he is good and powerful, completely different than you.

He put the earth firmly in its place; and nothing ever will be able to move it.

³¹ Everything in the sky and on the earth should be happy.

People everywhere should say, "Yahweh is our king!"

³² The oceans and all the creatures that are in the oceans should shout;

the fields and everything that is in them should rejoice.

³³ When they do that, it will be as though the trees in the forest will sing joyfully in front of Yahweh.

That will happen when he comes to judge everyone on the earth.

³⁴ Thank Yahweh, because everything that he does is good.

He faithfully loves us forever.

³⁵ Say to him, "God, you are the one who rescues us,

so gather us together and save us from the armies of other nations.

When you do that, we will thank you , and we will be happy to praise you."

³⁶ Praise Yahweh, the God of us Israelite people,

He has always existed, and he will exist forever.

After the people finished singing that song, they all said "Amen!", and they praised Yahweh. ³⁷ Then David left Asaph and the other members of his clan there in front of the tent in which Yahweh's sacred chest had been placed. He told them that they must do their work there every day. ³⁸ David also left Obed Edom and 68 other descendants of Levi to work with them. Hosah and Obed Edom guarded the entrances of the sacred tent.

³⁹ David also told Zadok the high priest and the other priests who worked with

him to remain in front of Yahweh's sacred tent, at the place where the Israelite people worshiped Yahweh there in the city of Gibeon. ⁴⁰ Every morning and every evening they burned offerings on the altar, obeying the rules that had been written by Moses, rules that Yahweh had given to the Israelite people. ⁴¹ With them were Heman and Jeduthun and other descendants of Levi. They were chosen to sing songs to praise Yahweh because he faithfully loves his people forever. ⁴² Heman and Jeduthun were appointed to play the trumpets and cymbals when the other descendants of Levi sang sacred songs. The sons of Jeduthun were appointed to guard the gates of the sacred tent.

⁴³ Then all the people left. They all returned to their homes, and David returned home to ask Yahweh to bless his family.

Chapter 17

¹ After David began to live in his palace, he said to the prophet Nathan, "It does not seem right that I am here living in a palace made of cedar wood, but Yahweh's sacred chest is kept inside a tent!"

² Nathan replied to David, "Whatever you are thinking about doing, do it, because God is with you."

³ But that night God spoke to Nathan. He said,

⁴ "Go and tell my servant David that this is what I, Yahweh, am saying to him: 'You are not the one who should build a temple for me to live in. ⁵ I have not lived in any building, from the day that I brought the people of Israel up out of Egypt until now. Instead, I have lived in my sacred tent, moving from one place to another when the Israelites moved to

other places. ⁶ Wherever I went with all the Israelites as they traveled, I never said to any of their leaders whom I appointed to lead them, "Why have you not built me a temple made of cedar wood?"'

⁷ Therefore, this is what you should say to my servant David: 'I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, took you from a pasture where you were taking care of sheep, and I appointed you to be the ruler of my Israelite people. ⁸ I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have gotten rid of all your enemies who were in front of you. And now I will cause you to become very famous, as well known as the names of the greatest men who have ever lived on the earth. ⁹⁻¹⁰ Formerly, during the time that I appointed leaders for my Israelite people, many violent groups oppressed them. But this will not happen anymore. I have chosen a place where my Israelite people can live peacefully and no one will disturb them anymore. I will give them rest from being attacked by their enemies. And I will defeat all your enemies.

I declare to you that I, Yahweh, will enable your descendants to rule after you die. ¹¹ When your life ends and you die and go to be with your ancestors who have died, I will appoint one of your sons to become king, and I will enable his kingdom to be strong. ¹² He is the one who will arrange for a temple to be built for me. And I will make the rule of one of his descendants so strong that it will last forever. ¹³ I will be like a father to him, and it will be as though he is a son to me. I stopped loving Saul, the one who was the king before you became king, but I will never stop loving your son. ¹⁴ I will cause him to rule over my people and his kingdom will endure forever.'"

¹⁵ So Nathan reported to David everything that Yahweh had revealed to him.

¹⁶ Then David went into the sacred tent

and sat in the presence of Yahweh, and prayed this:

"Yahweh my God, I am certainly not worthy for you to have done of all these things for me, and my family is not worthy, either.

¹⁷ And O God, now, in addition to everything else, you have spoken about what will happen to my descendants in the future for many generations. Yahweh my God, you have acted toward me as though I was the most important man on the earth!

¹⁸ What more can I, David, say to you for honoring me? Yahweh, you know what kind of person I am. ¹⁹ You have done all this, Yahweh, and because it is what you wanted to do. You have done these great things for me and you have revealed to me these things that you have promised to do for me, because you love me.

²⁰ Yahweh, you are great. There is no one like you. Only you are God, which is what we have always heard. ²¹ And there is no nation in the world like Israel. Israel is the only nation on the earth whose people you went out to rescue. You performed great and awesome miracles, rescuing our ancestors from being slaves in Egypt, expelling the people of other people groups who were in Canaan. ²² You have caused us your Israelite people to belong to you forever, and you, Yahweh, have become our God!

²³ And now Yahweh, I pray that you will cause the things that you have promised about me and my descendants to be fulfilled forever, and do the things that you have said that you would do. ²⁴ When that happens, you will be famous forever. And people will exclaim, 'Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, is the God who rules Israel!' And you will

cause that forever there will be descendants of mine who will rule.

²⁵ You, my God, have revealed to me that you will cause some of my descendants to become kings. So I am brave enough to pray like this to you. ²⁶ Yahweh, you are God! You have promised to do these good things for me. ²⁷ And now you, Yahweh, have promised to bless my descendants, in order that they will continue to rule forever. That will happen because you, Yahweh, are the one who has blessed them, and you will keep blessing them forever."

Chapter 18

¹ Some time later, David's army attacked the army of Philistia and defeated them. They captured the city of Gath and the surrounding villages.

² His army also defeated the army of the Moab people group. The people were forced to accept David to be their ruler, and also to pay money each year to David's government, in order that David's army would protect them.

³ David's army also fought against the army of Hadadezer, the king of the region of Zobah in Aram near the city of Hamath, when Hadadezer was trying to establish control over the area near the Euphrates River. ⁴ David's army captured one thousand of Hadadezer's chariots, seven thousand chariot drivers, and twenty thousand soldiers. They hamstringed most of their horses; there were only one hundred horses that they did not cripple.

⁵ When the army of Aram came from the city of Damascus to help Hadadezer's army, David's soldiers killed twenty-two thousand of them. ⁶ Then David stationed groups of his soldiers in Damascus, and

the people of Aram were forced to accept David to be their ruler, and to pay to David's government each year the payment that he demanded. And Yahweh enabled David's army to win battles everywhere they went.

⁷ David soldiers took the gold shields that were carried by the officers of Hadadezer's army and brought them to Jerusalem. ⁸ They also brought from Tebah and Kun, two cities that belonged to Hadadezer, a lot of bronze, which David's son Solomon later used to make the huge bronze basin called "The Sea" and the pillars and other bronze items for the temple.

⁹ When Tou, the king of the city of Hamath in Aram, heard that David's army had defeated the entire army of King Hadadezer, ¹⁰ he sent his son Hadoram to King David, to greet him and congratulate him about his defeating Hadadezer's army, which had been fighting the army of Tou. Hadoram brought to David many items made of gold, silver, and bronze.

¹¹ King David dedicated those things to Yahweh, like he had done with the silver and gold that his soldiers had taken from the Edom and Moab people groups, and from the Ammon people group and from the people of Philistia, and from the descendants of Amalek.

¹² The army of David's army commander Abishai, whose mother was Zeruah, killed eighteen thousand soldiers from Edom in the Valley of Salt. ¹³ Then David stationed groups of his soldiers there in Edom, and the people of Edom were forced to become the servants of David.

¹⁴ David ruled over all the Israelite people, and he always did for them what was just and fair. ¹⁵ Joab son of Zeruah was the chief army commander. Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was the record keeper. ¹⁶

Zadok son of Ahitub and Ahimelech son of Abiathar were the high priests. Shavsha was the official secretary. ¹⁷ Benaiah son of Jehoiada ruled over the Kereth and Peleth groups who were David's bodyguards. And David's sons were his most important officials.

Chapter 19

¹ Some time later, Nahash, the king of the Ammon people group, died. Then his son Hanun became their king. ² When David heard about that, he thought to himself, "Nahash was kind to me, so I will be kind to his son." So David sent some officials there, to tell Hanun that he was sorry to hear that Hanun's father had died.

But when David's officials came to Hanun in the land where the Ammonite lived, ³ the leaders of the Ammon people group said to Hanun, "Do you think that David is really to honor your father that King David is sending these men to say that he is sorry that your father died? We think that his men have come to look around our city in order to determine how his army can conquer us."

⁴ Hanun believed what they said; so he commanded some soldiers who seized the officials whom David had sent, and shaved off their beards, and insulted them by cutting off the lower part of their robes, and then sent them away.

⁵ The officials were greatly humiliated. When David found out about what had happened to his officials, he sent some messengers to them to tell them, "Stay at Jericho until your beards have grown again, and then return home."

⁶ Then the leaders of the Ammon people group realized that they had greatly insulted David. So Hanun and some of his

officials sent thirty-three thousand kilograms of silver to hire chariots and chariot drivers from the regions of Aram Naharaim, Aram Maacah and Zobah north-east of Israel. ⁷ They hired thirty-two thousand chariots and chariot drivers, as well as the kings of the region of Maacah and their armies. They came and set up their tents near the city of Medeba in the region of Moab. The soldiers from the Ammon people group also marched out and stood in their positions at the entrance to their capital city, Rabbah.

⁸ When David heard about that, he sent Joab and all his army. ⁹ The soldiers of the Ammon people group came out of their city and lined up for battle at the entrance to their capital city, Rabbah. Meanwhile, the other kings who had come with their armies stood in their positions in the open fields.

¹⁰ Joab saw that there were groups of enemy soldiers in front of his troops and behind his troops. So he selected some of the best Israelite troops and put them in positions to fight against the soldiers of Aram.

¹¹ He appointed his older brother Abishai to be the commander of his other soldiers and he told them to stand in their positions in front of the army of the Ammon people group. ¹² Joab said to them, "If the soldiers from Aram are too strong for us to defeat them, then your soldiers must come and help us. But if the soldiers from the Ammon people group are too strong for you to defeat them, then my soldiers will come and help your men. ¹³ We must be strong and fight hard to defend our people and our cities that belong to our God. Yahweh will do what he considers to be good."

¹⁴ So Joab and his troops advanced to fight the army of Aram; and the soldiers from Aram were driven away by the army of Israel. ¹⁵ And when the soldiers of the Am-

mon people group saw that the soldiers from Aram were running away, they also started to run away from Abishai and his army, and they retreated back inside the city. So Joab and his army returned to Jerusalem.

¹⁶ After the leaders of the army of Aram realized that they had been defeated by the army of Israel, they sent messengers to another part of Aram on the east side of the Euphrates river, and brought troops from there to the battle area, with Shophak, the commander of Hadadezer's army, leading them.

¹⁷ When David heard about that, he gathered all the Israelite soldiers, and they crossed the Jordan River. They advanced and took their battle positions to attack the army of Aram.

¹⁸ But the army of Aram ran away from the soldiers of Israel. However, David's soldiers killed seven thousand of their chariot drivers and forty thousand other soldiers. They also killed Shophak, their army commander.

¹⁹ When the kings who had been ruled by Hadadezer realized that they had been defeated by the Israelite army, they made peace with David, and agreed to allow him to rule them.

So the rulers of Aram did not want to help the rulers of the Ammon people group anymore.

Chapter 20

¹ In that region, kings usually went with their armies to fight their enemies in the springtime. But the following year, David did not do that. Instead, he stayed in Jerusalem, and he sent his commander Joab to lead the army. Joab took his troops. They crossed the Jordan River

and ruined the land of the Ammon people group. Then they went to Rabbah, the capital city, and surrounded it. David stayed in Jerusalem for a while. But later he took more troops and went to help Joab. Their armies attacked Rabbah and destroyed it. ² Then David took the crown from the head of the king of Rabbah and put it on his own head. It was very heavy; it weighed thirty-three kilograms, and it had many very valuable stones. They also took many other valuable things from the city. ³ Then they brought the people out of the city and forced them to work for their army, using saws and iron picks and axes. David's soldiers did this in all the cities of the Ammon people group. Then David and all of his army returned to Jerusalem.

⁴ Later, David's army fought a battle with the army of Philistia, at the city of Gezer. During the battle Sibbekai, from Hushah clan, killed Sippai, one of the descendants of the of the Rapha giants. So the armies of Philistia were defeated.

⁵ In another battle against the soldiers of Philistia, Elhanan son of Jair, killed Lahmi, the younger brother of the giant Goliath from the city of Gath, who had a spear which was as thick as a weaver's rod.

⁶ There was another battle near Gath. A huge man was there who had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot. He was descended from the Rapha giants. ⁷ When he made fun of the soldiers of Israel, Jehonadab son of Shimea killed him. Shimea was David's older brother.

⁸ Those were some of the descendants of the Rapha giants who had lived in Gath, who were killed by David and his soldiers.

Chapter 21

¹ Satan decided to cause the Israelite people to have trouble. So he incited David to find out how many men in Israel were able to be in the army.

² So David commanded Joab and the other army commanders, "Count all the men in Israel who are able to be in the army. Start at Beersheba in the south and go all the way to Dan in the north. Then come back and report to me, in order that I may know how many men there are."

³ But Joab replied, "Your Majesty, I hope that Yahweh will make our army a hundred times larger than it is now. But we all serve you. So you should not commit this sin and make Israel suffer for it."

⁴ But David would not change his mind. So Joab and his soldiers went everywhere in Israel and in Judah, and counted the people. Then they returned to Jerusalem, ⁵ and they reported to David that there were 1,100,000 men in Israel who could be in the army, and 470,000 in Judah. ⁶ However, Joab did not count the men from the tribes of Levi and Benjamin, because he was disgusted with what the king had commanded.

⁷ David's command to count the people caused God to become angry, so he told David that he had decided to punish the people of Israel. ⁸ Then David prayed to God. He said to him, "What I did was very foolish. I have sinned greatly by what I have done. So now I plead with you, please forgive me."

⁹ Then Yahweh said to Gad, David's prophet, ¹⁰ "Go and tell this to David: 'I am allowing you to choose one of three things to punish you. I will do whichever one you choose.'"

¹¹ So Gad went to David and said to him, "This is what Yahweh says: 'You can

choose one of these punishments: ¹² three years of famine in Israel, or three months during which your armies will run away from their enemies who will attack them with swords, or three days during which I will send my angel to cause many people in the country to die because of a plague.’ So you must decide what I will say to answer Yahweh, the one who sent me.”

¹³ David replied to Gad, “I am very distressed. But allow Yahweh to punish me, because he is very merciful. Do not allow humans to punish me, because they will not be merciful.”

¹⁴ So Yahweh sent a plague on the people of Israel, and seventy thousand of them died because of it. ¹⁵ And God sent an angel to destroy the people in Jerusalem by the plague. But when the angel was standing at the ground where Ornan, from the Jebus people group, threshed grain, Yahweh saw all the suffering that the people had endured, and he was grieved. So he said to the angel, “Stop what you are doing! That is enough!”

¹⁶ David looked up and saw the angel whom Yahweh had sent, standing between the sky and the ground. The angel had a sword in his hand that was pointed toward Jerusalem. Then David and the elders of the city, who were wearing clothes made of rough sackcloth, prostrated themselves on the ground.

¹⁷ David said to God, “I am the one who ordered the men who could be in the army to be counted. I am the one who has sinned and done what is very wrong, but these people are as innocent as sheep. They have certainly not done anything that is wrong. So Yahweh my God, punish me and my family, but do not allow this plague to continue to cause your people to become sick and die.”

¹⁸ Then the angel who was sent by Yahweh

told Gad to go up to the place where Ornan threshed grain and tell David to build an altar to worship Yahweh there. ¹⁹ So after Gad told David, he obeyed the message that Yahweh had given to Gad, and he went up there.

²⁰ While Ornan was threshing some wheat, he turned and saw the angel. His four sons who were with him also saw the angel, and they hid themselves. ²¹ Then David approached. When Ornan saw him, he left the place where he was threshing grain and prostrated himself, with his face touching the ground.

²² David said to him, “Please sell me this place for threshing in order that I can build an altar here to worship Yahweh, in order that he will stop this plague. I will pay the full price.”

²³ Ornan replied, “Take it! Your Majesty, do whatever you want to. I will give you the oxen that thresh the grain for an offering to be completely burned on the altar. And I will give you the threshing boards to use as wood on the altar, and I will give you flour for a flour offering. I will give all those things to you.”

²⁴ But the king said to Ornan, “No, I will not take these things as a gift. I will pay you the full price for it. I will not take what belongs to you, and offer sacrifices that have cost me nothing and offer them to Yahweh to be completely burned on the altar.”

²⁵ So David paid to Ornan six and one-half kilograms of gold for the whole area. ²⁶ David built an altar to worship Yahweh there, and he offered sacrifices to be completely burned on the altar and sacrifices to restore fellowship with Yahweh. David prayed to Yahweh, and Yahweh answered by sending a fire from heaven to burn up the offerings on the altar.

²⁷ Then Yahweh spoke to the angel, and

told him to put his sword back into its sheath. So the angel did that. ²⁸ And when David saw that Yahweh had answered him there at the place where Ornan threshed grain and had ended the plague, he offered sacrifices there. ²⁹ Yahweh's sacred tent, which Moses had commanded to be set up in the wilderness, and the altar for burning sacrifices completely, were at that time on a hill at the city of Gibeon. ³⁰ But David did not want to go there to request God to tell him what he wanted David to do, because he was afraid that the angel sent from Yahweh might strike him with his sword; he realized that this was the place that Yahweh now wanted sacrifices to be made.

Chapter 22

¹ Then David said, "Here, at the edge of Jerusalem, is where we will build the temple for our God Yahweh, and where we will make the altar for burning the offerings that the Israelite people will bring."

² So David commanded that the foreigners who lived in Israel must gather together. When they did that, he appointed some of those men to cut huge stones from the quarries and to smooth their surfaces, to be used to build the temple of God. ³ David provided a large amount of iron for making nails and hinges for the doors in the gates of the temple. He also provided a huge amount of bronze for making various utensils; and because there was a huge amount of it, no one could weigh it all. ⁴ He also provided money for buying a large amount of cedar logs. Because there was a huge number of them, no one counted them. Those were logs that men from Tyre and Sidon cities sent to David.

⁵ David provided all those things because he thought, "My son Solomon is still young

and he does not know what he needs to know about building buildings, and the temple of Yahweh must be magnificent. It must be a glorious building that will become famous, and people throughout the world must consider it to be glorious. So now I will begin to prepare for it to be built, and Solomon will be responsible for finishing it." So David collected a great amount of building materials before he died.

⁶ Then David summoned his son Solomon, and told him that he should arrange for a temple to be built for Yahweh, the God whom the Israelites worshiped. ⁷ He said to him, "I wanted to build a temple to honor Yahweh, my God. ⁸ But Yahweh told a prophet to tell me, 'You have killed many men in the big battles that you have fought. I have seen the blood of all the people whom you killed, so you will not be the one who will arrange for a temple to be built to honor me. ⁹ But you will have a son who will be king of Israel after you die. He will be a man who is peaceful and quiet, not a man who kills others. And I will cause that there will be peace between him and his enemies who are in all the nearby lands. His name will be Solomon, which sounds like the word for peace. During the time that he is king, people in Israel will be peaceful and safe. ¹⁰ He is the one who will arrange for a temple to be built to honor me. He will be like a son to me, and I will cause some of his descendants to rule over Israel forever.'

¹¹ So now, my son, I hope that Yahweh will help you, and enable you to be successful in arranging for building the temple of Yahweh, your God, which is what he said that you would do. ¹² I also hope that he will enable you to be wise and to understand what you need to know, and enable you to obey his laws while you rule over Israel. ¹³ If you carefully obey all the laws

and decrees which Yahweh told Moses to tell Israel to do, you will be successful. Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid of anything, and do not become discouraged!

¹⁴ I have tried hard to provide materials for building the temple of Yahweh. I have provided 3,300 metric tons of gold, 33,000 metric tons of silver. I have also provided a very large amount of iron and bronze, no one has been able to weigh it all. I have also gathered lumber and stone for the walls of the temple, but you may need to get some more of those things. ¹⁵ There are many men in Israel who have good ability to cut big stones for making stone walls, and carpenters, and men who are very skilled at making various kinds of things. ¹⁶ There are many men who know how to make things from gold and silver and bronze and iron. So now I say to you, begin the work of building the temple, and I hope that Yahweh will be with you."

¹⁷ Then David commanded that all the Israelite leaders must assist Solomon. He said to them, ¹⁸ "Yahweh our God is certainly with you. He has allowed you to have peace with all the nearby nations. He has enabled my army to conquer them, so now Yahweh and my people control them. ¹⁹ Now you must obey Yahweh with your entire inner beings. Help Solomon to arrange for building the temple for Yahweh God, in order that you can bring the sacred chest that contains the Ten Commandments and the other sacred items that belong to Yahweh into the temple that you will build to honor him."

Chapter 23

¹ David was a very old man when he appointed his son Solomon to be the next king.

² David gathered the leaders of Israel and the priests and other descendants of Levi.

³ He commanded some of his officials to count the descendants of Levi who were at least thirty years old, and they found out that there were thirty-eight thousand of them. ⁴ Then David said, "From those thirty-eight thousand men, I want twenty-four thousand of them to supervise the work at the temple of Yahweh, and I want six thousand of them to be officials and judges. ⁵ I want four thousand to be guards at the gates, and four thousand to praise Yahweh, using the musical instruments that I have provided for them."

⁶ David divided the descendants of Levi into three groups; each group consisted of men who were descendants of one of the three sons of Levi—Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

The descendants of Gershon are listed next.

⁷ The descendants of Gershon were Ladan and Shimei.

⁸ There were three sons of Ladan: Jehiel was the oldest, and his younger brothers Zetham and Joel.

⁹ There were three of the sons of Shimei: Shelomoth, Haziël, and Haran.

They were all leaders of the clans of Ladan.

¹⁰ There were four men who were sons of Shimei:

¹¹ Jahath, who was his oldest son, and his younger brothers Ziza, Jeush, and Beriah.

Jeush and Beriah did not have many sons, so they were counted as though they were one family.

The descendants of Kohath are listed next.

¹² Kohath had four sons: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.

¹³ There were two sons of Amram: Aaron and Moses.

Aaron and his descendants were set apart to dedicate to Yahweh the very holy things, to offer sacrifices to Yahweh, to serve in his presence, and to declare to the people what Yahweh would do to bless them. They were to do those things forever.

¹⁴ The sons of Moses, the man who served God well, were counted as part of the tribe of Levi. They are listed next.

¹⁵ The sons of Moses were Gershom and Eliezer.

¹⁶ The oldest son of Gershom was Shubael.

¹⁷ Rehabiah was the oldest son of Eliezer.

Eliezer had no other sons, but Rehabiah had many sons.

¹⁸ The oldest son of Izhar was Shelomith.

¹⁹ Hebron had four sons.

Jeriah was his oldest son, and his younger brothers were Amariah, Jahaziel, and Jekameam.

²⁰ Uzziel had two sons.

Micah was the oldest son, and his younger brother was Isshiah.

The descendants of Merari are listed next.

²¹ Merari had two sons: Mahli and Mushi.

The sons of Mahli were Eleazar and Kish.

²² Eleazar had no sons; he had only daughters. So their cousins, the sons of Kish, married them.

²³ The three sons of Mushi were Mahli, Eder, and Jerimoth.

²⁴ Those were the descendants of Levi, whose names were listed according to their families. They were chosen for special jobs by casting lots. Each person who was at least twenty years old was listed. They all worked in the temple of Yahweh.

²⁵ David had said previously, "Yahweh, the God to whom we Israelite people belong, has enabled us to have peace, and he has come to live in Jerusalem forever. ²⁶ Therefore, the descendants of Levi no longer need to carry the sacred tent and the items used in the work there." ²⁷ Obeying the final instructions of David before he died, instructions for doing this work at the temple, they counted only the descendants of Levi who were at least twenty years old.

²⁸ The work of those descendants of Levi was to assist the descendants of Aaron in their work in Yahweh's temple. They were to be in charge of the temple courtyards and the side rooms, the ceremonies for purifying all the sacred things, and to do other work at the temple. ²⁹ They were also in charge of the loaves of bread on display before God, the loaves that were placed each week on the table in the temple, the flour for the flour offerings, and the wafers that were made without yeast. They also had to measure the ingredients, mix them, and bake the bread and wafers. ³⁰ They were also told to stand every morning at the temple and thank Yahweh and praise him. They were also required to do the same thing every evening. ³¹ And they were to do the same thing whenever offerings that were to be completely burned on the altar were presented to Yahweh on Sabbath days and during the new moon

celebrations and other religious festivals. They were told how many of them should be there and what they should do each time.

³² So the descendants of Levi did the work that was assigned to them by their fellow Israelites who were descendants of Aaron. They did that work at the sacred tent and in the holy place inside the tent, and later at the temple.

Chapter 24

¹ These are the divisions of the descendants of Aaron the first high priest: Aaron's four sons were Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

² But Nadab and Abihu died before their father died, and they had no children. So their younger brothers Eleazar and Ithamar became the priests. ³ Zadok, who was a descendant of Eleazar, and Ahimelech, who was a descendant of Ithamar, helped David to separate the family groups into two groups. Each group had certain duties. ⁴ There were more leaders among the descendants of Eleazar than there were among the descendants of Ithamar. So they appointed sixteen leaders from Eleazar's descendants and eight leaders from Ithamar's descendants. ⁵ There were temple officials and priests who were there, including descendants of both Eleazar and Ithamar, to make sure that the work was divided fairly. So they decided what work each group would do by casting lots.

⁶ Shemaiah son of Nethanel, who was a descendant of Levi, wrote down the names of the leaders of each group while David and his officials were watching. Zadok, the high priest, and Ahimelech his assistant, and the leaders of the families of the

priests and of the families of the other descendants of Levi also watched.

⁷ Jehoiarib was the first one whose name was selected by casting lots.

Next Jedaiah was selected.

⁸ Next, Harim was selected.

Next, Seorim was selected.

⁹ Next, Malkijah was selected.

Next, Mijamin was selected.

¹⁰ Next, Hakkoz was selected.

Next, Abijah was selected.

¹¹ Next, Jeshua was selected.

Next, Shecaniah was selected.

¹² Next, Eliashib was selected.

Next, Jakim was selected.

¹³ Next, Huppah was selected.

Next, Jeshebeab was selected.

¹⁴ Next, Bilgah was selected.

Next, Immer was selected.

¹⁵ Next, Hezir was selected.

Next, Happizzez was selected.

¹⁶ Next, Pethahiah was selected.

Next, Jehezkel was selected.

¹⁷ Next, Jakin was selected.

Next, Gamul was selected.

¹⁸ Next, Delaiah was selected.

Next, Maaziah was selected.

¹⁹ Those were the men who were chosen to be the leaders of the groups that would serve in the temple, obeying the regulations that were set down by Aaron, regulations which Yahweh, the God to whom we Israelite people belong, had given to him.

²⁰ This is a list of some of the other descendants of Levi:

From the sons of Amram there was Shubael.

From the sons of Shubael there was Jehdeiah.

²¹ From Rehabiah son of Eleazar there was Isshiah, his oldest son.

²² From the descendants of Kohath's son Izhar there was Shelomoth.

From the descendants of Shelomoth there was Jahath.

²³ From the descendants of Kohath's son Hebron there was his oldest son Jeriah and Jeriah's younger brothers Amariah, Jahaziel, and Jekameam.

²⁴ From the descendants of Kohath's son Uzziel there was Micah.

From the descendants of Micah there was Shamir.

²⁵ And Micah's younger brother was Isshiah.

From the descendants of Isshiah was Zechariah.

²⁶ The sons of Merari were Mahli, Mushi, and Jaaziah.

²⁷ From the descendants of Jaaziah there were Beno, Shoham, Zaccur, and Ibri.

²⁸ Mahli's son Eleazar did not have any sons.

²⁹ From the descendants of Kish there was his son Jerahmeel.

³⁰ The sons of Mushi were Mahli, Eder, and Jerimoth.

Those were descendants of Levi who were listed according to the leaders of their families. ³¹ The jobs they would do were decided by casting lots like their fellow Israelites the descendants of Aaron, did. They cast lots while King David, Zadok, Ahimelech, and the leaders of the families of the priests and the other descendants of Levi watched. The jobs that were given

to the families of each oldest brother and each youngest brother were equal.

Chapter 25

¹ David and some of the temple officials chose some of the descendants of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun to be in charge of the preaching, and to play harps and lyres and cymbals. This is a list of the men whom they chose for that work:

² From the sons of Asaph they chose Zaccur, Joseph, Nethaniah, and Aserelah. Asaph supervised them. And the king appointed Asaph to preach.

³ From the sons of Jeduthun they chose six men: Gedaliah, Zeri, Jeshaiiah, Shimei, Hashabiah, and Mattithiah. Jeduthun supervised them and also preached, playing his harp while he thanked and praised Yahweh.

⁴ From the sons of Heman they chose Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel, Shubael, Jerimoth, Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti, Romamti-Eze, Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir, and Mahazioth. ⁵ They were all sons of Heman, who was King David's prophet. God promised to cause Heman to be strong, so altogether, God gave him fourteen sons and three daughters.

⁶ All those men were supervised by their fathers while they played music in the temple of Yahweh. They played cymbals, lyres, and harps. And their fathers—Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman—were supervised by the king. ⁷ Those men and their relatives were all trained and skilled for playing musical instruments in the temple. That was their work for Yahweh. Including their relatives, there were 288 of them. ⁸ All of them, including ones who were young and those who were old, cast lots to determine what work they would

do.

⁹ From the family of Asaph, the first ones selected were Joseph and 12 of his sons and relatives.

¹⁰ Next, Gedaliah and 12 of his sons and relatives were selected.

¹¹ Next, Zaccur and 12 of his sons and relatives were selected.

¹² Next, Nethaniah and 12 of his sons and relatives were selected.

¹³ Next, Bukkiah and 12 of his sons and relatives were selected.

¹⁴ Next, Jesarelah and 12 of his sons and relatives were selected.

¹⁵ Next, Jeshaiiah and 12 of his sons and relatives were selected.

¹⁶ Next, Mattaniah and 12 of his sons and relatives were selected.

¹⁷ Next, Shimei and 12 of his sons and relatives were selected.

¹⁸ Next, Azarel and 12 of his sons and relatives were selected.

¹⁹ Next, Hashabiah and 12 of his sons and relatives were selected.

²⁰ Next, Shubael and 12 of his sons and relatives were selected.

²¹ Next, Mattithiah and 12 of his sons and relatives were selected.

²² Next, Jerimoth and 12 of his sons and relatives were selected.

²³ Next, Hananiah and 12 of his sons and relatives were selected.

²⁴ Next, Joshbekashah and 12 of his sons and relatives were selected.

²⁵ Next, Hanani and 12 of his sons and relatives were selected.

²⁶ Next, Mallothi and 12 of his sons and relatives were selected.

²⁷ Next, Eliathah and 12 of his sons and relatives were selected.

²⁸ Next, Hothir and 12 of his sons and relatives were selected.

²⁹ Next, Giddalti and 12 of his sons and relatives were selected.

³⁰ Next, Mahazioth and 12 of his sons and relatives were selected.

³¹ Next, Romamti-Eze and 12 of his sons and relatives were selected.

Chapter 26

¹ This is a list of the groups of men who guarded the temple gates:

From the descendants of Korah, there was Meshelemiah son of Kore, who was one of the sons of Asaph.

² The oldest son of Meshelemiah was Zechariah. His other sons were Jediahel, Zebadiah, Jathniel, ³ Elam, Jehohanan, and Eliehoenai.

⁴ Another guard was Obed Edom.

His oldest son was Shemaiah. His other sons were Jehozabad, Joah, Sakar, Nethanel, ⁵ Ammiel, Issachar, and Peul-lethai. It was because God had blessed him that he had many sons.

⁶ Obed Edom's son Shemaiah also had sons. They were leaders in their father's family because they were capable of doing many things well.

⁷ The sons of Shemaiah were Othni, Rephael, Obed, and Elzabad. Shemaiah's relatives Elihu and Semakiah were also capable men.

⁸ All of those descendants of Obed Edom and their sons and relatives were capable people and strong workers. Altogether there were 62 of them.

⁹ Another guard was Meshelemiah. He and his sons and relatives were also capable people. There were 18 of them altogether.

¹⁰ Another guard was Hosah's son Shimri, a descendant of Merari. Hosah appointed Shimri to be the leader, even though he was not Hosah's oldest son. ¹¹ Hosah's other sons were Hilkiah, Tabaliah, and Zechariah. Altogether there were 13 sons and relatives of Hosah.

¹² Those men were leaders of the groups of men who guarded the gates of the temple. They worked at the temple like their relatives did. ¹³ By casting lots, the leader of each family chose one gate for their group to guard. All of them, including young men and old men, cast lots. ¹⁴ Shelemiah's group was selected to guard the east gate. The group of Shelemiah's son Zechariah, who was a wise counselor, was selected to guard the north gate.

¹⁵ Then Obed Edom's group was selected to guard the south gate, and his sons were selected to guard the entrances to the temple storerooms.

¹⁶ Then Shuppim's group and Hosah's group were selected to guard the west gate and the Shalleketh Gate on the upper road to the temple.

The work for the guards was divided evenly. ¹⁷ Each day there were six descendants of Levi who guarded the east gate, four who guarded the north gate, four who guarded the south gate, and two at a time who guarded the entrances to the storerooms. ¹⁸ At the west gate there were two men who guarded the courtyard and four who guarded the road outside the courtyard.

¹⁹ Those were the groups of men who were descendants of Korah and Merari who guarded the gates of the temple.

²⁰ Other descendants of Levi were in

charge of the chests that contained the money that was dedicated to God, money that the people brought to the temple.

²¹ One of those men was Ladan, a descendant of Gershon. He was the ancestor of several family groups. Jehiel was the leader of one of those family groups. ²² Others who had that work were Zetham and his younger brother Joel, who were the sons of Jehiel.

²³ Others who did that work were descendants of Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel.

²⁴ Shubuel, a descendant of Moses's son Gershon, was the leader who was in charge of the money chests. ²⁵ Others who did that work were the descendants of Gershon's younger brother Eliezer. Those men were Eliezer's son Rehabiah, Rehabiah's son Jeshaiah, Jeshaiah's son Joram, Joram's son Zichri, and Zichri's son Shelomith. ²⁶ Shelomith and his relatives were in charge of all the valuable things that had been dedicated to Yahweh by King David, by the leaders of the family groups, by the army commanders of one thousand soldiers and commanders of 100 soldiers, and by other army commanders. ²⁷ Some of the things that those army officers had taken from Israel's enemies in battles they dedicated for the repair of the temple of Yahweh. ²⁸ And Shelomith and his relatives were also in charge of everything that had been dedicated to Yahweh by the prophet Samuel, by King Saul, and by David's two army commanders Abner and Joab.

²⁹ From the descendants of Izhar, Kenaniah and his sons were given work outside the temple area. They were officials and judges in various places in Israel.

³⁰ From the descendants of Hebron, Hashabiah and his relatives were responsible for the work done for Yahweh and

for the king in all the area west of the Jordan river. There were 1,700 of them who were able to do their work well.³¹ It was written in the records of the descendants of Hebron that Jeriah was their leader. When David had been ruling for almost forty years, they searched in those records, and they found names of capable men descended from Hebron who were at the city of Jazer in the region of Gilead.³² Jeriah had 2,700 relatives who were able to do their work well, and who were leaders of their families. King David put them in charge of governing the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the western half of the tribe of Manasseh, to be sure that all the people did what God and the king told them to do.

Chapter 27

¹ This is a list of the Israelite men who served the king in the army. Some were leaders of families, some were commanders of one hundred men, some were commanders of one thousand men, and some were other officers. There were twenty-four thousand men in each group. Each group served one month of each year.

² Jashobeam, son of Zabdiel, was in charge of the group that served during the first month of each year. ³ He was a descendant of Perez, and he was the commander of all the army officers during the first month of each year.

⁴ Dodai, from the clan of Ahohi, was the commander of the group that served during the following.

⁵ Benaiah, son of Jehoiada the high priest, was the commander of the group that served during the following month.

⁶ He was the one who was a mighty warrior among David's thirty greatest sol-

diers, and he was their leader. His son Ammizabad was his assistant.

⁷ Asahel, Joab's younger brother, was the commander of the group that served during the following month. Asahel's son Zebadiah became the commander after Asahel was killed.

⁸ The commander for the following month was Shamhuth, a descendant of Izrah.

⁹ The commander for the following month was Ira son of Ikkesh from the city of Tekoa.

¹⁰ The commander for the following month was Helez, a member of the clan of Pelon from the tribe of Ephraim.

¹¹ The commander for the following month was Sibbekai, a descendant of Zerah from the city of Hushah.

¹² The commander for the following month was Abiezer from the city of Anathoth in the tribe of Benjamin.

¹³ The commander for the following month was Maharai, a descendant of Zerah from the city of Netophath.

¹⁴ The commander for the following month was Benaiah from the city of Pirathon in the tribe of Ephraim.

¹⁵ The commander for the last month of each year was Heldai, a descendant of Othniel from the city of Netophath.

¹⁶ This is a list of the administrators of the twelve tribes of Israel:

Eliezer, son of Zicri, was the administrator of the tribe of Reuben.

Shephatiah, son of Maacah, was the administrator of the tribe of Simeon.

¹⁷ Hashabiah, the son of Kemuel, was the administrator of the tribe of Levi.

Zadok was the administrator of the tribe of Aaron.

¹⁸ Elihu, David's older brother, was the administrator of the tribe of Judah.

Omri, son of Michael, was the administrator of the tribe of Issachar.

¹⁹ Ishmaiah, son of Obadiah, was the administrator of the tribe of Zebulun.

Jerimoth, son of Azriel, was the administrator of the tribe of Naphtali.

²⁰ Hoshea, son of Azaziah, was the administrator of the tribe of Ephraim.

Joel, son of Pedaiiah, was the administrator of the tribe of the western half of the tribe of Manasseh.

²¹ Iddo, son of Zechariah, was the administrator of the eastern half of the tribe of Manasseh, in the region of Gilead.

Jaasiel, son of Abner, was the administrator of the tribe of Benjamin.

²² Azarel, son of Jeroham, was the administrator of the tribe of Dan.

²³ David did not tell Joab to count the men who were less than twenty years old, because Yahweh had promised many years previously that there would be as many people in Israel as there are stars in the sky. ²⁴ Joab and his helpers started to count the men of Israel, but they did not finish counting them because Joab knew that Yahweh was angry about their being counted. Yahweh punished the people of Israel because of this counting, and as a result the total number of Israelite men able to serve in the army was not written on the scroll about King David's rule.

²⁵ Azmaveth, son of Adiel, was in charge of the king's storehouses.

Jonathan, son of Uzziah, was in charge of the storehouses in other towns and villages in Israel, and also in charge of the watchtowers.

²⁶ Ezri son of Kelub was in charge of the

workers who farmed the land that belonged to the king.

²⁷ Shimei from the city of Ramath was in charge of the king's vineyards.

²⁸ Baal-Hanan from the city of Geder was in charge of storing the olive oil.

²⁹ Shitrai from the Plain of Sharon was in charge of the herds of cattle that grazed there.

³⁰ Obil, a descendant of Ishmael, was in charge of the camels.

Jehdeiah from the city of Meronoth was in charge of the donkeys.

³¹ Jaziz, a descendant of Hagar, was in charge of the king's flocks of sheep.

All of those officials were in charge of the things that belonged to King David.

³² David's uncle Jonathan was a wise counselor for him.

Jehiel, son of Hacmoni, taught the king's sons.

³³ Ahithophel was the king's official counselor.

³⁴ Hushai from the Ark people group was the king's special friend.

Benaiah's son Jehoiada became the king's advisor after Ahithophel died, and later Abiathar became his advisor.

Chapter 28

¹ David summoned all the leaders of Israel to come to Jerusalem. He summoned the leaders of the tribes, the leaders of the groups that worked for the king, the commanders of one hundred soldiers, the commanders of one thousand soldiers, those who were in charge of the king's property and his livestock, those who

taught his sons, all the palace officials, and his mighty soldiers and bravest warriors.

² David stood up and said, "My fellow Israelites, listen to me. I wanted to build a temple to be a place where we would put the sacred chest containing Yahweh's covenant, where the sacred chest would stay permanently. And I made plans to build it. ³ But God said to me, 'You are not the one who will arrange to build a temple, because you have fought battles and have killed people.'

⁴ But Yahweh, the God to whom we Israelites belong, had chosen me and my descendants to be the kings of Israel forever. First he chose Judah to be a leader, and from the people of Judah he chose me to be the king over all of Israel. ⁵ Yahweh has given me many sons, but from them he chose my son Solomon to be the next king to rule his kingdom of Israel. ⁶ He said to me, 'Solomon your son is the one who will arrange to build my temple and the courtyards around it, because I have chosen him to be like my son and I will be like his father. ⁷ I will enable his kingdom to endure forever if he continues to obey my laws and decrees, like you are doing now.'

⁸ So now, while all you people of Israel, all of you who belong to Yahweh, are watching, and while God is listening, I command all you people to carefully obey all the commands of Yahweh our God, in order that you may continue to possess this good land and enable your descendants to inherit it forever.

⁹ And you, my son Solomon, must know God like I know him, and you must serve him faithfully and because you want to. You must do that because he knows what everyone is thinking and he understands the reasons that people do what they do. If you seek to know him, he will heed your prayers. But if you abandon him, he will

abandon you forever. ¹⁰ Yahweh has chosen you to arrange to build a temple for him. So think about what I have said, and be strong and do what he is wanting you to do."

¹¹ Then David gave to his son Solomon the scroll on which were written the plans for the main rooms of the temple, its porch, its storerooms, all the other upper and lower rooms, the holy place, and the very holy place having the sacred chest and its lid.

¹² David wrote for him the plans that he had made for building the courtyards and all the rooms that surrounded the temple, including the room where the money and other valuable things that were dedicated to God were kept. ¹³ He gave Solomon instructions for the work groups of priests and other descendants of Levi, about all the work that they must do to serve in Yahweh's temple, and about taking care of all the things that would be used in the work at the temple. ¹⁴ He wrote down how much gold and how much silver should be used to make all the items in the temple. ¹⁵ This was a list of how much gold would be needed for making the gold lampstands and the lamps, how much silver to make the silver lamps and lampstands. ¹⁶ There was a list for how much gold would be needed for making the table on which the priests would put the bread to display before God, how much silver to make the other tables, ¹⁷ and how much pure gold for the meat forks and the bowls and the cups, how much gold for each gold dish, how much silver for each silver dish. ¹⁸ There was a list for how much pure gold would be needed to make the altar for burning incense. He also gave to Solomon his plans for making the golden statues of winged creatures that would be above the sacred chest of Yahweh, like a chariot for him.

¹⁹ Then David said, "I have written all

these plans while Yahweh was directing me. He has enabled me to understand all the details of his plan for the temple that is to be built.”

²⁰ David also said to his son Solomon, “Be strong and courageous, and do this work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, because Yahweh our God, whom I worship, will be with you. He will not fail to help you or abandon you until you finish all the work of making the temple of his. ²¹ The groups of priests and other descendants of Levi are ready to begin their work at God’s temple, and every man who has a special skill will help you in all the work. And my officials and the other people will obey you, whatever you command them to do.”

Chapter 29

¹ Then King David said to all the people who had gathered there, “My son Solomon, the one whom God has chosen to be the next king, is young and does not have much experience. This work of building the temple is great, because this glorious building will not be to honor people, but to honor Yahweh our God. ² From all the things that I possess, I have provided what will be needed to build the temple of my God—gold for the things to be made of gold, silver for the things to be made of silver, bronze for the things to be made of bronze, iron for the things to be made of iron, wood for the things to be made of wood, and large amounts of onyx and turquoise and other valuable stones of various colors, and marble and all kinds of valuable stones. ³ In addition to all these things that I have given for the temple, I am giving my own treasures of gold and silver, because I very earnestly desire that this holy temple for my God be built. ⁴ I am giving about 100 metric tons

of gold from Ophir and 230 metric tons of refined silver to cover the walls of the buildings, ⁵ for making the other items of gold and silver, and for the other work to be done by the craftsmen. So now, I ask you, who is willing to show by contributing other gifts for the building of the temple that he has dedicated himself to Yahweh?”

⁶ Then the leaders of the families, the leaders of the tribes of Israel, the commanders of one thousand soldiers and the commanders of one hundred soldiers, and the officials who supervised the work that the king wanted done, gave gifts willingly. ⁷ For the work at the temple they gave 165 metric tons and eighty-four kilograms of gold, 330 metric tons of silver, 600 metric tons of bronze, and 3,300 metric tons of iron. ⁸ Any people who owned valuable stones gave them to be put in the storeroom of the temple. Jehiel, a descendant of Gershon, was appointed to be in charge of them. ⁹ The people were happy to see that their leaders wanted to give those things; they were happy and enthusiastic to give those things to Yahweh. And King David also was very happy.

¹⁰ Then, while all the people there were listening, David praised Yahweh. He said,

“We praise you, Yahweh,

the God whom our ancestor Jacob worshiped.

We will praise you forever!

¹¹ You alone are great and powerful;

only you are truly glorious and majestic and wonderful.

And that is true because everything in heaven and on the earth is yours.

You are the king of all the people in this world;

you are the ruler of everything.

¹² Because you are very powerful,
you are able to cause anyone to be
great and be strong.

¹³ So now, our God, we thank you,
and we praise you for being very
great.

¹⁴ But I and my people are not really able
to give anything to you,

because everything that we have
comes from you;

the things that we have given to you
are only the things that we have received
from you.

¹⁵ You know that we are like foreign-
ers and strangers to you, as our ancestors
were.

Our years here on earth are like a
shadow that disappears quickly;

we know that there is nothing that
can enable us to escape dying.

¹⁶ Yahweh our God, we have gathered all
these things to use in building your tem-
ple,

but all of it really belongs to you, and
you have given it to us.

¹⁷ My God, I know that you test us peo-
ple,

and you are pleased if you find out
that we do what is right.

All these things I have given to you be-
cause I wanted to.

And now I have seen that your people
have joyfully and generously given things
to you.

¹⁸ Yahweh, the God whom our ancestors
Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob worshiped,

I desire that your people will continue
to desire to do things like this forever,

and that they will always be loyal to
you.

¹⁹ And now, please enable my son
Solomon to faithfully and sincerely

do everything that is needed to build
this beautiful building

for which I have provided all these
things.”

²⁰ Then David said to all the people who
were gathered there, “Praise Yahweh our
God!” So they all praised Yahweh the
God whom their ancestors also worshiped.
They prostrated themselves on the ground
in front of Yahweh and in front of the king.

²¹ The next day the people offered sacri-
fices to Yahweh. They presented many an-
imals to be completely burned on the al-
tar: A thousand bulls, a thousand rams,
a thousand male sheep, offerings of wine,
and many other sacrifices for all the peo-
ple of Israel to eat. ²² On that day the
people were joyful and ate and drank in
Yahweh’s honor.

Then for the second time they declared
that Solomon was now the king. As Yah-
weh had commanded, they anointed him
with olive oil to be the king, and they
anointed Zadok to be the high priest. ²³
So Solomon sat on the throne because Yah-
weh wanted him to be the king to suc-
ceed his father David. During the follow-
ing years Solomon prospered, and all the
Israelite people obeyed him. ²⁴ King
David’s other sons and all the officers and
mighty warriors accepted Solomon to be
their king, and they solemnly promised to
obey him.

²⁵ Yahweh caused Solomon to be highly
respected by all the Israelite people, and
they honored him very much. No king
of Israel had been honored as much as
Solomon was.

²⁶ Jesse’s son David was the king who
ruled all of Israel. ²⁷ He ruled for forty
years: seven years in the city of Hebron
and thirty-three years in Jerusalem. ²⁸

He was very rich and very much honored, and he became an old man. Then he died, and his son Solomon became the king of Israel.

²⁹ A record of all the things that King David did while he ruled, from the beginning to the end, was on scrolls written by the prophets Samuel, Nathan, and Gad. ³⁰ They told about his powerful rule, and all the things that happened to him and to the people of Israel and in the kingdoms of other countries while he was ruling Israel.

2 CHRONICLES

Chapter 1

¹ King Solomon, David's son, was able to gain complete control over his kingdom, because Yahweh his God was with him and enabled him to become a very strong king.

²⁻⁵ When David had been king, he arranged for a new sacred tent to be made in Jerusalem. Then David and the Israelite leaders brought God's sacred chest from the city of Kiriath Jearim to the new sacred tent. But when Solomon became the king, the first sacred tent was still in the city of Gibeon. There was a bronze altar there that Bezalel son of Uri and grandson of Hur, had made was also still at Gibeon, in front of the first sacred tent.

Solomon called together the army commanders who directed thousands of soldiers, and the commanders who directed hundreds of soldiers, with the judges and all the other leaders in Israel. He told them to go with him to Gibeon. So they all went to the place on the hill where idols were worshiped at Gibeon. That was the same place where God had met with his people in the tent which Moses had made. There Solomon and all the others with him prayed to Yahweh. ⁶ Then Solomon went up to the bronze altar in front of the sacred tent, and he offered one thousand animals to be killed and completely burned on the altar.

⁷ That night God appeared to Solomon in a dream and said to him, "Request whatever you want me to give to you."

⁸ Solomon replied to God, "You were very kind to David my father, and now you have appointed me to be the next king. ⁹ So Yahweh my God, you have caused me

to become the king to rule people who are as many as the dust of the earth. So do what you promised to my father David. ¹⁰ Please enable me to be wise and to know what I should do, in order that I may rule these people well, because there is no one who can rule all this great nation of yours without your help."

¹¹ God replied to Solomon, "You have not requested a huge amount of money or to be honored or that your enemies be killed. And you have not requested that you be enabled to live for a long time. Instead, you have requested that I enable you to be wise and to know what you should do in order that you may govern well my people whom I have appointed you to rule.

¹² So I will enable you to be wise and to know what you should do to rule my people well. But I will also enable you to have a huge amount of money and for people everywhere to honor you, more any king before you, and more than any king who will come after you." ¹³ Then Solomon and the people who were with him all left the sacred tent at Gibeon, and they returned to Jerusalem. There he ruled the Israelite people.

¹⁴ Solomon acquired 1,400 chariots and twelve thousand men who rode on horses. He put some of the chariots and horses in Jerusalem, and put some of them in various other cities. ¹⁵ During the years that Solomon was king, silver and gold were as common in Jerusalem as stones, and lumber from cedar trees were as plentiful as lumber from ordinary sycamore trees in the foothills. ¹⁶ Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and from the region of Kue. ¹⁷ In Egypt his men paid seven kilograms of silver for each chariot and one and seven-tenths kilograms of silver for each horse. They also sold many of them to the kings of the Heth and Aram people groups.

Chapter 2

¹ Solomon decided that a temple should be built where Yahweh would be worshiped, and also that he would build a palace for himself. ² He commanded seventy thousand men to carry the building supplies and eighty thousand men to cut stones from quarries in the hills. He also chose 3,600 men to supervise them.

³ Solomon sent this message to King Hiram of the city of Tyre:

"Many years ago when my father David was building his palace, you sent him cedar logs. Will you send me cedar logs, too?

⁴ We are about to build a temple to set it apart for Yahweh, to burn for him incense made from fragrant spices, to always display before him the bread, and to burn animal offerings every morning and evening and day of rest, as well as at every new moon and on the other special festivals to honor Yahweh our God. We want to do these things forever, as Yahweh has commanded. ⁵ We want this temple to be a great temple, because our God is greater than all other gods. ⁶ But no one can build a place for God to live in, since even the heavens and the earth are not big enough for him. I myself am not worthy to build him a house, except as a place to offer sacrifices to him.

⁷ Therefore, please send me someone who is very good at making things from gold and silver and bronze and iron, and at making things from purple and red and blue cloth. He should also know well how to engrave designs. I want him to work in Jerusalem and in other places in Judah with my skilled craftsmen, the ones whom my father David appointed.

⁸ I know that your workers are skilled in cutting timber, so also please send me

cedar logs, pine logs, and algum from the Lebanon mountains. My workers will work with your workers. ⁹ In that way, they will provide me with plenty of lumber. We will need plenty, because I want the temple that we will build to be large and beautiful. ¹⁰ I will pay to your workers, the men who cut the logs, 4,400 kiloliters of bushels of ground wheat, 4,400 kiloliters of barley, and 440 kiloliters of wine, and 440 kiloliters of olive oil."

¹¹ When Hiram received this message, he replied by sending a message back to Solomon:

"Because Yahweh loves his people, he has appointed you to be their king. ¹² Let everyone praise Yahweh, the God to whom the Israelite people belong, the one who created the sky and the earth! He has given King David a wise son, one who is very intelligent and who has good skill and understanding. He wants to build a temple for Yahweh and a palace for himself. ¹³ I will send to you Hiram-Abi, one of my skilled craftsmen. ¹⁴ His mother was from the tribe of Dan, and his father was from here in Tyre. He is able to make things from gold and silver and bronze and iron and stone and wood, but he also makes nice things from purple and blue and red cloth, and he does all kinds of engraving. He can make things using any design that you give to him. He will work with your craftsmen, and the craftsmen who did work for your father, King David.

¹⁵ Now please send us the wheat, barley, olive oil, and wine that you promised to send to us. ¹⁶ When you do that, my workers will cut in the Lebanon mountains all the logs that you need and bring them down to the sea. Then we will tie the logs together to form rafts with them, and float them in the sea to the city of Joppa. From there, you can arrange for men to take them up to Jerusalem."

¹⁷ Solomon told his workers to count all the people from other countries who were living in Israel, similar to what his father David had done. There were 153,600 of them. ¹⁸ Solomon assigned seventy thousand of them to carry materials, and eighty thousand to cut stone from quarries in the hills, and 3,600 of them to supervise the others and be sure that they worked steadily.

Chapter 3

¹ Then Solomon's workers started to build the temple for Yahweh in Jerusalem. They built it on Mount Moriah, where an angel from Yahweh had appeared to his father David. They built it on the ground that Ornan, a descendant of the Jebus people group, had sold to David and where David said that it should be built. ² They began the work on the second day of the second month, when Solomon had been ruling almost four years.

³ The foundation of the temple was twenty-seven meters long and nine meters wide. ⁴ The entrance room across the front of the temple was also nine meters long, the same as the temple's width. The entrance room was also nine meters high. Solomon caused workmen to coat the interior of the entrance room with thin sheets of pure gold.

⁵ Solomon's workers used panels of pine wood to line the main hall of the temple. Then they covered those panels with very thin sheets of pure gold. On them they carved images of palm trees and designs that resembled chains. ⁶ They decorated the temple with very valuable stones. The gold that they used was from the land of Parvaim.

⁷ They covered the ceiling beams, doorframes, walls and doors of the temple with

very thin sheets of gold. They also carved statues of winged creatures on the walls. ⁸ They also built the very holy place inside the temple. It was nine meters long, the same as the temple's width. The width of the very holy place was the same. They covered its walls with sheets of pure gold that altogether weighed about twenty metric tons. ⁹ Each gold nail weighed about one-half a kilogram. They also covered the walls of the upper rooms with thin sheets of gold.

¹⁰ Solomon's workers made two statues of creatures with wings to put inside the very holy place. They covered those statues with very thin sheets of gold. ¹¹⁻¹² Each statue had two long wings. One wing of each statue touched the wall of the temple. The other wing of each statue touched a wing of the other statue. The wingspan of each cherub was about four and three-fifths meters across. One wing of each cherub touched the wall, while the other reached to the middle of room and touched the inner wing of the other cherub. Each wing was two and one-third meters long.

¹³ It was nine meters from the outer wing of the one statue to the outer wing of the other statue. The statues faced the doorway leading to the main room.

¹⁴ Solomon's workers made a curtain to separate the main room from the very holy place. It was made of blue, purple, and red thread and fine linen. Figures of winged creatures were embroidered on the curtain. ¹⁵ They made two bronze pillars and put them at the entrance of the temple. They were each sixteen meters high. A separate piece was attached to the top of each pillar; each of the top pieces was two and one-third meters high.

¹⁶ The workers made carvings that resembled chains and put them on top of the pillars. They made carvings that resembled

pomegranates and attached them to the chains. There were one hundred of them.

¹⁷ They set up the pillars in front of the temple, one the south side of the entrance and the other on the north side. The one of the south side was named Jakin and the one on the north side was named Boaz.

Chapter 4

¹ Solomon's workers made a square bronze altar, nine meters long on each side, and four and three-fifths meters high.

² They also made a very large round tank that was called "The Sea," and it had a circumference of fourteen meters. ³ Below the outer rim there were small figures of bulls that were set in a circle, the bulls were placed 45 centimeters apart around the whole circle. The bulls were cast together in two rows, and they were also cast together with the metal basin that was called "The Sea." (Each row had three hundred figures of bulls.)

⁴ "The Sea" was set on twelve large figures of bulls, with the bulls facing outward. Three bulls faced north, three faced west, three faced south, and three faced east. ⁵ The sides of the tank were eight centimeters thick. The tank's brim was fashioned like the brim of a cup; it resembled a lily blossom. The tank held sixty-six kiloliters of water.

⁶ The craftsmen also made ten basins for washing the articles that were to be used in making offerings, and they set five on the south side, and five on the north side. In them the utensils used for the burnt offering were washed, and the priests washed themselves in the large bronze tank that was called "The Sea."

⁷ The craftsmen also made ten gold lampstands according to how Solomon had instructed them. They put them in the tem-

ple, five on the south side and five on the north side.

⁸ They made ten tables and put them in the temple, five on the south side and five on the north side. They also made one hundred gold basins.

⁹ They constructed one courtyard for the priests, and a larger courtyard for the other people. They made doors for the courtyards and covered them with thin sheets of bronze. ¹⁰ They placed the large tank that was called "The Sea" at the southeast corner of the temple.

¹¹ They also made pots and shovels for the ashes of the altar, and other small bowls.

So Hiram and his workers finished the work that King Solomon had given him to do at the temple of God. ¹² These were the things that they made:

the two large pillars

the two bowl shaped tops on top of the pillars

¹³ the four hundred carvings that resembled pomegranates that were placed in two rows, they were made to decorate the tops of the two pillars.

¹⁴ The pomegranate carvings also were used to decorate the stands, and the basins that were placed on them,

¹⁵ the very large tank called "The Sea," and the figures of twelve bulls underneath it,

¹⁶ the pots, shovels, meat forks, and all the other things needed for the work at the altar.

All those things that Hiram-Abi and his craftsmen made for King Solomon were of bronze that they polished for it to gleam brightly. ¹⁷ They made them by pouring melted bronze into the clay molds that Hiram-Abi had set up near the Jordan River between the cities of Succoth

and Zarethan. ¹⁸ All of those things that Solomon told them to make used a very large amount of bronze, so great was the amount they used that no one knew how much it all weighed.

¹⁹ Solomon's workers also made all these things that they later put into the temple:

the golden altar,

the tables on which the priests put the bread to display before God,

²⁰ the pure gold lampstands and the pure gold lamps, in which the priests put oil to burn in front of the very holy place (as God had told Moses that the priests should do),

²¹ the pure gold decorations that resembled flowers,

and the lamps and tongs.

²² The workers also made the pure gold wick trimmers and bowls for sprinkling, and dishes and incense burners,

the gold doors of the temple,

the gold inner doors leading to the very holy place,

during the Festival of Shelters, in the seventh month.

⁴ When they had all arrived, the descendants of Levi lifted up the sacred chest, ⁵ and they carried it and the sacred tent and the sacred things that were inside it. The priests, who were also descended from Levi, carried them. ⁶ King Solomon and many of the other people of Israel who had gathered there walked in front of the sacred chest. And they sacrificed a huge amount of sheep and bulls. No one was able to count them because there were very many.

⁷ The priests then brought the sacred chest into the very holy place, into the inner room of the temple, and they placed it under the wings of the figures of winged creatures. ⁸ The wings of those figures spread out over the sacred chest and over the poles by which it was carried. ⁹ The poles were very long, with the result that they could be seen by people who were standing in the entrance to the very holy place, but they could not be seen by anyone standing outside the temple. Those poles are still there. ¹⁰ The only things that were inside the sacred chest were the two stone tablets that Moses had put there at Mount Sinai, where Yahweh had made a covenant with the Israelites after they came out of Egypt.

¹¹ Then the priests left the holy place in the temple. All the priests who were there set themselves apart to serve the priestly duties, without concern for which group they were from. ¹² All the descendants of Levi who were musicians—Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, their sons and their other relatives—stood on the east side of the altar. They were wearing linen clothes, and they were playing cymbals, harps, and lyres. There were 120 other priests who were blowing trumpets. ¹³ The men blowing trumpets, those playing the cym-

Chapter 5

¹ After Solomon's workers had finished building the temple, Solomon put in the temple storerooms everything that his father David had dedicated to Yahweh—all the silver and gold and all the other things that were used at the temple.

² Then King Solomon summoned to Jerusalem all the elders of Israel, all the leaders of the tribes and of the families. He wanted them to join in bringing to the temple Yahweh's sacred chest from Mount Zion, where it was in the part of the city called the city of David. ³ So all the leaders of Israel gathered together with the king,

bals and other musical instruments, and the singers, made music together, praising Yahweh and singing this song:

"Yahweh is good to us;

he faithfully loves us forever."

Then suddenly the temple was filled with a cloud. ¹⁴ The glory of Yahweh filled the temple, with the result that the priests were not able to continue doing their work.

Chapter 6

¹ Then Solomon prayed, "Yahweh, you said that you would live in a dark cloud.

² But now I have built a glorious temple for you to live in forever!"

³ Then while all the people stood there, Solomon turned toward the people and asked God to bless them. ⁴ He said to them,

"Let us praise Yahweh, the God to whom we Israelites belong, who has caused to happen what he promised to my father David. What he said to David was this:

⁵ 'From the time that I brought my people out of Egypt, I have never chosen a city in Israel in which a temple should be built for people to worship me there. Nor did I choose anyone to be the leader of my Israelite people. ⁶ But now I have chosen Jerusalem to be the place for people to worship me, and I have chosen you, David, to rule my Israelite people.'"

⁷ Then Solomon said further, "My father David wanted to build a temple for Yahweh, the God to whom we Israelites belong. ⁸ But Yahweh said to him, 'It is good that you wanted to build a house for me. ⁹ However, you are not the one who I want to build the temple, It is one of your own sons who will build it.'

¹⁰ And Yahweh has done what he promised to do. I have become the king of Israel to rule after my father, and I am ruling the people, as Yahweh promised, and I have arranged for this temple to be built for us to worship Yahweh, the God to whom we Israelites belong. ¹¹ I have put the sacred chest in the temple, in which are the stone tablets showing the covenant that Yahweh made with us Israelite people."

¹² Then Solomon stood in front of the altar that was in front of the people of Israel who had gathered there. He spread out his hands as he began to pray. ¹³ Now His workers had built a bronze platform there for him to stand on, which was two and one-third meters square and one and one-half meters high. They had put it in the outer courtyard. Solomon mounted that platform and then knelt down in front of all the people of Israel who had gathered there, and he spread out his arms toward heaven. ¹⁴ Then he prayed,

"Yahweh, the God to whom we Israelite people belong, there is no God like you in heaven or on the earth. You solemnly promised in your covenant that you would faithfully love us, and that is what you have done for us who earnestly do what you want us to do.

¹⁵ You have done the things that you promised my father David, who served you very well, that you would do. Truly, you promised to do those things for him, and today we see that by your power you have caused it all to happen.

¹⁶ So now, Yahweh, the God we Israelites worship Israel, as you promised your servant David, my father, please make sure that he will always have a descendant who will be king of Israel. For you promise you would do this if his descendants were faithful to you. ¹⁷ So now, God of us Israelite people, cause what you

promised David, who served you well, to become true.

¹⁸ But, my God, will you really live on earth among us? This temple I have built cannot contain you; not even the universe and heaven itself can contain you. ¹⁹ But Yahweh, my God, please listen to my prayer, while I am pleading with this day and do what I am requesting. ²⁰ Always protect this temple, this place where you said you would be present, in order that you might always hear me when I pray, for I am your servant. ²¹ Listen to me when I pray, and listen to your Israelite people when they pray, whether we are here, or even if we just face in this direction. Listen from heaven, where you live; and when you hear us pray, forgive us.

²² If people accuse someone of doing something wrong to another person, and if they bring him in front of your altar outside this holy temple, and if he says, 'I did not do that; may God punish me if I am not telling the truth,' ²³ then please listen from heaven and decide who is telling the truth. Then punish the person who is guilty as he deserves to be punished, and do good to the other person as a reward for his innocence.

²⁴ And suppose that your Israelite people are defeated by their enemies because they sinned against you, and forced to go to some distant country. Suppose further that they turn away from their sinful behavior and face in the direction of this temple and acknowledge that you have justly punished them; and suppose that they beg you to forgive them. ²⁵ Then please listen to them from heaven and forgive your them for the sins that they have committed, and bring them back to this land that you gave to our ancestors.

²⁶ When you do not allow any rain to fall because the people have sinned against you—then, if they stop acting sin-

fully and humbly pray to you, you who are present in this place, ²⁷ then listen from heaven and forgive the sins of your people. Teach them the right way to conduct their lives. Then send rain on the land that you gave to your people forever.

²⁸ And when the people of this land experience famines, or if there is a plague or mildew or locusts or grasshoppers, or when their enemies surround any of their cities in order to attack them—if any of these disaster happens to them—²⁹ and then if your Israelite people earnestly plead, or if even just one person does so—if they stretch out their hands toward this temple and pray to you because they know the weakness and sorrow in their own hearts—³⁰ then listen from your home in heaven and forgive them. You alone know what each person is thinking, so reward each person according to everything that he does. ³¹ Do this in order that they might honor you and conduct their lives as you want them to, all the time that they live in this land that you gave to our ancestors.

³² There will be some foreigners who do not belong to your Israelite people who have come here from countries far away because they have heard that you are very great and powerful. If they turn toward this temple and pray, ³³ then from your home in heaven please listen to their prayer and do for them what they request you to do. Do that in order that all the people groups in the world will honor and obey you, as your people of Israel do. And do this so that they will know that you are present in this temple that I have built.

³⁴ When you send your people to go and attack their enemies, if they pray to you, no matter where they are, and if they turn toward this city that you have chosen and toward this temple that I have caused to be built to honor you, ³⁵ then will you

please listen from heaven to their prayers. Listen to what they plead for you to do, and give them help.

³⁶ It is true that everyone sins. So when your people sin against you, and you become angry with them, you might allow their enemies to capture them and take them to their countries, even to countries that are far away. ³⁷ When that happens, while they are in those distant countries, if they say ‘We have sinned; we have done things that are wrong and have done things that are very wicked,’ ³⁸ suppose that they repent very sincerely and pray facing this land that you gave their ancestors, and facing this city that you chose, and facing this temple that I have built for you to be present in. ³⁹ Then from your home in heaven listen to their prayer, and listen to them while they plead for your help, and do what they ask you to do, and forgive your people who have sinned against you.

⁴⁰ Now, my God, look at us as we pray to you in this place, and please listen to us.

⁴¹ Yahweh our God, come and stay in this place with the sacred chest,

the chest that shows that you are powerful.

Yahweh God, cause your priests to know clearly that you have rescued them.

Cause us your people to rejoice because of all the good things that you do for us.

⁴² Yahweh God, do not reject me, the king whom you have appointed to be the king of Israel;

do not forget how faithfully were to David, your servant, because of your covenant with him.”

Chapter 7

¹ When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from the sky and burned up the animals that the people had sacrificed, as well as the other offerings. And the power and light of Yahweh filled the temple. ² The light was extremely bright, with the result that the priests could not enter the temple of Yahweh. ³ When all the Israelite people who were there saw the fire coming down and the light of Yahweh above the temple, they prostrated themselves with their faces touching the stone pavement. They worshiped and thanked Yahweh, saying,

‘Yahweh is always good to us;

he will love us forever, as he promised to do.’

⁴⁻⁵ Then the king and all the people who were there dedicated the temple to Yahweh by offering more sacrifices to him. King Solomon offered twenty-two thousand cattle and 120,000 sheep and goats to be sacrificed. ⁶ The priests stood in their positions, and the other descendants of Levi stood in their positions holding the musical instruments to praise Yahweh, instruments that King David had ordered to be made for praising Yahweh and thanking him. They sang, “He faithfully loves us forever.” Opposite the other descendants of Levi the priests stood, blowing their trumpets, while all the Israelite people were standing and listening.

⁷ Solomon dedicated the middle part of the courtyard in front of the temple. Then he presented offerings to be completely burned there along with the fat of the animals to be sacrificed to maintain fellowship with Yahweh. The priests burned them there in the courtyard because in addition to those things there were offerings of flour, with the result that there was not

enough space on the bronze altar to burn all those sacrifices.

⁸ Solomon and the other people celebrated the Festival of Shelters for seven days. There was a huge group of people who celebrated with him. Some of them came from as far away as Lebohamath in the far north and from the border of Egypt in the far south. ⁹ On the eighth day they gathered again to worship Yahweh. They had celebrated the dedication of the altar for seven days and the Festival of Shelters for seven days. ¹⁰ Then on the next day Solomon sent them to their homes. They were very joyful because of all the good things that Yahweh had done for David and Solomon and for all his Israelite people.

¹¹ In this way, Solomon's workers finished building the temple and Solomon's palace. And Solomon finished doing everything else that he had planned to do. ¹² Then Yahweh appeared to him one night in a dream and said to him, "I have heard your prayer, and I have chosen this temple to be the place where my people will offer sacrifices to me.

¹³ When I prevent any rain from falling, or when I command locusts to eat all the crops, or when I send a plague among my people, ¹⁴ then if the people who belong to me, are sorry for their sins and stop doing them, and if they plead with me for me to forgive, then I will indeed listen from heaven. I will forgive them for having sinned, and I will cause them to prosper again. ¹⁵ I will listen to them when they pray to me in this place. ¹⁶ I have decided to be present in this temple, and I have set apart it for myself. I will protect it for all time.

¹⁷ And as for you, if you obey me as David, your father, did, and if you do all that I command you to do, and if you obey all my laws and decrees, ¹⁸ I will

make sure that your descendants will always be kings, which is what I promised to David your father, when I told him, 'Persons from your descendants will always be the kings of Israel.'

¹⁹ What will I do to you Israelites when you stop worshipping me? What will I do when you disobey the decrees and commands I have given to you? And what will I do when you start worshipping other gods? ²⁰ This is what I will do: I will cause you to be driven away from this land that I have given to you, and I will reject the temple that I have set apart for myself. I will make people from all the other people groups laugh about what happened to house where Yahweh was worshiped. ²¹ Although this temple is now so magnificent, when that happens, all the people who pass by will be appalled, and they will say, 'Why has Yahweh done terrible things like this to this country and to this temple?' ²² And others will reply, 'It happened because they rejected Yahweh, the God to whom their ancestors belonged, the one who brought their ancestors out of Egypt, and they have chosen to worship other gods and try to please them. And that is why Yahweh has caused them to experience all these disasters.'"

Chapter 8

¹ Solomon's workers took twenty years to build the temple and his palace. ² Then his workers rebuilt the cities that King Hiram had given back to him, and Solomon sent Israelites to live in those cities. ³ Solomon's army then went to the town of Hamathzobah and captured it. ⁴ They also rebuilt walls around the city of Tadmor in the wilderness, and in the region of Hamath, for all the towns where they kept supplies. ⁵ They rebuilt the cities of Upper Beth Horon and

Lower Beth Horon, and built walls around them with gates and bars for the gates. ⁶ They also rebuilt the city of Baalath and all the cities where supplies were kept, and the cities where Solomon's chariots and horses were kept. Solomon's workers built whatever he wanted them to build, in Jerusalem and in Lebanon, and in other places in the area that he ruled.

⁷ Solomon forced people from many other groups who were not Israelites to work for him as if they were slaves. They were people from the Heth, Amor, Periz, Hiv, and Jebus people groups. ⁸ They were descendants of groups whom the Israelites had not completely destroyed. Solomon forced them to become his laborers, and they are still that at this present time. ⁹ But Solomon did not force Israelites to work for him. Israelites became his soldiers and commanders of his chariots and his chariot drivers. ¹⁰ They were also King Solomon's chief officials. There were 250 of them, and they supervised the workers.

¹¹ Solomon brought his wife, who was the daughter of the king of Egypt, to the place that his workers had built for her in the place outside Jerusalem called the city of David. He said, "I do not want my wife to live in the palace that my father King David's workers built, because the sacred chest was in that palace for a while, and any place where the sacred chest has been is holy."

¹² On the altar that Solomon's workers had built in front of the entrance to the temple, Solomon brought many offerings that were to be completely burned. ¹³ He did that obeying what sacrifices Moses had declared should be made every day, on the Sabbath days, to celebrate each day on which there was a new moon, and on the three other festivals that were celebrated each year: the Festival of Bread with No

Yeast, the Festival of Harvest, and the Festival of Shelters. ¹⁴ Obeying what his father David had commanded, Solomon appointed the groups of priests for their work, and he appointed the descendants of Levi to lead the people while they sang to praise Yahweh, and while they assisted the priests in their daily work. He also appointed groups of them to guard all the gates, because that was also what David, God's servant, had commanded. ¹⁵ The priests and other descendants of Levi obeyed completely everything that the king commanded, including the order to take care of the storerooms.

¹⁶ They did all the work of building the temple that Solomon told them to do, until it was all completed. In the way they finished building the temple.

¹⁷ Then some of Solomon's men went to the cities of Ezion Geber and Elath on the coast of the Sea of Reeds, next to a region that belonged to the Edom people group. ¹⁸ King Hiram sent him from the city of Tyre some ships that were commanded by his officers. They were men who were experienced sailors. These men went in the ships with Solomon's men to the region of Ophir and brought back about fifteen metric tons of gold, which they delivered to King Solomon.

Chapter 9

¹ The queen who ruled the Sheba area in Arabia heard that Solomon had become famous, so she traveled to Jerusalem to ask him questions that were difficult to answer. She came with a large group of servants, and she brought camels that were loaded with spices, and valuable gems. When she arrived, she shared her thoughts with him. ² Solomon answered all her questions. He explained every-

thing that she asked about, even things that were very difficult.

³ The queen realized that Solomon was very wise. She saw his palace, ⁴ she saw the food that was served on his table every day, she saw where his officials lived, their uniforms, the servants who served the food and wine, and the sacrifices that he took to the temple to be offered. She was extremely amazed.

⁵ She said to the king, "Everything that I heard in my own country about you and about how wise you are is true! ⁶ But I did not believe it was true until I came here and saw it myself. You are extremely wise and rich, even more than what people told me. ⁷ The men who work for you are very fortunate! Your servants who are constantly standing in front of you and listening to the wise things that you say are also fortunate! ⁸ I praise Yahweh your God, who has shown that he is pleased with you by appointing you to be the king of Israel for him. God has always loved the Israelite people, and he desires to assist them forever, so he has appointed you to be their king, in order that you will rule them fairly and righteously."

⁹ Then the queen gave to Solomon about four metric tons of gold and a large amount of spices and gemstones. Never had King Solomon received more spices than the queen gave him at that time.

¹⁰⁻¹² King Solomon gave to the queen from Sheba everything that she wanted. He gave her more than she had given to him. Then she and those who came with her returned to her own land.

The men of Hiram worked with the men of Solomon to bring gold from Ophir. They also brought a large amount of algum wood. The wood was used to make steps for the house of Yahweh, and they also used the wood to make harps and lyres

for those who played music. No one in all the land of Judah had ever seen anything like the quality of the algum wood that was used to make the steps and the instruments.

¹³ Each year there was brought to Solomon about twenty-two metric tons of gold. That was in addition to the taxes paid to him by the merchants and traders. ¹⁴ Also, the kings of Arabia and the governors of the districts in Israel brought gold and silver to Solomon.

¹⁵ King Solomon's workers took this gold and hammered it into thin sheets and covered two hundred large shields with those thin sheets of gold; they put about six and one-half kilograms of gold on each shield. ¹⁶ His workers made three hundred smaller shields. They covered each of them with one and three-quarters kilograms of gold. Then the king put those shields in the House of the Forest of Lebanon.

¹⁷ His workers also made for him a large throne. Part of it was covered with ivory and part of it was covered with very fine gold. ¹⁸ There were six steps in front of the throne. There was a gold footstool that was attached to the throne. At each side of the throne there was an armrest, and alongside each armrest there was a statue of a lion. ¹⁹ So there were twelve statues of lions. No throne like that had ever existed in any other kingdom. ²⁰ All of Solomon's cups were made of gold, and all the various dishes in the House of the Forest of Lebanon were made of gold. They did not make things from silver, because during the years that Solomon ruled, silver was not considered to be valuable. ²¹ The king had a fleet of ships capable of sailing far out on the ocean. It sailed along with Hiram's merchant fleet. Every three years the fleet brought gold, silver, ivory, apes, and baboons.

²² King Solomon became richer and wiser than any other king on the earth. ²³ Kings from all over the world wanted to come and listen to the wise things that Solomon said, things that God had put into his mind.

²⁴ All the people who came to him brought presents: things made from silver or gold; they also brought robes, weapons, spices, horses, and mules. The merchants continued to do this every year.

²⁵ Solomon had four thousand stalls for his horses and chariots, and twelve thousand men who rode horses. Solomon put some of them in Jerusalem and some of them in other cities where he kept his chariots. ²⁶ Solomon ruled over all the kings in the area from the Euphrates River in the northeast, to the region of Philistia in the west, and to the border of Egypt in the south. ²⁷ During the years that Solomon was king, he caused silver to become as common in Jerusalem as stone; and he caused cedar trees in the foothills of Judah to become as plentiful as sycamore fig trees. ²⁸ Solomon's agents brought horses to the land of Judah from Egypt and from many other lands.

²⁹ Lists of all the other things that Solomon did are written in the scrolls written by the prophet Nathan, and by the prophet Ahijah from the city of Shiloh, and in the scroll in which was written the visions of the prophet Iddo (a scroll in which Iddo's visions about Jeroboam son of Nebat were also written). ³⁰ Solomon ruled in Jerusalem over all of Israel for forty years. ³¹ Then Solomon died; they buried him in the part of Jerusalem called 'the city of David.' And his son Rehoboam became the next king.

Chapter 10

¹ All the people of northern Israel went to

the city Shechem in order to appoint Rehoboam to be their king. So Rehoboam also went there. ² Now Jeroboam son of Nebat had fled to Egypt to escape from King Solomon. While he was in Egypt he heard about the people wanting to appoint Rehoboam to be their king, and so he returned to Israel from Egypt. ³ So the leaders of the northern tribes summoned Jeroboam, and he went with them to talk to Rehoboam. They said to Rehoboam, ⁴ "Your father Solomon forced us to work very hard, but if you charge us fewer taxes than we were paying to him, and if you make us work not so much we will serve you faithfully."

⁵ He replied, "Come back three days from now, and I will give you my answer." So those leaders and Jeroboam left.

⁶ Then King Rehoboam consulted his older men who had advised his father Solomon while he was still alive. He asked them, "What shall I say to answer these men?"

⁷ They replied, "If you will be kind to these people and do things that will please them, and if you say kind things to them when you answer them, they will always serve you."

⁸ But he did not agree with what the older men advised him to do. Instead, he consulted the younger men who had grown up with him, who were now his advisors.

⁹ He said to them, "What do you say that I should answer the men who are asking me to reduce the work and taxes that my father required from them?"

¹⁰ The young men who had grown up with him replied, "Those men have said that your father forced them to work very hard for him, so they want you to reduce the work and taxes that your father required from them. But this is what you should tell them: 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist.' ¹¹ My father re-

quired you people to work hard and pay high taxes, but I will make the loads you carry even heavier. My father whipped you with leather whips, but I will whip you with scorpions.”

¹² Three days later, Jeroboam and all the leaders came to King Rehoboam again, as he had instructed them to do. ¹³ The king ignored the advice of the older men and spoke harshly to the Israelite leaders. ¹⁴ He told them what the younger men had advised. He said, “My father put heavy burdens of work and taxes on you, but I will put heavier burdens on you. It was as though he beat you with whips, but I will beat you with scorpions!” ¹⁵ So the king did not pay any attention to the people’s leaders. All this happened in order that what Yahweh wanted would occur, what he had told the prophet Ahijah about Jeroboam becoming king of the ten tribes out of the twelve.

¹⁶ When the Israelite leaders realized that the king did not pay any attention to what they said, they shouted,

“We do not want anything to do with this descendant of King David!

We will not pay attention to what this grandson of Jesse says!

You people of Israel, let us go home!

As for this descendant of David, he can look after his family himself!”

So the Israelite leaders returned to their homes.

¹⁷ And after that, the only Israelite people whom Rehoboam ruled over were those who lived in the territory of the tribe of Judah, in the countryside and in the cities, towns, and villages.

¹⁸ Then King Rehoboam went with Adoniram to talk to the Israelite people. Adoniram was the man who supervised all the men who were forced to work for

Rehoboam. But the Israelite people killed him by throwing stones at him. When that happened, King Rehoboam quickly got in his chariot and escaped to Jerusalem. ¹⁹ Ever since that time, the people of the northern tribes of Israel have been rebelling against the descendants of King David.

Chapter 11

¹ When Rehoboam arrived in Jerusalem, he gathered 180,000 of the best soldiers from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. He wanted them to fight against the northern tribes of Israel and defeat them, in order that he could rule all twelve tribes again.

² But Yahweh spoke to the prophet Shemaiah and said this to him: ³ “Go and tell this to Solomon’s son Rehoboam, the king of Judah, and to all the Israelite people of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin: ⁴ ‘Yahweh says that you must not go to fight against the people of Israel; it is as though they are your own relatives. All of you must go home. What has happened is what Yahweh wanted to happen.’” So Shemaiah went and told that to them, and they all paid attention to what Yahweh had commanded them to do; they did not attack Jeroboam and his soldiers.

⁵ Rehoboam lived in Jerusalem, and his workers built walls around several of the cities and towns in Judah to protect them against enemy attacks. ⁶ In the area that belonged to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin they built walls around Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa, ⁷ Beth Zur, Soko, Adullam, ⁸ Gath, Mareshah, ⁹ Adoraim, Lachish, Azekah, ¹⁰ Zorah, Aijalon, and Hebron. ¹¹ He also appointed an army commander in each of those cities and towns, and gave them supplies of food, olive oil, and wine.

¹² He put shields and spears in all the cities and made them well-protected. So he continued to control the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

¹³ The priests and other descendants of Levi throughout Israel supported Rehoboam. ¹⁴ The descendants of Levi abandoned their property and their pastureland, and they came to Jerusalem and to other places in Judah, because Jeroboam and his sons would not allow them to do the work of priests of Yahweh. ¹⁵ Instead, Jeroboam appointed the priests that he wanted to work at the altars he commanded to be built on the hills all around the cities, to offer sacrifices to the idols that he commanded to be made that resembled goats and calves. ¹⁶ And people from every tribe in Israel who wanted to worship Yahweh, the God to whom the Israelites belonged, went with the descendants of Levi to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices to Yahweh, the God whom their ancestors worshiped. ¹⁷ They caused the kingdom of Judah to be strong, and for three years they were happy that Solomon's son Rehoboam was the king. During that time they conducted their lives righteously as David and Solomon had done previously.

¹⁸ Rehoboam married Mahalath. She was the daughter of David's son Jerimoth, and her mother was Abihail, the daughter of Eliab and granddaughter of Jesse. ¹⁹ Rehoboam and Mahalath had three sons: Jeush, Shemariah, and Zaham. ²⁰ Later Rehoboam married Maacah, the daughter of Absalom, and they had four sons: Abijah, Attai, Ziza, and Shelomith. ²¹ Rehoboam loved Maacah more than he loved any other of his wives and slave wives. Altogether he had eighteen wives and sixty slave wives, and twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters.

²² Rehoboam appointed his son Abijah to

be the leader of his older and younger brothers, because he wanted to appoint Abijah to be the next king. ²³ He very wisely sent some of his other sons to other cities in the areas of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and to other cities that had walls around them. He gave them plenty of supplies and many wives.

Chapter 12

¹ After Rehoboam had obtained complete control of his kingdom, he and all the other people in Judah stopped obeying the laws of Yahweh. ² As a result, after Rehoboam had been king for almost five years, Yahweh sent Shishak, the king of Egypt, with his army to attack Jerusalem. ³ He brought with his army twelve hundred chariots and sixty thousand soldiers who rode horses and a very large number of troops from two regions in Libya, and from Ethiopia. ⁴ They captured many of the cities in Judah that had walls around them, and they came as far as Jerusalem.

⁵ Then the prophet Shemaiah came to Rehoboam and the other leaders of Judah who had gathered in Jerusalem because they were afraid of the army of Shishak. Shemaiah said to them, "Yahweh says this: 'You have abandoned me; so now I am abandoning you, to allow you to be captured by the army of Shishak.'"

⁶ Then the king and the other Israelite leaders humbled themselves and said, "What Yahweh is doing to us is just."

⁷ When Yahweh realized that they had humbled themselves, he gave this message to Shemaiah: "Because they have humbled themselves, I will not allow them to be destroyed. Instead, I will soon rescue them. I will not use Shishak's army to completely destroy the people of Jerusalem, ⁸ but they will conquer

Jerusalem and force the people there to do what Shishak wants them to do. As a result, the people of Jerusalem will learn that it is better to serve me than to serve the kings of other countries.”

⁹ When Shishak’s army attacked Jerusalem, they took away the valuable things that were in the temple of Yahweh and in the king’s palace. They took everything that was valuable, including the gold shields that Solomon’s workers had made. ¹⁰ So King Rehoboam’s workers made bronze shields to be used instead of the gold ones, and gave the bronze shields to the commanders of the men who guarded the entrance to the his palace. ¹¹ After that, whenever the king went to the temple, the guards went with him, carrying those bronze shields. Then when the king left, they would return the shields to the guards’ room.

¹² Because Rehoboam humbled himself, Yahweh stopped being angry with him, and did not get rid of him. Instead, he caused good things to happen in Judah.

¹³ King Rehoboam again obtained complete control in Jerusalem, and continued to be the king of Judah. He was forty-one years old when he became the king. He ruled for seventeen years in Jerusalem, which is the city that Yahweh had chosen from all the tribes in Israel to be the place in which people were to worship him. ¹⁴ Rehoboam’s mother’s name was Naamah. She was from the Ammon people group. Rehoboam did evil things because he did not try to find out what Yahweh wanted him to do.

¹⁵ An account of all the things that Rehoboam did while he was the king, and lists of the members of his family, are in the scrolls written by the prophets Shemaiah and Iddo. The armies of Rehoboam and Jeroboam were constantly fighting each other. ¹⁶ When Rehoboam died, he

was buried in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David. Then his son Abijah became the king.

Chapter 13

¹ When Jeroboam had been ruling Israel for almost eighteen years, Abijah became the king of Judah. ² He ruled in Jerusalem for three years. His mother was Micaiah, the daughter of Uriel from the city of Gibeah.

There was a war between the armies of Abijah and Jeroboam. ³ Abijah went into the battle, taking 400,000 of his capable soldiers, and Jeroboam prepared to fight them, taking 800,000 of his capable troops.

⁴ Abijah stood on the top of Mount Zemaraim, which is in the hill country that belonged to the tribe of Ephraim, and he shouted, “Jeroboam and all you other people of Israel, listen to me! ⁵ You certainly know that Yahweh, whom we Israelites are to worship, made a covenant with David by which he promised that his descendants would always rule over Israel. ⁶ But Jeroboam, who was only an official of David’s son King Solomon, rebelled against his king. ⁷ And when Solomon’s son Rehoboam became king and was still young and inexperienced, a group of worthless scoundrels gathered around you and rebelled against him.

⁸ And now you are planning to fight against the kingdom that Yahweh established to be governed by David’s descendants. It is true that you have a huge army, and you and your soldiers have brought with you the golden statues of calves that Jeroboam’s workers made to be your gods. ⁹ But you drove out the priests that Yahweh appointed, men who are descendants of Aaron the first high

priest. You also drove out the descendants of Levi, and you appointed the priests that you wanted, like the people of other countries do. And so one may even come to set himself apart for the work of a priest, even sacrificing a young bull and seven rams as a sign of his ordination and his dedication to become a priest. But what kind of priest is he? He is consecrated to serve idols that are not gods at all!

¹⁰ As for us, Yahweh is our God, and we have not abandoned him. Our priests who serve Yahweh are descendants of Aaron, and the descendants of Levi assist them.

¹¹ Every morning and every evening they present to Yahweh offerings to be completely burned on the altar, and they burn fragrant incense. Each week they place on the sacred table the bread to display before Yahweh, and each morning they light the lamps that are on the gold lampstand. We are obeying what Yahweh our God requires us to do. But you have abandoned him; you no longer worship him.

¹² Yahweh is with us; he is our leader. The priests whom he has appointed will blow their trumpets to signal that we are ready to fight a battle against you. You Israelite men, do not fight against Yahweh, the God to whom your ancestors belonged, because you will not be successful against him.”

¹³ While he was speaking, Jeroboam sent some of his troops around the army of Judah. So while the soldiers who were with Jeroboam were in front of the army of Judah, the other soldiers of Israel were behind the army of Judah. ¹⁴ When the soldiers of Judah turned and saw that they were going to be attacked from the front and from the rear, they cried out to Yahweh. The priests blew their trumpets, ¹⁵ and the men of Judah shouted a loud battle cry. Then Yahweh enabled Abijah and the army of Judah to defeat Jeroboam and

the army of Israel. ¹⁶ The soldiers of Israel fled from the soldiers of Judah, and God enabled the army of Judah to defeat them. ¹⁷ Abijah and his troops struck the capable soldiers of Israel and killed 500,000 of them, the best soldiers there were in Israel.

¹⁸ So the soldiers of Israel were defeated, and the soldiers of Judah won the battle because they trusted in Yahweh, the God to whom their ancestors belonged.

¹⁹ Abijah's army pursued the army of Jeroboam, and they captured from the people of Israel the cities of Bethel, Jeshanah, and Ephron, and the surrounding villages.

²⁰ During the remaining time that Abijah ruled, Jeroboam did not become powerful again. Then Yahweh caused him to become very ill, and he died.

²¹ But Abijah became more powerful. He married fourteen wives and had twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters.

²² An account of the other things that Abijah did while he was the king, including what he said and what he did, is in the scroll written by the prophet Iddo.

Chapter 14

¹ When Abijah died, he was buried in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David. His son Asa became the king. While Asa was ruling, there was peace in Judah for ten years.

² Asa did things that Yahweh his God considers to be right and good. ³ His workers got rid of the altars to worship foreign gods that were at the hilltops where the idols were worshiped. They smashed the stone pillars and cut down the poles that were there for the goddess Asherah. ⁴ Asa commanded the people of Judah to worship only Yahweh, the God whom their

ancestors worshiped, and to seek his will and obey his commands. ⁵ His workers destroyed all the places where idols were worshiped on the hilltops, and the altars for burning incense to idols, in every town in Judah. As a result, there was peace while Asa ruled the kingdom of Judah. ⁶ His workers built cities and constructed walls around them. No army attacked Judah during those years, because Yahweh enabled them to have peace.

⁷ Asa said to the people of Judah, "We should protect these towns by building walls around them, with watchtowers and gates that have bars. This country still belongs to us because we have requested Yahweh our God to help us. We requested him for his help, and he has given us peace in our entire country." So they built buildings and succeeded in what they did.

⁸ Asa had an army of 300,000 men from Judah. They all carried large shields and spears. He also had 280,000 men from the tribe of Benjamin in his army. They also carried shields, and also bows and arrows. They were all brave soldiers.

⁹ Zerah, a man from Ethiopia, attacked Judah with an army of one million men and three hundred chariots. He came to Mareshah, southwest of Jerusalem. ¹⁰ Asa went with his army to fight against them, and both armies took their positions in the Zephathah Valley.

¹¹ Then Asa cried out to Yahweh his God, saying, "Yahweh, there is no one like you who can help those who have very little power to resist large armies. We have come to fight against this huge army. Yahweh, you are our God; do not allow anyone to defeat you."

¹² Then Yahweh enabled Asa and the army of Judah to defeat the army from Ethiopia. They fled, ¹³ and Asa and his army pursued them to the southwest as far as

Gerar. A huge number of the soldiers from Ethiopia were killed, with the result that those who were not killed were unable to fight anymore. They were completely defeated by Yahweh and his army, and the men of Judah carried away a great amount of their possessions. ¹⁴ The men of Judah were able to destroy the villages near to the city of Gerar because Yahweh had caused the people there to become terrified and unable to fight. The army of Judah took away all the valuable things from those villages. ¹⁵ They also attacked the places where the local people who took care of domestic animals had set up their tents, and they took away large flocks and herds of sheep and goats and camels. Then they returned to Jerusalem.

Chapter 15

¹ The Spirit of God came on Azariah son of Oded. ² Azariah went to talk with Asa and said to him, "Asa and all you men of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, listen to me. Yahweh is with you whenever you are with him. If you request him to help you, he will help you, but if you abandon him, he will abandon you. ³ For many years the Israelite people did not have the true God, and they did not have priests or God's laws. ⁴ But when they experienced trouble, they turned to Yahweh, our God, and requested him to help them. And he helped them. ⁵ At that time, people were not safe when they traveled, because all the people who lived in those countries were experiencing many difficulties. ⁶ The people of various nations were crushed by armies of other nations, and people in some cities were crushed by armies from other cities, because God was allowing them to experience many difficulties. ⁷ But you people, you must be strong and do not become discouraged,

because God will reward you for what you do to please him.”

⁸ Asa was encouraged when he heard what Azariah son of Oded, prophesied. Asa commanded his workers to remove all the detestable idols from everywhere in the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and from the towns that his soldiers had captured in the hills of the tribe of Ephraim. Asa’s workers repaired the altar where people offered sacrifices to Yahweh that was in front of the entrance to the temple in Jerusalem. ⁹ He gathered together all the people of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and many people had come from the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon who were living among them. He was able to do that because many people had left those tribes in Israel, when they realized that Yahweh was helping him.

¹⁰ After Asa had been ruling for almost fifteen years, in the third month of that year, those people gathered in Jerusalem.

¹¹ At that time they sacrificed to Yahweh seven hundred bulls and seven thousand sheep and goats, from the animals that they had captured when they defeated the army of Ethiopia. ¹² They solemnly made an agreement to worship very sincerely Yahweh, the God whom our ancestors worshiped. ¹³ They promised to execute all those who would not worship Yahweh, including those who were important and who were not important, both men and women. ¹⁴ They shouted and blew trumpets and other horns while they solemnly promised to do that. ¹⁵ All the people who were living in Judah were happy to promise to do that because they had solemnly promised to do it very sincerely. They eagerly asked Yahweh to guide them, and he helped them. So he enabled them to have peace throughout their country.

¹⁶ King Asa’s grandmother Maacah had

made a disgusting pole for worshipping the goddess Asherah. So Asa commanded his workers to cut down that pole, chop it into pieces, and burn it in the Kidron Valley. He did not allow Maacah to continue to influence the people because she was the mother of the previous king. ¹⁷ Although Asa’s workers did not get rid of places where people worshiped idols, and those high places remained on the hills throughout Asa’s reign. But still, Asa was determined to do what pleased Yahweh all during the years that he was alive. ¹⁸ He ordered his workers to bring into God’s temple all the silver and gold and other valuable items that he and his father had dedicated to God.

¹⁹ There were no more wars in Judah until Asa had been ruling Judah almost thirty-five years.

Chapter 16

¹ When Asa had been ruling Judah for almost thirty-six years, King Baasha of Israel went with his army to attack Judah. They captured the town of Ramah north of Jerusalem and started to build a wall around it, in order to prevent any people from entering or leaving the area in Judah that King Asa ruled.

² So Asa told his workers to take all the silver and gold that was in the storerooms of the temple and in his own palace, and take and give it to Ben Hadad, the king of Aram, who was ruling in Damascus. He sent him a message, saying, ³ “I want there to be a peace treaty between me and you, like there was between my father and your father. Look, I am sending you much silver and gold. So please cancel the treaty that you have made with Baasha, the king of Israel, in order that he will take his soldiers away from attacking mine, because

he will be afraid of your army.”

⁴ Ben Hadad agreed to do what King Asa suggested. He sent the commanders of his armies with their soldiers to attack some of the towns in Israel. They captured Ijon, Dan, Abel Maim, and all the cities in the tribe of Naphtali where supplies were kept. ⁵ When Baasha heard about that, he commanded his troops to stop fortifying Ramah. ⁶ Then King Asa gathered all the men of Judah, and they took away from Ramah all the stones and timber that Baasha’s men had been using to build the wall around that town. They took those materials to the cities of Geba and Mizpah north of Jerusalem and built walls around them.

⁷ At that time the prophet Hanani went to King Asa and said to him, “Because you relied on the king of Aram and not on Yahweh our God, the army of the king of Aram has escaped from you. ⁸ Remember that the huge armies from Ethiopia were very powerful. But when you relied on Yahweh, he enabled your army to defeat them. ⁹ That happened because Yahweh sees what is happening all over the earth, and he strengthens those who completely trust him. You have done a very foolish thing, so from now on other armies will be fighting your army.”

¹⁰ Asa was very angry with the prophet because of what the prophet had said. So he commanded his officials to put Hanani in prison. At that same time, he started to treat some of his people very cruelly.

¹¹ All the things that Asa did while he was ruling, from the time he started to rule until he died, are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. ¹² When Asa had been ruling for almost thirty-nine years, he was afflicted with a disease in his feet. The disease was very severe, but in spite of that, he did not request help from Yahweh. Instead he sought help only

from doctors. ¹³ Asa had been ruling for about forty-one years when he died. ¹⁴ People buried him in the tomb that his workers had made for him in the part of Jerusalem called “the city of David.” They laid his corpse on a bed covered with spices and various perfumes that had been mixed together. They also lit a huge fire to honor him.

Chapter 17

¹ Then Asa’s son Jehoshaphat became the king of Judah, and he enabled his army to become very strong, with the result that they could resist attacks from the army of Israel. ² He put soldiers in all the cities in Judah around which they had built walls, and he put soldiers in other places in Judah and in the towns in the tribe of Ephraim that soldiers of his father Asa had captured.

³ Yahweh helped Jehoshaphat because in his earlier years, when he first began his rule, he did the things that pleased Yahweh just as his ancestor King David had done. Jehoshaphat did not worship Baal. ⁴ Instead, he sought advice from the God whom his father had worshiped, and he obeyed God’s commands and he did not do the evil things that the kings of Israel kept doing. ⁵ Yahweh enabled him to completely control his kingdom. All the people of Judah brought gifts to him, with the result that he became very rich and was greatly honored. ⁶ He was completely devoted to doing what pleased Yahweh. His workers got rid of the places on hilltops where idols were worshiped and the places where poles were set up and used to worship the goddess Asherah all throughout Judah.

⁷ When he had been ruling Judah for almost three years, he sent some of his

officials—Ben-Hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Micaiah—to teach the people in various cities in Judah. ⁸ With them he sent several descendants of Levi—Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tob-Adonijah, along with two priests, Elishama and Jehoram. ⁹ They took with them a scroll on which was written the laws of Yahweh and they taught them to the people in all the towns throughout Judah.

¹⁰ The people in all the kingdoms surrounding Judah became very afraid of what Yahweh might do to punish them if they fought against Judah, so they did not try to fight Jehoshaphat's army. ¹¹ Some people from Philistia brought gifts to Jehoshaphat, and they also brought to him the silver that he demanded that they pay to him. Some Arabs brought to him 7,700 rams and 7,700 goats.

¹² Jehoshaphat continued to become more powerful. His workers built forts and places to store supplies in various towns in Judah. ¹³ Then they put large amounts of supplies in those storehouses.

Jehoshaphat also placed in Jerusalem soldiers who were experienced. ¹⁴ The leaders and numbers from each tribe were as follows:

From the tribe of Judah, Adnah was the leader of the soldiers, and he commanded 300,000 soldiers.

¹⁵ His assistant was Jehohanan, who commanded 280,000 soldiers.

¹⁶ Next was Zicri's son Amasiah, who volunteered to serve Yahweh in this way; he commanded 200,000 courageous soldiers.

¹⁷ From the tribe of Benjamin, Eliada, who was a brave soldier, was the leader of the soldiers; he commanded 200,000 men who had bows, arrows, and shields.

¹⁸ Next was Jehozabad, who commanded 180,000 men who had weapons for fighting battles.

¹⁹ Those were the soldiers who served the king in Jerusalem, in addition to the men whom the king had placed in the other cities in Judah that had walls around them.

Chapter 18

¹ Jehoshaphat became very wealthy and was greatly honored. But then he arranged for one of his family to marry someone from the family of King Ahab of Israel. ² Several years later, he went down from Jerusalem to Samaria to visit Ahab. Ahab welcomed him, and the people who had come with him by slaughtering many sheep and cattle for a feast. ³ Then he asked Jehoshaphat, "Will you and your army go with my army to attack the city of Ramoth in the region of Gilead?" Jehoshaphat replied, "My soldiers and I are at your orders. We will go to war when you tell us to go." ⁴ Then he added, "But we should ask Yahweh first, to find out what he wants us to do."

⁵ So the king of Israel gathered all his four hundred prophets and asked them, "Should we go to fight the people of Ramoth, or should we not?"

They replied, "Yes, go and attack them because God will enable your army to defeat them."

⁶ But Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there no prophet of Yahweh here whom we can ask?"

⁷ The king of Israel replied, "There is still one man here, whom we can ask to find out what Yahweh wants. His name is Micaiah son of Imlah. But I hate him because he never says that anything good about

me. He always predicts that bad things will happen to me.”

Jehoshaphat replied, “King Ahab, you should not say that!”

⁸ So the king of Israel told one of his officials to summon Micaiah immediately.

⁹ Now the king of Israel and the king of Judah were sitting there on thrones, wearing their royal robes. They were sitting by the gate of Samaria, and all the prophets were busy saying words of prophecy to them.

¹⁰ One of them whose name was Zedekiah son of Kenaanah, had made from iron something that resembled the horns of a bull. He proclaimed to Ahab, “This is what Yahweh says: ‘With horns like these, your army will keep attacking the army of Aram like a bull attacks another animal, until you completely destroy them.’” ¹¹ All the other prophets of Ahab agreed. They said, “Yes! If you attack Ramoth in Gilead, you will be successful, because Yahweh will enable you to defeat them.”

¹² The messenger who went to summon Micaiah said to him, “Listen to me! All the other prophets are predicting the same thing. You had better do as they are doing!”

¹³ But Micaiah said, “As surely as Yahweh lives, I will tell him only what he tells me to say.”

¹⁴ When Micaiah arrived, the king of Israel asked him, “Should we go to attack Ramoth, or not?”

Micaiah replied, “Sure, go! Yahweh will enable your army to defeat them!”

¹⁵ But King Ahab wished to appear reverent toward Yahweh in front of Jehoshaphat. He said to Micaiah, “I keep telling you to say only what Yahweh tells you to say!”

¹⁶ Then Micaiah replied, “The truth is that in a vision I saw all the troops of Israel scattered on the mountains. They seemed to be like sheep that did not have a shepherd. And Yahweh said, ‘Their master has been killed. So tell them all to go home peacefully.’”

¹⁷ Ahab turned to Jehoshaphat and said, “I told you that Micaiah never says anything good will happen to me! He only predicts bad things for me.”

¹⁸ But Micaiah continued, saying, “Listen to what Yahweh showed to me! In a vision I saw Yahweh sitting on his throne, with all the armies of heaven standing around him, on his right side and on his left side. ¹⁹ And Yahweh said, ‘Who can persuade Ahab, the king of Israel, to go to fight against the people of Ramoth, in order that he may be killed there?’

Some suggested one thing, and others suggested something else.

²⁰ Finally one spirit forward and said, ‘I can do it!’

Yahweh asked him, ‘How will you do it?’

²¹ The spirit replied, ‘I will go and inspire all of Ahab’s prophets to tell lies.’ Yahweh said, ‘You will be successful; go and do it!’

²² So now I tell you that Yahweh has caused your prophets to lie to you. Yahweh has decided that something terrible will happen to you.”

²³ Then Zedekiah walked over to Micaiah and slapped him on his face. He said, “Do you think that Yahweh’s spirit left me in order to speak to you?”

²⁴ Micaiah replied, “You will find out for yourself to which of us Yahweh’s spirit has truly spoken on the day when you go into a room of some house to hide from the Aramean soldiers!”

²⁵ King Ahab commanded his soldiers, “Arrest Micaiah and take him to Amon, the

governor of this city, and to my son Joash.

²⁶ Tell them that I have commanded that they should put this man in prison and give him only bread and water. Do not give him anything else to eat until I return safely from the battle!"

²⁷ Micaiah replied, "If you return safely, it will be clear that it was not Yahweh who told me what to say to you!" Then he said to all those who were standing there, "Do not forget what I have said to King Ahab!"

²⁸ So the king of Israel and the king of Judah led their armies to Ramoth in Gilead.

²⁹ King Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "I will put on different clothes, in order that no one will recognize that I am the king. But you should wear your royal robe." So the king of Israel disguised himself, and they both went into the battle.

³⁰ The king of Aram had told his soldiers who were driving the chariots, "Attack only the king of Israel! Do not attack anyone else." ³¹ So when the soldiers who were driving the Aramean chariots saw Jehoshaphat wearing the royal robes, they thought, "He must be the king of Israel!" ³² So they turned to attack him. But when Jehoshaphat cried out, Yahweh helped him, and they realized that he was not the king of Israel. And God caused them to stop pursuing him.

³³ But one Aramean soldier shot an arrow at Ahab, without knowing who he was. The arrow struck Ahab between the places where the parts of his armor joined together. Ahab told the driver of his chariot, "Turn the chariot around and take me out of here! I have been severely wounded!" ³⁴ The battle continued all the day. Ahab was sitting propped up in his chariot, facing the Aramean soldiers. And late in the afternoon, when the sun was setting, he died.

Chapter 19

¹ When King Jehoshaphat returned safely to his palace in Jerusalem, ² the prophet Jehu son of the prophet Hanani, went out of the city to meet the king, and said to him, "It was not right for you to help a wicked man and to love those who hate Yahweh. Because of what you have done, Yahweh is angry with you. ³ But you have done some good things; you got rid of the poles in this country for worshiping the goddess Asherah, and you have been determined to do what pleases God."

⁴ Jehoshaphat lived in Jerusalem. But one time, like he had done once previously, he went out among all the people in the country, from the city of Beersheba in the far south to the hill country of the tribe of Ephraim in the far north, and he convinced them to return to worshiping Yahweh, the God whom their ancestors worshiped. ⁵ He appointed judges throughout Judah, in each of the cities that had walls around them. ⁶ He told them, "Make your decisions carefully, because you are judging cases not in order to please people, but to please Yahweh. And he will be watching you whenever you make a decision. ⁷ So now revere Yahweh and judge cases carefully and do not forget that Yahweh our God never acts unjustly, and that he never does what people want because they offer him money."

⁸ In Jerusalem, Jehoshaphat also appointed some priests and other descendants of Levi and some leaders of Israelite families to be judges. He told them to do what Yahweh's laws said was right when they settled disputes. Those men lived in Jerusalem. ⁹ He told them this: "You must always do your work faithfully, honoring Yahweh. ¹⁰ In every dispute that your fellow Israelites who live in the cities want you to settle, you must warn them to not

sin against Yahweh by telling lies during the trial—regardless of whether the trial is about murder, or about various laws, or about various royal decrees. If you do not warn them, God will punish you. Do this so that he does not become angry with you or your fellow Israelites.

¹¹ Amariah, the high priest, will supervise you in any matter that Yahweh is concerned about, and Zebadiah son of Ishmael, the leader of the tribe of Judah, will supervise you in any matter that I am concerned about. And the descendants of Levi will assist you. Act courageously, and I pray that Yahweh will help those who do their work well.”

Chapter 20

¹ Later armies from Moab and Ammon and some soldiers from region of Meun, near Edom, came to fight against Jehoshaphat’s army.

² Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, “A huge army is coming to attack your army. They are coming from the region of Edom, from the other side of the Dead Sea. They have already come to Hazazon Tamar!” Another name for that place is Engedi. ³ Jehoshaphat became very afraid, so he decided to ask Yahweh what he should do. He also proclaimed that all the people of Judah should fast. ⁴ The people of Judah gathered together to request Yahweh to help them. They came to Jerusalem from every town in Judah to seek help from Yahweh.

⁵ Then Jehoshaphat stood up in front of the people of Judah in front of the new courtyard of the temple, ⁶ and he prayed this:

”Yahweh, the God whom our ancestors belonged to, you rule from heaven.

You rule over all the kings and nations on earth. You can do anything; no one can successfully oppose you. ⁷ Our God, you drove out the people who lived in this land while your Israelite people advanced into it, and you certainly gave it to us who are descendants of Abraham, so that the land would belong to us forever. ⁸ Our ancestors lived here and built a temple at which to worship you. At that time they prayed: ⁹ ‘If we experience disasters, either from our enemies attacking us, or from disease or hunger, we will assemble at this temple in your presence, for you agreed to be present here. We will plead with you because of the things we are suffering, and you will hear us and will rescue us.’

¹⁰ You would not allow our Israelite ancestors to enter the countries of Ammon, Moab, or Edom when they were traveling from Egypt to Canaan. So our ancestors turned away from those areas and did not attack the people there and did not destroy them. But now they are coming here to attack us. ¹¹ We did good things for them. But now look at how they are repaying us by trying to drive out us from the land that you gave to our ancestors to belong to them and their descendants forever! ¹² So, our God, please punish them. We cannot defeat the enormous army that is coming to attack us. We do not know what to do, but we are depending on you to help us.”

¹³ All the men of Judah and their wives, children, and babies were standing there in the presence of Yahweh while Jehoshaphat prayed.

¹⁴ Then the Spirit of Yahweh came upon Jahaziel son of Zechariah, who was son of Benaiah, who was son of Jeiel, who was son of Mattaniah. He was a descendant of Levi and a descendant of Asaph. He stood up in front of the whole group that was gathered there, ¹⁵ and said,

"King Jehoshaphat and all you who live in Jerusalem and in other places in Judah, listen! This is what Yahweh says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this huge army that is coming to attack you, because it is not you who will win this battle. It is God who will win it. ¹⁶ Tomorrow march down toward them. They will be climbing up through the pass of Ziz north of En Gedi. You will meet them at the end of the gorge near wilderness of Jeruel. ¹⁷ But you will not need to fight this battle. You soldiers from Jerusalem and other places in Judah, just take your positions, and then stand still and watch what will happen. You will see Yahweh rescue you. Do not be afraid or discouraged. March toward them tomorrow, and Yahweh will be with you.'"

¹⁸ Jehoshaphat prostrated himself with his face touching the ground, and all the people of Jerusalem and other places in Judah who were there knelt down to worship Yahweh. ¹⁹ Then some descendants of Levi who were descendants of Kohath and Korah stood up and loudly praised Yahweh, the God whom the Israelites belonged to.

²⁰ Early the next morning the army left to go to the desert near the town of Tekoa. While they were leaving, Jehoshaphat stood up and said to them, "You people of Jerusalem and other places in Judah, listen to me! Trust in Yahweh our God; if you do that, you will be strong. Trust in what his prophets have said; if you do that, you will be successful." ²¹ Then, after consulting with the people's leaders, Jehoshaphat assigned some persons to sign praise to Yahweh for his greatness, and for these individuals to lead the entire army to the enemy. They were singing,

"Thank Yahweh,

because he faithfully loves us forever."

²² While they began to sing and praise Yahweh, Yahweh caused some enemy soldiers to unexpectedly attack the others from Ammon and Moab and Edom. They defeated the others in their army. ²³ Then the soldiers from Ammon and Moab attacked the soldiers from Edom and completely annihilated them. After they finished slaughtering the men from Edom, they slaughtered each other.

²⁴ When the soldiers from Judah came to the place where they could look down over the wilderness, they looked toward that huge army of their enemies, and they saw only corpses lying on the ground. No one had survived.

²⁵ So Jehoshaphat and his soldiers went to take the possessions of their enemies, and they saw that there was a lot of equipment and clothing and other valuable things; there was more than they could carry away. There were very many things, with the result that it took three days for them to collect them all. ²⁶ The following day they gathered in Berakah Valley and praised Yahweh there. That is why that valley is still called Berakah, which means praise.

²⁷ Then while Jehoshaphat led them, all the soldiers who were from Jerusalem and other places in Judah returned to Jerusalem. They were happy because Yahweh had enabled them to defeat their enemies. ²⁸ When they arrived at Jerusalem, they went to the temple, playing harps, lutes, and trumpets.

²⁹ People in the kingdoms of the nearby countries became very afraid when they heard how Yahweh had fought against the enemies of the Israelites. ³⁰ Then there was peace in the kingdom that Jehoshaphat ruled, because God had enabled him to have peace throughout the country.

³¹ Jehoshaphat continued to rule Judah. He was thirty-five years old when he became king of Judah, and he ruled in Jerusalem for twenty-five years. His mother's name was Azubah, the daughter of Shilhi. ³² He did things that were pleasing to Yahweh, like his father Asa had done, and he did not stop doing those things. ³³ But he did not get rid of the places where idols were worshiped on the hills in the countryside, and most of the people still not erious about obeying the God whom their ancestors had worshiped.

³⁴ A record of the other things that Jehoshaphat did while he ruled, from the beginning until he died, is in the scrolls written by the prophet Jehu son of Hanani. They are also in the scroll on which was written a record of the activities of the kings of Israel.

³⁵ Later, Jehoshaphat made a treaty with Ahaziah, the king of Israel, who was a very wicked king. ³⁶ They agreed that their workers would build a fleet of ships to use to buy and sell things with other countries. After those ships were built at Ezion Geber, ³⁷ Eliezer son of Dodavahu of the city of Mareshah, prophesied against Jehoshaphat. He said, "You have made an alliance with Ahaziah, who is a wicked king. Therefore, Yahweh will destroy the ships that your workers have made." And the ships were wrecked, and were never able to sail to other countries.

Chapter 21

¹ Then Jehoshaphat died and was buried where his ancestors were buried in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David. His son Jehoram became the next king of Judah. ² Jehoram's younger brothers were Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azariah,

Michael, and Shephatiah. ³ Before Jehoshaphat died, he had given them large gifts of silver and gold and other valuable things. He also appointed them to rule various cities in Judah that had walls around them. But he appointed Jehoram to be the king of Judah, because Jehoram was his oldest son.

⁴ After Jehoram was completely in control of his father's kingdom, he caused all of his younger brothers to be killed, along with some of the leaders of the nation. ⁵ Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became the king, and he ruled in Jerusalem for eight years. ⁶ But he did many of the evil things that the kings of Israel had done. He did many things that Yahweh said were evil, things that the family of Ahab had done, because he married one of Ahab's daughters. ⁷ However, because of the covenant that Yahweh had made with King David, Yahweh did not want to get rid of the descendants Judah.

⁸ While Jehoram was ruling, the people in the region of Edom rebelled against the king of Judah and appointed their own king. ⁹ So Jehoram and his officers and his men in chariots went to Edom. There, the army of Edom surrounded them. However, Jerhoram and his army attacked them and broke free from them; then they escaped during the night. ¹⁰ But the king of Judah was never able to regain control of Edom, and Edom is still not controlled by Judah. The people in the city of Libnah between Judah and Philistia also rebelled against Judah. Those things happened because Jehoram stopped obeying Yahweh, the God whom his ancestors belonged to.

¹¹ On the hilltops in Judah he had also built high places, where they worshiped idols. He caused the people of Judah to stray away from Yahweh by worshiping foreign gods.

¹² One day, Jehoram received a letter from

the prophet Elijah. Elijah had written this:

¹³ Instead, you have continually done the evil things that the kings of Israel have done. You have encouraged the people in Jerusalem and other places in Judah to stop worshiping Yahweh and to be unfaithful to him. And you have killed your brothers, men who were better than you are.'

¹⁴ So now Yahweh is about to cause disasters to strike very severely the people in your kingdom and even your own children and your wives, and everything that you own. ¹⁵ And you yourself will have an intestinal disease that will continue to become worse, and you will suffer from it until you die."

¹⁶ Then Yahweh stirred up some men from the Philistia people group and some Arabs who lived near the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, where people from Ethiopia had settled, to come against Jehoram. ¹⁷ Their army invaded Judah and took away from Jerusalem all the valuable things that they found in the king's palace; they also took away his sons and wives. His youngest son, Jehoahaz, was the only one of his sons whom they did not take away.

¹⁸ After that happened, Yahweh caused Jehoram to be afflicted with an intestinal disease that no doctor could cure. ¹⁹ About two years later, while he had great pain, he died because of that disease. The people of Judah had made bonfires to honor his ancestors when they died, but they did not make a bonfire for Jehoram.

²⁰ Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became the king, and he ruled in Jerusalem for eight years. No one regretted it when he died. His corpse was buried in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David, but he was not buried where the other kings of Judah had been buried.

Chapter 22

¹ The people of Jerusalem appointed Jehoram's youngest son Ahaziah to be their king, because the men from Philistia who had invaded Judah with some Arabs had killed all of Jehoram's other sons. So Ahaziah started to rule Judah.

² Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he became king. He ruled in Jerusalem for one year. His mother's name was Athaliah, a granddaughter of King Omri of Israel.

³ King Ahab conducted his life just like the members of Ahab's family had done, because his mother encouraged him to do things that are wrong. ⁴ He did many things that Yahweh said were evil, like the descendants of Ahab had done, because after Ahaziah's father died, they became his advisors. And Ahaziah died as a result of heeding their bad advice. ⁵ Before he died, he did what they encourage him to do by going with Joram son of King Ahab of Israel, to fight against the army of Hazael, the king of Aram, at Ramoth Gilead. Joram was wounded there by the Arameans.

⁶ After he was wounded, Joram went back to the city of Jezreel to recover from his battle wounds. Then King Ahaziah went down to Jezreel to see Joram son of King Ahab, because he had been wounded.

⁷ God caused Ahaziah to die as a result of his going to visit Joram. When Ahaziah arrived, he went with Joram to meet Jehu son of Nimshi, whom Yahweh had appointed to kill all the descendants of Ahab.

⁸ While Jehu and the men who were with him were killing Ahab's descendants, they found the leaders of Judah and the sons of Ahaziah's relatives who had been working for Ahaziah, and they killed all of them also. ⁹ Then Jehu went to find Ahaziah,

and his soldiers found Ahaziah while he was hiding in the city of Samaria. They brought him to Jehu and executed him. Then they buried his corpse, because they said, "He deserves to be buried, because he was a descendant of Jehoshaphat, who tried hard to please Yahweh." After that, there were no descendants of Ahaziah who were powerful enough to become the kings of Judah.

¹⁰ When Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, saw that her son had been killed, she commanded that all the members of Ahaziah's family who might become king must be executed. ¹¹ But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram, took Joash, Ahaziah's very young son, away from the other sons of the king who were about to be murdered, and she hid him and his nursemaid in a bedroom in the temple. Because Jehosheba, who was the daughter of King Jehoram and the wife of the high priest Jehoiada, was Ahaziah's sister, she was able to hide the child, with the result that Athaliah could not kill him. ¹² He remained hidden there for six years while Athaliah ruled Judah.

Chapter 23

¹ The next year, Jehoiada decided that it was necessary to do something. So he made an agreement with the army commanders of groups of one hundred soldiers: Azariah son of Jeroham, Ishmael son of Jehohanan, Azariah son of Obed, Maaseiah son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat son of Zicri. ² They went throughout Judah and gathered the descendants of Levi and the leaders of Israelite families from all the cities. When they came to Jerusalem, ³ the whole group went to the temple and made an agreement with the young king there. Jehoiada said to them,

"This is the son of the previous king of Judah. So he is the one who must rule, like Yahweh promised that the descendants of King David must do.

⁴ So this is what you must do: One-third of you priests and other descendants of Levi who are starting to work on the Sabbath day must guard the temple doors. ⁵ One-third of you must guard the king's palace, and one-third of you must guard the Foundation Gate. All the other people will be in the courtyard outside the temple. ⁶ Only the priests and the descendants of Levi who work there are allowed to enter the temple, because they are set apart for that work. All the others must remain in the courtyard, obeying what Yahweh has commanded. ⁷ You descendants of Levi must stand around the young king, each of you with your weapon in your hand. You must kill anyone else who tries to enter the temple. And stay close to the king, wherever he goes."

⁸ So the descendants of Levi and all the men of Judah did what Jehoiada had told them. He did not allow anyone to go home after he finished his work on that day. Each commander took his men, the ones who were finishing their work on that Sabbath day and those who were starting their work on that day. ⁹ Then Jehoiada gave each of the commanders the spears and the large and small shields that had been put there in the temple by King David. ¹⁰ He commanded all the guards to stand in their positions, each with his sword in his hand, all around the king—near the altar and near the temple, from the north side to the south side.

¹¹ Then Jehoiada and his sons brought Joash out. They put a crown on his head and gave him a scroll on which were written the rules that the kings needed to obey, and they proclaimed that he was now the king. They anointed him with olive oil and

shouted, "We desire that the king will live for many years!"

¹² When Athaliah heard the noise being made by the people running toward the king and cheering, she ran to the temple.

¹³ She saw the young king there standing alongside the pillar at the entrance of the temple, which is the place at the temple where the kings usually stood. The army commanders and trumpet players were standing beside the king, and all the people of Judah were rejoicing and blowing trumpets, and singers with their musical instruments were leading the people while they praised God. Then Athaliah tore her robes and started screaming, "You are committing treason!"

¹⁴ Jehoiada the high priest said to the army commanders, "Kill her, but do not kill her at the temple of Yahweh!" Then he said to them, "Bring Athaliah out between your ranks and kill anyone who tries to follow her!" ¹⁵ She tried to flee, but they seized her as she reached the Horse Gate, before the palace, and they killed her there. ¹⁶ Then Jehoiada made an agreement that he and the king and all the other people would be Yahweh's people. ¹⁷ Then all the people who were there went to the temple of Baal and tore it down. They smashed the altars of Baal. They also killed Mattan, the priest of Baal, in front of those altars.

¹⁸ Then Jehoiada appointed the priests, who were also descended from Levi, to take care of the temple. They were part of the group to whom King David had given various work at the temple, to sacrifice the animals that were to be completely burned on the altar, doing what was written in the laws that Moses had given to them. He also told them to rejoice and sing, which was also what David had commanded. ¹⁹ He also put gatekeepers at the gates of the temple in order that anyone who was unacceptable to God would not

be allowed to enter.

²⁰ Jehoiada took with him the army commanders, the important men, the leaders and many others, and brought the king down from the temple. They went into the palace through the Upper Gate, and put the king on his throne. ²¹ Then all the people of Judah rejoiced. And there was quiet throughout the city, because Athaliah had been killed.

Chapter 24

¹ Joash was seven years old when he became the king of Judah, and he ruled in Jerusalem for forty years. His mother's name was Zibiah; she was from the city of Beersheba. ² Joash did what pleased Yahweh all during the years that Jehoiada was the high priest. ³ Jehoiada chose two women to be Joash's wives. And they bore Joash sons and daughters.

⁴ Some years later, Joash decided that the temple should be repaired. ⁵ He summoned the priests and other descendants of Levi and said to them, "Go to the cities of Judah and collect from the people the tax money that they are required to pay each year, and use that money to pay for repairing the temple. Do it immediately." But the descendants of Levi did not do it immediately.

⁶ So the king summoned Jehoiada and said to him, "Why have you not required the descendants of Levi to bring to Jerusalem from various places in Judah the annual tax that Moses said that the people of Judah must pay, for taking care of the sacred tent?"

⁷ The temple needed to be repaired because the sons of that wicked woman Athaliah had entered into the temple and had wrecked some of the things, and had

also used some of the sacred items that were in it for the worship of Baal.

⁸ So, obeying what the king commanded, the descendants of Levi made a chest and placed it outside the temple, at one of the entrances. ⁹ Then the king sent letters everywhere in Judah, requesting everyone to bring their tax money to the temple, as Moses had required the Israelite people to do when they were in the wilderness. ¹⁰ All the officials and the other people agreed, and they brought their contributions gladly. They put the money into the chest until it was full. ¹¹ Whenever the descendants of Levi brought the chest to the king's officials, and they saw that there was a lot of money in it, the king's secretary and the assistant to the high priest would take all the money from the chest and then put the chest back in its place. They did this frequently, and they collected a huge amount of money. ¹² The king and Jehoiada gave the money to the men who were supervising the work of repairing the temple. Those men hired stoneworkers and carpenters to repair the temple. They also hired men who worked with iron and bronze to repair the things in the temple that were broken.

¹³ The men who did the repair work worked hard, and the work of repairing the temple progressed. They rebuilt the temple to make it as it was originally, and they made it stronger. ¹⁴ When they had finished the repair work, they brought to the king and to Jehoiada the money that they had not used for the repairs. That money was used to make things to use for performing the sacrifices that were to be completely burned on the altar, and to make bowls and other gold and silver things for the temple. As long as Joash lived, the people continually brought to the temple sacrifices that were to be completely burned on the altar.

¹⁵ Jehoiada became very old. He died when he was 130 years old. ¹⁶ He was buried where the kings had been buried, in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David. He was buried there because of the good things that he had done in Judah for God and for God's temple.

¹⁷ After Jehoiada died, the leaders of Judah went to Joash, bowed in front of him, and persuaded him to do what they wanted. ¹⁸ So they and the other people stopped worshiping at the temple, and they started worshiping the poles dedicated to the goddess Asherah and other idols. Because they were doing those sinful things, God was very angry with the people of Jerusalem and with the people in other places in Judah. ¹⁹ Although Yahweh sent prophets to persuade them to return to him, and although the prophets testified about the evil things that they had done, the people would not pay attention.

²⁰ Then God's Spirit came upon Zechariah son of Jehoiada the high priest. He stood up front of the people and said, "This is what God says: Why are you violating Yahweh's commandments? You will not be able prosper if you do that. Since you have stopped obeying Yahweh, he will stop taking care of you."

²¹ But the people planned to kill Zechariah. And the king permitted them to kill him. They killed him by throwing stones at him in the temple courtyard. ²² King Joash forgot about how Zechariah's father Jehoiada had been kind to him. So he commanded them to kill Jehoiada's son Zechariah, who said as he was dying, "I hope that Yahweh will see what you are doing to me and punish you for doing it."

²³ Near the end of that year, the army of Aram marched to attack the army of Joash. They invaded Judah and attacked Jerusalem and killed all the leaders of

the people. They seized many valuable things and sent them to their king in Damascus, their capital city. ²⁴ The army of Aram that came to Judah was very small, but Yahweh allowed them to defeat the large army of Judah, because he was punishing Joash and the other people of Judah for having abandoned him, the God whom their ancestors worshiped. ²⁵ Before the battle ended, Joash was severely wounded. Then his officials decided to kill him for murdering Zechariah son of Jehoiada the high priest. They killed him while he was in his bed. They buried him in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David, but they did not bury him in the place where the other kings had been buried.

²⁶ Those who conspired to kill him were Zabad son of Shimeath, who was a woman from the Ammon people group, and Jehozabad son of Shimrith, who was a woman from the Moab people group. ²⁷ An account of the things that were done by the sons of Joash and the many prophecies about Joash and what he did to repair the temple are written in the commentary on the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. Then after Joash died, Amaziah his son became the king.

Chapter 25

¹ Amaziah was twenty-five years old when he became the king of Judah, and he ruled from Jerusalem for twenty-nine years. His mother was Jehoaddan. She was from Jerusalem. ² Amaziah did many things that pleased Yahweh, but he did not want to do them very much. ³ As soon as he was in complete control of his kingdom, he caused others to execute the officials who had murdered his father. ⁴ But he did not order their sons to be executed; he obeyed what was in the laws

that Moses had written. In those laws Yahweh had commanded, "People must not be executed because of what their children have done, and children must not be executed for what their parents have done. People must be executed only for the sins that they themselves have committed."

⁵ Amaziah summoned the men of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin to come to Jerusalem, and there he put them into groups, each clan in a group by themselves. Then he appointed officers to command each group. Some officers commanded one hundred men, and some commanded one thousand men. They counted the men who were at least twenty years old; altogether there were 300,000 men. They were all men who were ready to be in the army, and able to fight well, using spears and shields. ⁶ Amaziah also hired 100,000 capable soldiers from Israel; he paid almost 3,300 kilograms (or about three and one-third metric tons) of silver for them.

⁷ But a prophet came to him and said, "Your Majesty, you must not allow those soldiers from Israel to march with your soldiers, because Yahweh does not help the people of the tribe of Ephraim or from anywhere else in Israel. ⁸ Even if your soldiers go and fight courageously in battles, God will cause your enemies to defeat you; do not forget that God has the power to help armies or to cause them to be defeated."

⁹ Amaziah asked that prophet, "If I do that, what about 3,300 kilograms of silver that I paid to hire those soldiers from Israel?"

The prophet replied, "Yahweh is able to pay you back more money than you paid to hire those soldiers."

¹⁰ So Amaziah told those soldiers from Israel to return home. They left to go home,

but they were very angry with the king of Judah for not allowing them to stay and fight.

¹¹ Then Amaziah became brave, and he led his army to the Valley of Salt. There they killed ten thousand soldiers from the Edom people group. ¹² The army of Judah also captured ten thousand other soldiers, took them to the top of a cliff, and threw them all down over the cliff, with the result that their bodies were all smashed to pieces.

¹³ While that was happening, the soldiers from Israel whom Amaziah had sent home raided cities and towns in Judea, from the city of Samaria to the city of Beth Horon. They killed three thousand people and took away a great amount of valuable things.

¹⁴ When Amaziah returned to Jerusalem after his army had slaughtered the soldiers from Edom, he brought the idols that his enemies had worshiped. He set them up to be his own gods. Then he bowed down to worship them and offered sacrifices to them. ¹⁵ Because of that, Yahweh was very angry with Amaziah. He sent a prophet to him, who said, "Why do you worship these foreign gods who were not even able to save their own people when your army attacked them?"

¹⁶ While he was still speaking, the king said to him, "We certainly did not appoint you to be one of my advisors. So stop talking! If you say anything more, I will tell my soldiers to kill you!"

So the prophet said, "I know that God has determined to get rid of you, because you have begun to worship idols, and have not heeded my advice." Then the prophet said nothing more.

¹⁷ Some time later Amaziah, the king of Judah, consulted his advisors. Then he sent a message to Jehoash, the king of Israel.

He wrote, "Come and meet me face to face in battle."

¹⁸ But Jehoash replied this to King Amaziah: "One time a thistle growing in the mountains in Lebanon sent a message to a cedar tree, saying, 'Give your daughter to my son in order that he can marry her.' But a wild animal in Lebanon came along and trampled the thistle under his feet. ¹⁹ What I mean is that you are saying to yourself that your army has defeated the army of Edom, so you have become very proud. You can be proud of your victory, but you should not fight me. If you do, you will only make trouble for yourself. I will defeat you, and Judah with you."

²⁰ But Amaziah paid no attention to Jehoash's message. This happened because God wanted Jehoash's army to defeat them, because they were worshiping the gods of Edom. ²¹ So Jehoash's army attacked. Their two armies faced each other at the city of Beth Shemesh in Judah. ²² The army of Judah was badly defeated by the army of Israel, and all the soldiers of Judah fled to their homes. ²³ King Jehoash's army also captured King Amaziah there. Then he brought Amaziah to Jerusalem, and his soldiers tore down the wall that was around the city, from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate. That was a section that was one-hundred and eighty meters long. ²⁴ His soldiers also carried away the gold, silver, and other valuable objects from the temple that the descendants of Obed Edom had been guarding. They also took away the valuable things in the palace, and they took to Samaria some prisoners whom they had captured.

²⁵ King Jehoash of Israel died, and King Amaziah of Judah lived for fifteen years after that. ²⁶ An account of all the other things that Amaziah did while he was the

king of Judah is written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. ²⁷ From the time that Amaziah started to disobey Yahweh, some men in Jerusalem planned to kill him. He was able to escape to the city of Lachish, but those who wanted to kill him sent another group of people to Lachish and killed him there. ²⁸ They put his corpse on a horse and brought it back to Jerusalem and buried it where his ancestors had been buried in what is called the city of Judah.

Chapter 26

¹ All the people took Uzziah and made him their king, in the place of his father Amaziah. Uzziah was sixteen years old at that time. ² While he was the king, after his father King Amaziah had died, he had his workers rebuild the city of Elath and brought that city under the protection of Judah.

³ Uzziah ruled in Jerusalem for fifty-two years. His mother was Jecoliah; she was from Jerusalem. ⁴ Uzziah did the things that Yahweh said were good, like his father Amaziah had done. ⁵ He set himself to seek God in the days of Zechariah. Zechariah is the one who taught him to give honor to God. For as long as he sought Yahweh, God made him successful.

⁶ Uzziah and his army went to attack the army of Philistia. They tore down the walls of the cities of Gath, Jabneh, and Ashdod. Then they rebuilt the cities near Ashdod and in other places in Philistia. ⁷ God helped them to fight the army of Philistia and the Arabs who lived in the city of Gur Baal, and the descendants of Meun who had come to that area from Edom. ⁸ Even the Ammon people group paid taxes to Uzziah each year. So Uzziah became

famous as far as the border of Egypt, because he had become very powerful.

⁹ Uzziah's workers built watchtowers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate, at the Valley Gate, and at the place where the wall turns, and they placed weapons in those towers. ¹⁰ They also built watchtowers in the wilderness and dug many wells. They did that to provide water for a lot of the king's cattle that were in the foothills and in the plains. Uzziah was very interested in farming, so he also stationed workers to take care of his fields, vineyards in the hills, and in the fertile areas.

¹¹ Uzziah's army was trained for fighting battles. They were in groups that were always ready to go into battles. Jeiel, the king's secretary, and Maaseiah, one of the army officers, counted the men and placed them in groups. Hananiah, one of the king's officials, was their commander. ¹² The total number of the family leaders who led the strongest soldiers in battle was 2,600 in number. ¹³ In the groups that those leaders commanded there was a total of 307,500 well-trained soldiers. It was a very powerful army, ready to fight the king's enemies. ¹⁴ Uzziah gave to each soldier a shield, a spear, a helmet, a vest made of iron plates, a bow and arrows, and a sling for throwing stones. ¹⁵ In Jerusalem his skilled workers made machines to put on the watchtowers and on the corners of the walls, to shoot arrows and to hurl large stones. He became very famous even in distant places, because God helped him very much and enabled him to become very powerful.

¹⁶ But because Uzziah was very powerful, he became very proud, and that caused him to be punished. He disobeyed what Yahweh his God had commanded. He went into the temple to burn incense on the altar where God had said that only the priests should burn incense. ¹⁷

Chapter 27

Azariah, the high priest, and eighty other brave priests followed him into the temple. ¹⁸ They rebuked him and said to him, "Uzziah, it is not right for you to burn incense to Yahweh because you are not set apart to serve as a priest, and only a priest can burn incense to Yahweh. The priests are the descendants of Aaron our first high priest, and you are not one of them! You must leave immediately, because you have disobeyed Yahweh our God, and he will not honor you for what you have done!"

¹⁹ Now Uzziah was holding in his hand a pan for burning incense, and he became very angry with the priests. While he was expressing his anger, while he stood beside the altar of incense in front of the priests, suddenly spots of leprosy appeared on his forehead. ²⁰ When Azariah the high priest and all the other priests who were there looked at him, they saw the leprosy on his forehead, so they quickly took him outside. And truly the king was eager to leave the temple, because he knew that it was Yahweh who had caused him to have that leprosy, and he did not want it to become worse.

²¹ King Uzziah had leprosy until he died. Because he had leprosy, he lived in a house that was not near other houses, and he was not allowed to enter the courtyard of the temple. His son Jotham supervised the palace and ruled the people of Judah.

²² A record of all the other things that Uzziah did while he was the king of Judah was written by the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. ²³ Because Uzziah was a leper, when he died they would not bury him in the royal tombs. Instead, they buried him in a nearby cemetery that the kings owned. Then his son Jotham became the king of Judah.

¹ Jotham was twenty-five years old when he became the king of Judah. He ruled from Jerusalem for sixteen years. His mother was Jerushah, the daughter of the priest Zadok. ² Jotham obeyed Yahweh and did what Yahweh approved. He followed the example of his father Uzziah in everything he did. (He did not, however, go into the Temple of Yahweh to burn incense as his father had done.) Yet the people of Judah continued to do the things that showed how sinful they had become.

³ Jotham's workers rebuilt the Upper Gate of the temple, and they did a lot of work to repair the wall near the hill of Ophel. ⁴ They built cities in the hills of Judah, and they built forts and towers for defense in the forests.

⁵ During the time that he was the king of Judah, his army attacked and defeated the army of the Ammon people group. Then, every year during the next three years, he required them to pay to him about three and one-third metric tons of silver, 2,200 kiloliters of wheat, and 2,200 kiloliters of barley.

⁶ Jotham faithfully obeyed Yahweh his God, and as a result he became a very powerful king.

⁷ A record of everything else that Jotham did during the time that he was the king, including the wars that his army fought, is written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. ⁸ After he had ruled Judah for sixteen years, he died when he was forty-one years old. ⁹ He was buried in Jerusalem, and his son Ahaz became the next king of Judah.

Chapter 28

¹ Ahaz was twenty years old when he became the king of Judah. He ruled from Jerusalem for sixteen years. His ancestor King David had been a good king, but Ahaz was not like David. He constantly disobeyed Yahweh ² and was as sinful as the kings of Israel had been. He made idols of the god Baal by having craftsmen cast them in metal. ³ He burned incense in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. He even killed some of his own sons in fires as sacrifices. That imitated the disgusting customs that the people groups who previously lived there had done, people whom Yahweh had drive out when the Israelites were advancing through the land. ⁴ He offered sacrifices to idols at the houses built upon hilltops and under every big green tree.

⁵ Therefore Yahweh his God allowed his army to be defeated by the army of the king of Aram. They captured many soldiers of Judah and took them as prisoners to Damascus. The army of the king of Israel also defeated the army of Judah and killed very many of their soldiers. ⁶ In one day the army of Remaliah's son, King Pekah of Israel, killed 120,000 fine soldiers in Judah. That happened because the people of Judah had abandoned Yahweh, the God whom their ancestors worshiped. ⁷ Zicri, a warrior from the tribe of Ephraim, killed King Ahaz's son Maseiah, Azrikam, who was in charge of the palace, and Elkanah, the king's assistant. ⁸ The soldiers of Israel captured 200,000 of the people of Judah, including many wives and sons and daughters of the soldiers of Judah. They also seized and took back to Samaria many valuable things.

⁹ But a prophet of Yahweh, whose name was Oded, was in Samaria. He went out of the city to meet the army as it was return-

ing. He said to them, "Yahweh, the God to whom your ancestors belonged, was angry with the people of Judah, so he has handed them over to you, and you have slaughtered so many in a towering rage. ¹⁰ And now you want to sin by causing men and women from Judah to become your slaves, but you have certainly offended Yahweh, our God, in this matter. ¹¹ So listen to me! Send back to Judah your fellow countrymen whom you have captured, because Yahweh is extremely angry with you for what you did to them."

¹² Then some of the leaders of the tribe of Ephraim—Azariah son of Johanan, Berekiah son of Meshillemoth, Jehizkiah son of Shallum, and Amasa son of Hadlai—rebuked those who were returning from the battle. ¹³ They said to them, "You must not bring those prisoners here! If you do that, Yahweh will consider that we are guilty of sinning. We are already guilty of committing many sins; do you want to cause us to be even more guilty by committing another sin? God is already very angry with us people of Israel!"

¹⁴ So, while their leaders and others were watching, the soldiers released the prisoners, and also gave back to them the valuable things that they had captured. ¹⁵ The leaders assigned some men to take care of the prisoners. These men took some of the clothes that the soldiers had taken from the people of Judah and gave those clothes to the people who were naked. They also gave to the prisoners sandals and other clothes, as well as things to eat and drink, and they gave them olive oil to rub on their wounds. They gave donkeys to those who were very weak, in order that they could ride on them. Then they led them all to Jericho, the city that had many palm trees. Finally those men returned to Samaria.

¹⁶ About that time, King Ahaz sent a mes-

sage to the king of Assyria requesting help.

¹⁷ He did that because the army from the Edom people group had come again and attacked Judah and taken away many of the people of Judah as prisoners. ¹⁸ At the same time, men from Philistia raided towns in the foothills and in the southern Judean wilderness. They captured the cities of Beth Shemesh, Aijalon, and Gederot, as well as those of Soko, Timnah, and Gimzo with its nearby villages.

¹⁹ Yahweh allowed those things to happen in order to humble King Ahaz, because he had encouraged the people of Judah to do wicked things and had disobeyed Yahweh very much. ²⁰ Tiglath-Pileser, the king of Assyria, sent his army saying that they would help Ahaz, but instead of helping him, they caused him trouble. ²¹ Ahaz's soldiers took some of the valuable things from the temple and from the king's palace and from other leaders of Judah, and sent them to the king of Assyria to pay him to help them, but the king of Assyria refused to help Ahaz.

²² While King Ahaz was experiencing those troubles, he disobeyed Yahweh even more. ²³ He offered sacrifices to the gods that were worshiped in Damascus, whose army had defeated his army. He thought, "The gods that are worshiped by the kings of Aram have helped them, so I will offer sacrifices to those gods in order that they will help me." But worshiping those gods caused Ahaz and all of Israel to be ruined.

²⁴ Ahaz gathered all the furnishings that were used in the temple and broke them into pieces. He locked the doors of the temple and set up altars for worshiping idols at every street corner in Jerusalem.

²⁵ In every city in Judah, his workers built houses on the hilltops, and there they burned sacrifices to other gods, and that caused Yahweh, the God whom their ancestors worshiped, to be very angry with

them.

²⁶ A record of the other things that Ahaz did while he was the king, from when he started to rule until he died, is written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. ²⁷ Ahaz died and was buried in Jerusalem, but he was not buried in the tombs where the other kings of Israel had been buried. Then his son Hezekiah became the king.

Chapter 29

¹ Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he became the king of Judah. He ruled from Jerusalem for twenty-nine years. His mother was Abijah, the daughter of a man whose name was Zechariah. ² Hezekiah did things that Yahweh considered to be right, like his ancestor King David had done.

³ During the first month of the first year that Hezekiah was ruling Judah, he unlocked the doors of the temple, and his workers repaired them. ⁴ Then he gathered the priests and other descendants of Levi in the courtyard on the east side of the temple, ⁵ and he said to them, "You descendants of Levi, listen to me! Set yourselves apart, and prepare the house of Yahweh so it is a place that honors Yahweh, whom your ancestors worshiped; carry out all the filthiness that is in the holy place. ⁶ Our ancestors disobeyed God; they did many things that he says are evil, and they did things that are not pleasing to him. They abandoned this place where Yahweh lives, and they have stopped worshiping him. ⁷ They locked the doors of the temple and extinguished the lamps. They did not burn any incense, and they did not offer any sacrifices that were to be completely burned on the altar in the holy place. ⁸ Therefore, Yahweh has become very angry with us peo-

ple of Jerusalem and other places in Judah, and he has caused other people to become frightened and horrified of us. And they ridicule us. You know this very well. ⁹ That is why our fathers have been killed in battles, and our sons and daughters and our wives have been captured and taken to other countries. ¹⁰ But now I intend to make a covenant with Yahweh, our God, in order that he will no longer be angry with us. ¹¹ You who are like my sons, do not waste any time. Do immediately what Yahweh wants you to do. Yahweh has chosen you to stand in his presence and offer sacrifices and burn incense.”

¹² Then these descendants of Levi started to work in the temple.

From the descendants of Kohath there were Mahath the son of Amasai, and Joel the son of Azariah.

From the descendants of Merari there were Kish the son of Abdi, and Azariah the son of Jehallelel.

From the descendants of Gershon there were Joah the son of Zimmah, and Eden the son of Joah.

¹³ From the descendants of Elizaphan there were Shimri and Jeiel.

From the descendants of Asaph there were Zechariah and Mattaniah.

¹⁴ From the descendants of Heman there were Jehiel and Shimei.

From the descendants of Jeduthun there were Shemaiah and Uzziel.

¹⁵ Those men gathered their fellow descendants of Levi and together they prepared themselves for the work of the priesthood. They took all the steps to prepare themselves so they could serve the king in Yahweh's house, because the king was following Yahweh's commands. And the Levites entered the temple to clean it up. ¹⁶ They worked within the temple to purify

it. They brought out into the courtyard of the temple everything that they had found in the temple that was not pleasing to Yahweh. Then the descendants of Levi took those things down to the Kidron Valley and burned them there. ¹⁷ The priests and other descendants of Levi started this work on the first day of the first month and finished setting apart for the honor of Yahweh, the courtyard of the temple on the eighth day of that month, and they finished the work of setting the temple apart for the honor of Yahweh, one week later.

¹⁸ Then they went to King Hezekiah and reported this: "We have purified all parts of the temple, and the altar where sacrifices are completely burned, and all the items used at the altar, the table on which the priests display the bread before Yahweh, and the things used at that table. ¹⁹ Ahaz ruled over us, he disobeyed what Yahweh had commanded, and he threw away many of the tools and implements from the temple many things that should be there, but now we have brought them back, we dedicated them to Yahweh's service, and then we placed them in front of the altar of Yahweh, where they can be seen."

²⁰ Early the next morning, King Hezekiah gathered together the city officials, and they went to the courtyard of the temple.

²¹ They took with them seven bulls, seven rams, seven male lambs, and seven male goats to be an offering in order that Yahweh would forgive the sins of all the people in the kingdom of Judah, and in order to purify the temple. The king commanded that the priests, who were descendants of Aaron, should offer those animals to be sacrifices to Yahweh on the altar. ²² So first the priests slaughtered those bulls, and took the blood and sprinkled it on the altar. Then they slaughtered the rams and sprinkled their blood on the

altar. Then they slaughtered the lambs and sprinkled their blood on the altar. ²³ The goats that were slaughtered to be an offering in order that Yahweh would forgive the sins of the people were brought to the king and the others who were there. Then the king and those who were present laid their hands on those goats. ²⁴ Then the priests slaughtered those goats and splashed their blood on the altar, to atone for the sins of Israel. The priests did that because the king had commanded that offerings that would be completely burned on the altar and other sacrifices should be made for all the people of Israel.

²⁵ The king then told the descendants of Levi to stand in the temple with their cymbals, harps, and lyres, obeying what David and his prophets Gad and Nathan had commanded. Those were things that Yahweh had told his prophets that the descendants of Levi should do. ²⁶ So the descendants of Levi went and stood in the temple, and began to play the musical instruments that King David had given to them. And the priests began to blow their trumpets.

²⁷ Then Hezekiah told some of the priests to slaughter the animals that would be completely burned on the altar. When they started to slaughter the animals, the people started to sing to praise Yahweh, while the other descendants of Levi were playing their instruments. ²⁸ All the people who were there bowed to worship Yahweh, while the singers sang and the trumpeters played. They continued to do this until they had finished slaughtering all the animals that would be completely burned.

²⁹ When they finished making those offerings, the king and all those who were there knelt down and worshiped Yahweh.

³⁰ Then King Hezekiah and his officials commanded the descendants of Levi to

praise Yahweh, singing the songs composed by David and Asaph the prophet. So they sang songs joyfully, and bowed their heads to worship.

³¹ Then Hezekiah said, "You have now set yourselves apart for the honor of Yahweh. So come close to the temple and bring animals to be sacrificed, and also bring the other offerings to thank Yahweh for what he has done for you." Then those who wanted to bring animals to be completely burned on the altar brought them.

³² Altogether they brought seventy bulls, one hundred rams, and two hundred male lambs to be completely burned on the altar. ³³ The other animals that they brought were six hundred bulls and three thousand sheep and goats that were set apart for the honor of Yahweh, to be sacrifices. ³⁴ There were not enough priests to remove the skins from the animals that would be completely burned on the altar. So the descendants of Levi stepped in to help the priests until the work was finished. The Levites were more hardworking and dedicated than the priests were.

³⁵ In addition to all the offerings that were completely burned on the altar, the priests burned the fat of the accompanying animals that were sacrificed to maintain good fellowship with Yahweh; there were also offerings of wine.

In this way the worship at the temple began again. ³⁶ And Hezekiah and all the other people of Judah celebrated, because God had enabled them to do all the repair work very quickly.

Chapter 30

¹⁻³ King Hezekiah, his officials, and all the other people who had gathered

in Jerusalem wanted to celebrate the Passover festival. But they were not able to celebrate it at the usual time, because many of the priests had still not been able to perform all the rites of purity for themselves, so they were not allowed to do the work of that festival. Also, not everyone had come to Jerusalem to celebrate it. So they decided to celebrate the festival the following month. ⁴ The king and all the other people who had gathered thought that this was a good plan. ⁵ So they decided to send messages to all the cities and villages in Judah and in Israel, from Beersheba in the far south to Dan in the far north, including places in the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, to invite people to come to the temple in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover to honor Yahweh, the God whom the Israelite people worshiped. Many of the people had not previously celebrated that festival, even though it had been written in the law of Moses that they should do that.

⁶ Obeying what the king commanded, messengers went throughout Judah and Israel, taking messages that had been written by the king and his officials. This is what they wrote:

⁷ Do not act like they did, because what they did caused Yahweh to punish them so severely that other people were horrified when they heard of what he had done. ⁸ Do not be stubborn as our ancestors were. Do what Yahweh desires. Come to Jerusalem to the temple, which he has set apart for his honor forever. Do what pleases Yahweh our God, in order that he will no longer be angry with you. ⁹ If you return to Yahweh, the people who have captured our brothers and sisters and our children will act kindly toward them, and allow them to return to this land. Do not forget that Yahweh our God is kind and merciful. If you return to him, he will no

longer reject you.”

¹⁰ The messengers went to all the cities in the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, as far north as the tribe of Zebulun, and gave them this message, but most of the people there scorned them and ridiculed them.

¹¹ But some of the people of the tribes of Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun acknowledged their sin and went to Jerusalem. ¹² Also in Judah God made the people want together to obey Yahweh, which is what the king and his officials had told them to do in the message that they sent.

¹³ So a huge crowd of people gathered in Jerusalem in the second month of the year, to celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread. ¹⁴ They removed the altars of Baal in Jerusalem and took away the altars for burning incense to honor other gods; they burned them all in the Kidron Valley.

¹⁵ They slaughtered the Passover lambs on the fourteenth day of that month. The priests and the other descendants of Levi who had not performed the rituals to purify themselves, they were ashamed; and they set about to make themselves qualified for the service to Yahweh, and they brought to the temple animals to be completely burned on the altar in the house of Yahweh.

¹⁶ Then they stood in the places that Moses had written in his law that they should stand in. Then the descendants of Levi gave to the priests bowls containing blood of the animals that were being sacrificed, and the priests sprinkled the altar with some of the blood. ¹⁷ Many people in the crowd had not purified themselves, and therefore they were not able to kill the lambs and dedicate them to Yahweh. So it was necessary for the descendants of Levi to kill the lambs for them. ¹⁸ Although most of the people who had come from the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh,

and Issachar had not purified themselves, they ate the food of the Passover Festival anyway, ignoring the rules written by Moses. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying "Yahweh, you always do what is good; I pray that you will forgive everyone¹⁹ who sincerely wants to honor you, the God whom our ancestors worshiped, even if they have not purified themselves by obeying the sacred laws that you gave to us."²⁰ And Yahweh heard what Hezekiah prayed; he forgave the people, and did not punish them.

²¹ The Israelite people who were there in Jerusalem celebrated the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days. They rejoiced greatly as they celebrated, while the priests and other descendants of Levi sang to Yahweh every day and played musical instruments to praise God.

²² Hezekiah thanked all the descendants of Levi for doing this work for Yahweh, and for very skillfully leading the people who were worshiping. For those seven days the people ate the Passover food and brought offerings to maintain fellowship with Yahweh and praised Yahweh, the God whom their ancestors had worshiped.

²³ Then the whole group decided to celebrate for seven more days; so they celebrated joyfully for seven more days. ²⁴ King Hezekiah provided one thousand bulls and seven thousand sheep to be slaughtered for the people to eat during the festival, and the officials also gave them one thousand bulls and ten thousand sheep and goats. Many priests set themselves apart for serving Yahweh and to honor him, at this festival. ²⁵ All the people of Judah rejoiced, including the priests and other descendants of Levi and all the people from Israel who had come, and including some from other countries who were living in Israel and some from

other countries who were living in Judah. ²⁶ Everyone in Jerusalem was very joyful, because nothing like this had happened in Jerusalem since the time when David's son Solomon was the king of Israel. ²⁷ The priests and the other descendants of Levi stood up to bless the people, and God heard them, because their prayers reached up to heaven, the holy place where God lives.

Chapter 31

¹ After the festival ended, the Israelites who were there went to all the cities in Judah and smashed the stones for worshiping idols, and cut down the poles for worshiping the goddess Asherah. They destroyed the high places where idols were worshiped, and the altars of Baal throughout the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and also in the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. After destroying all of them, they returned to their own cities and towns.

² Hezekiah divided the priests and other descendants of Levi into groups. He appointed some of the groups to offer sacrifices that would be completely burned on the altar and offerings to maintain fellowship with Yahweh. He appointed some groups to do other work at the temple: Some to lead the people in their worship, some to thank Yahweh, and some to sing songs to praise Yahweh at the gates of the temple. ³ The king contributed some of his own funds to buy animals that would be sacrificed in the morning and in the evening of each day, and on the Sabbath days, to celebrate the new moons, and during the other feasts, according to what was written in the laws that Yahweh gave to Moses. ⁴ Hezekiah told the people living in Jerusalem to give to the priests and the other descendants of Levi the portions of

meat that should be given to them, in order that they could devote all their time to obeying the laws of Yahweh. ⁵ As soon as he told that to them, they generously gave the first part of their harvest of grain, and the first part of the new wine that they produced, and olive oil and honey, and of the crops that grew in their fields. They brought to the temple a tenth of all their crops. ⁶ The men of Israel and Judah who were living in various cities in Judah also brought a tenth of their cattle and sheep and goats, and a tenth of other things that they had set them apart for the honor of Yahweh their God, and they piled up all those things in heaps. ⁷ They started to do that in the third month and finished doing it in the seventh month. ⁸ When Hezekiah and his officials saw the heaps, they praised Yahweh and requested God to bless the people.

⁹ But Hezekiah asked the priests and other descendants of Levi, "What are these heaps of things?" ¹⁰ Then Azariah the high priest, a descendant of Zadok, replied, "Since the time that the people started to bring their offerings to the temple, we have had even more food than we need. This has happened because Yahweh has greatly blessed our fellow Israelites, with the result that all this is left over after we priests and other descendants of Levi took all that we need!"

¹¹ Then Hezekiah ordered that they should prepare storerooms at the temple to hold these supplies. ¹² Then they brought into the storerooms all the tithes and offerings and things and the things dedicated to Yahweh which the people had brought. One of the descendants of Levi whose name was Konaniah was in charge of those things, and his younger brother Shimei was his assistant. ¹³ Those two men supervised Jehiel, Azariah, Nahath, Asahel, Jerimoth, Jozabad, Eliel, Is-

makiah, Mahath and Benaiah while they did the work. They were appointed by King Hezekiah; Azariah was in charge of everything that was done in the temple.

¹⁴ Kore son of Imnah, another descendant of Levi, who guarded the east gate of the temple, was in charge of the offerings to God that were made voluntarily. He distributed to the priests and other descendants of Levi the offerings and other things that were dedicated to Yahweh. ¹⁵ Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, Shemaiah, Amariah and Shecaniah faithfully assisted him in the towns where the priests lived. They distributed those things to the groups of their fellow priests; they distributed them to everyone, including those who were young and those who were old.

¹⁶ They also distributed things to the males who were at least three years old, those whose names were on the scrolls where lists of family names were written. They were males who were allowed to enter the temple to perform their tasks each day, the tasks that each group had been assigned to do. ¹⁷ The names of the priests were on the scrolls where their families' names were written. They also distributed things to groups of descendants of Levi, those who were at least twenty years old. ¹⁸ They included all their little children and wives and other sons and daughters whose names were on the scrolls where the family names were written, because they also faithfully had set themselves apart for the honor of Yahweh and his requirements for holiness.

¹⁹ Hezekiah also appointed other men to distribute portions of those offerings to the priests and other descendants of Levi who were living in the pasturelands around the towns of Judah. But they gave things only to those who were descendants of Aaron the first high priest, whose

names were on the scrolls containing the names of their families.

²⁰ That is what Hezekiah did throughout Judah. He always faithfully did things that Yahweh his God says are right and good. ²¹ In everything that he did for the worship in the temple, and as he obeyed God's laws and commands, he tried to find out what his God wanted, and he worked energetically. So he was successful.

Chapter 32

¹ After King Hezekiah had obeyed Yahweh's instructions and had done all those things, King Sennacherib of Assyria came with his army and invaded Judah. He commanded his soldiers to surround the cities that had walls around them, thinking that they would break through those walls and conquer those cities. ² When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come with his army and that they intended to attack Jerusalem, ³⁻⁴ he consulted with his officials and army leaders. They said to themselves, "Why should allow the king of Assyria and his army to come and find plenty of water to drink?" So they decided to stop the water from flowing outside the city. A large group of men gathered together and blocked all the springs and the stream that flowed through that area. ⁵ Then they worked hard to repair all the sections of the city wall that had been broken, and they built watchtowers on the walls higher. They strengthened the Millo, a massive supporting wall on the east side of the city of David. They also made a large number of weapons and shields.

⁶ Hezekiah appointed army commanders, and he gathered them in front of him in the square at one of the city gates, and he encouraged them by saying this to them:

⁷ "Be strong and courageous. Do not be

afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the huge army that is with him, because Yahweh is with us, and his power is greater than their power. ⁸ They have to rely on the power of humans, but we have Yahweh our God to help us and to fight battles for us." So the people became more confident because of what Hezekiah, the king of Judah, said.

⁹ Later, when Sennacherib and all his soldiers were surrounding the city of Lachish, he sent some officers to Jerusalem to give this message to King Hezekiah and to all the people of Judah who were there:

¹⁰ "I am Sennacherib, the great king of Assyria, and this is what I say: While you are staying in Jerusalem, my soldiers are surrounding the city. So what are you depending on to keep you safe? ¹¹ Hezekiah says to you, 'Yahweh our God will save us from being defeated by the army of you.' He wants you to die from having no food or water. ¹² Hezekiah is the one who told his men to get rid of that god's high places on the hills, and his altars in the countryside, saying to you people of Jerusalem and other places in Judah, 'You must worship at only one altar and burn sacrifices on only that altar.'

¹³⁻¹⁴ Do you people not know what I and my ancestors have done to all the people groups in other countries? We destroyed them all, and their gods could not save them from me. ¹⁵ So do not allow Hezekiah to deceive you like this. Do not believe what he says, because no god of any nation or kingdom has ever been able to rescue his people from being conquered by my army and the armies of my ancestors. So certainly your god will not be able to rescue you from my power."

¹⁶ Sennacherib's officers said more things to insult Yahweh their God and Hezekiah, who served God well. ¹⁷ King Sennacherib

wrote more letters insulting Yahweh, the God whom the Israelites belonged to. He wrote, "No god of any of these nations I have conquered could save his people from me. Similarly, the god of Hezekiah will not save his people from my power."

¹⁸ Then the officers shouted in the Hebrew language to the people who were on the wall, in order to cause them to be very terrified, thinking that as a result the army of Assyria could capture the city without a battle. ¹⁹ They belittled the God worshiped by the people of Jerusalem like they belittled the gods of the other people groups of the world, gods which indeed were only idols fashioned by craftsmen.

²⁰ Then King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah cried out to God, praying very earnestly about this. ²¹ And that night Yahweh sent an angel who killed all the soldiers of Assyria and their leaders and their officers in the place where the king of Assyria and his army had set up their tents. So the king of Assyria left, and returned to his own country, very disgraced. And one day when he went into the temple of his god, some of his sons struck him with their swords and killed him.

²² That is how Yahweh guided and rescued Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem from the power of Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, and from the power of all their other enemies. That is how he gave them peace with all the countries near them.

²³ Many people brought offerings for Yahweh to Jerusalem, and also brought valuable gifts for King Hezekiah. And from that time, Hezekiah was highly respected by the people of all the other nations.

²⁴ About that time, Hezekiah became very ill. He thought that he was about to die. But he prayed to Yahweh, and Yahweh answered him. He performed a miracle and healed Hezekiah. ²⁵ But Hezekiah was very proud, and he did

not thank Yahweh for acting kindly toward him. Therefore Yahweh was angry with him and punished him and the people of Jerusalem and other places in Judah. ²⁶ Then Hezekiah said that he was sorry about being proud, and the people of Jerusalem also said that they were sorry for their sins. So Yahweh did not punish them during the remaining years that Hezekiah was their king.

²⁷ Hezekiah became very rich and was greatly honored. His workers made store-rooms for his silver and gold, for his very valuable stones, and for spices and shields and other valuable things. ²⁸ His workers also built buildings to store the grain and wine and olive oil that people produced and brought to him. They also made stalls for various kinds of cattle, and pens for his flocks of sheep and goats. ²⁹ They built cities and acquired for the king great many flocks of sheep and goats and herds of cattle, because God had enabled him to become very rich.

³⁰ Hezekiah was the one who told his workers to block the place where the water flows out of the spring of Gihon, and to build a tunnel through which the water flowed to the west side of the area called the city of David. He was able to do everything that he wanted to do. ³¹ But when messengers who were sent by the rulers of Babylon came and asked about the miracle that God had performed in the land, it was then that God left Hezekiah alone in order to test him. God tested him so that he would know everything that was in Hezekiah's heart.

³² A record of the other things that happened while Hezekiah was ruling, and the things that he did to please God, is written on the scroll of the vision of Isaiah the prophet. It is also written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. ³³ When Hezekiah died, he was buried in the tombs

where the most respected kings of Judah were buried. Everyone in Jerusalem and other places in Judah honored him. Then his son Manasseh became the king.

Chapter 33

¹ Manasseh was twelve years old when he became the king of Judah, and he ruled from Jerusalem for fifty-five years. ² He did many things that Yahweh said were evil. He imitated the disgusting things that were formerly done by the people groups that Yahweh had expelled from Israel as his people advanced into the land. ³ He commanded his workers to rebuild the high places upon the hills for worshiping idols, the same ones that his father Hezekiah had destroyed. He told them to set up poles to honor the god Baal, and to make poles to honor the goddess Asherah. He also bowed down to worship all the stars. ⁴ He directed his workers to build altars for foreign gods in the temple itself, about which Yahweh had said, "It is here in Jerusalem that I want people to worship me, forever." ⁵ He directed that altars for worshiping all the stars be built in both of the courtyards outside the temple ⁶ He even sacrificed some of his own sons by burning them in a fire in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. He performed rituals to practice sorcery. He asked fortune tellers for advice. He performed witchcraft. He talked to people who consulted the spirits of people who had died to find out what would happen in the future. He did many things that Yahweh says are very evil, things that caused Yahweh to become very angry.

⁷ Manasseh took the carved idol that his workers had made and put it in the temple. That is the temple concerning which God had said to David and to his son Solomon, "My temple will be here in Jerusalem, the

city that I have chosen where I want people to worship me, forever." ⁸ If they will obey all the laws and decrees and regulations that I told Moses to give to them, I will not again force the Israelite people to leave this land that I gave to their ancestors." ⁹ But Manasseh led the people of Jerusalem and other places in Judah to do things that are wrong, with the result that they did more evil than had been done by the people in the people groups that Yahweh had driven out as the Israelite people advanced through the land.

¹⁰ Yahweh spoke to Manasseh and the people of Judah, but they paid no attention. ¹¹ So Yahweh caused the army commanders of Assyria and their soldiers to come to Jerusalem, and they captured Manasseh. They put a hook in his nose, put bronze chains on his feet, and took him to Babylon. ¹² There, while he was suffering, he humbled himself greatly in the presence of Yahweh, the God whom his ancestors worshiped, and pleaded with Yahweh to help him. ¹³ When he prayed, Yahweh heard him and pitied him. So he allowed him to return to Jerusalem and to rule his kingdom again. Then Manasseh realized that Yahweh is God, who can do anything.

¹⁴ Later, Manasseh's workers rebuilt the eastern section of the outer wall around Jerusalem, and they made it higher. That section extended from spring of Gihon north to the Fish Gate, and around the part of the city that they called Ophel Hill. Manasseh also appointed army officers to guard each of the cities in Judah that had walls around them. ¹⁵ Manasseh's workers removed from the temple the idols and the figures of gods of other nations. He also told them to remove the altars that they had previously built on Mount Zion and in other places in Jerusalem. He had all those things thrown out of the city. ¹⁶ Then he told them to repair the

altar of Yahweh, and he offered sacrifices to restore fellowship with Yahweh and to thank him. And he told the people of Judah that they must worship only Yahweh.

¹⁷ The people continued to offer sacrifices at the high places on the hills, but only to Yahweh their God.

¹⁸ The other things that happened while Manasseh was ruling, including his prayer to God and the messages from Yahweh that the prophets spoke to him, are written in the book of the kings of Israel.

¹⁹ What Manasseh prayed and how God pitied him because of what he pleaded to God for—also his sins and ways in which he disobeyed God—also the list of places where he built the houses on the hills for idol worship and set up poles to honor the goddess Asherah and other idols before he humbled himself—these are all written in what the prophets wrote. ²⁰ Manasseh died and was buried in his palace. Then his son Amon became the king of Judah.

²¹ Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he ruled in Jerusalem for two years. ²² He did many things that Yahweh said were evil, as his father Manasseh had done. Amon worshiped all the idols that Manasseh's workers had made. ²³ But he did not humble himself and turn to Yahweh like his father did. So he became more sinful than his father had been.

²⁴ Then Amon's officials made plans to kill him. They assassinated him in his palace.

²⁵ But then the people of Judah killed all those who had assassinated Amon, and they appointed his son Josiah to be their king.

Chapter 34

¹ Josiah was eight years old when he became the king of Judah. He ruled from

Jerusalem for thirty-one years. ² He did things that were pleasing to Yahweh, and conducted his life like his ancestor King David had done. He fully obeyed all the laws of God.

³ When he had been ruling for almost eight years, while he was still a boy, he began to worship God as his ancestor King David had done. Four years later, he began to get rid of all the houses that were built on the hills for idol worship, and they were all around Jerusalem and in other places in Judah. They also took down the poles that were to give honor the goddess Asherah and the carved idols and metal statues of gods. ⁴ While he directed them, his workers tore down the altars where people worshiped Baal. They smashed the altars that were near those altars, where people burned incense. They smashed the poles to honor the goddess Asherah and the idols carved from wood or stone and metal statues. They smashed them to bits and scattered the bits over the graves of those who had offered sacrifices to them.

⁵ They burned the bones of the priests who had offered sacrifices; they burned them on their own altars. In that way Josiah caused Jerusalem and other places in Judah to be acceptable places to worship Yahweh again. ⁶ In the towns in the tribes of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, and as far north as the tribe of Naphtali and in the ruins around all those towns, ⁷ Josiah's workers tore down the pagan altars and the poles to honor the goddess Asherah, and crushed the idols to powder, idols that craftsmen had carved. They also smashed to pieces all the altars for burning incense throughout Israel. Then Josiah returned to Jerusalem.

⁸ When Josiah had been ruling for almost eighteen years, he decided to do something else to cause the land and the temple to be acceptable places to worship Yah-

weh. So he sent Shaphan son of Azaliah and Maaseiah the governor of the city and Joah son of Joahaz, the secretary, to repair the temple of Yahweh.

⁹ They went to Hilkiah the high priest and gave him the money that had been brought to the temple. That was the money that the descendants of Levi who guarded the doors of the temple had collected from the people of the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim and other places in Israel, and also from all the people in Jerusalem and other places in the tribes of Judah and Benjamin—all the people of the land who survived.

¹⁰ Then Hilkiah gave some of the money to the men who had been appointed to supervise the work of repairing the temple. The supervisors paid the men who did the repair work. ¹¹ They also gave some of the money to the carpenters and builders to buy the cut stones and the timber for the joists and the beams for the buildings that the kings of Judah had allowed to decay.

¹² The workers did their work faithfully. Their supervisors were Jahath and Obadiah, who were descendants of Levi's son Merari, and Zechariah and Meshullam, who were descendants of Levi's son Kohath. All the descendants of Levi, who played musical instruments well, ¹³ supervised all the workers as they did their various jobs. Some of the descendants of Levi were secretaries; some kept records, and some guarded the temple gates.

¹⁴ While they were giving to the supervisors the money that had been taken to the temple, Hilkiah the high priest found a scroll on which was written the laws that Yahweh had given to Moses to give to the people. ¹⁵ So Hilkiah said to Shaphan, "I have found in the temple a scroll on which is written the laws that God gave to Moses!" Then Hilkiah gave the scroll to Shaphan.

¹⁶ Shaphan took the scroll to the king and said to him, "Your officials are doing everything that you told them to do. ¹⁷ They have taken the money that was in the temple, and they have given it to the men who will supervise the men who will repair the temple." ¹⁸ Then Shaphan said to the king, "I have also brought to you a scroll that Hilkiah gave to me." And Shaphan started to read it to the king.

¹⁹ When the king heard the laws that were written in the scroll, he tore his clothes because he was very upset. ²⁰ Then he gave these instructions to Hilkiah, to Shaphan's son Ahikam, to Micah's son Abdon, to Shaphan, and to Asaiah, the king's special advisor: ²¹ "Go and ask Yahweh for me, and for all his people who are still alive in Judah and Israel, about what is written in this scroll that has been found. Because it is clear that Yahweh is very angry with us because our ancestors disobeyed what Yahweh said; they did not obey the laws that are written on this scroll."

²² So Hilkiah and the others went to consult a woman whose name was Huldah, who was a prophetess who lived in the Second District of Jerusalem. Her husband Shallum son of Tikvah, took care of the robes that were worn in the temple.

²³ When they told her what the king had said, she said to them, "This is what Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites say we worship, says: 'Go back and tell the king who sent you ²⁴ that this is what Yahweh says: "Listen to this carefully. I am going to bring a disaster on Jerusalem and all the people who live here. I will send on them the curses that were written in the scroll that was read to the king of Judah. ²⁵ I will do that because they have abandoned me, and they burn incense to honor other gods. They have caused me to become very angry because of all the idols that they have made.'" ²⁶ The king of Ju-

dah sent you to inquire what I, Yahweh, want. Go and tell him that this is what I, Yahweh, the God whom you Israelites worship, say about what you read: ²⁷ 'Because you heeded what was written in the scroll, and you humbled yourself when you heard what I said to warn about what would happen to this city and the people who live here, and because you tore your robes and wept in my presence, I have listened to you. ²⁸ So I will allow you to die in peace, without seeing me punish this place and the people living in it.'"

So they took her reply back to the king. ²⁹ Then the king summoned all the elders of Jerusalem and other places in Judea. ³⁰ They went up together to the temple with the leaders of Judah and many other people of Jerusalem and the priests and other descendants of Levi, from the least important to the most important ones. And while they listened, the king read to them everything that was in the scroll containing God's laws that had been found in the temple.

³¹ Then the king stood next to the pillar at the entrance to the temple, where kings stood when they announced something important, and while Yahweh was listening, he repeated his promise to sincerely obey, with his entire inner being, Yahweh and all his commands and regulations and decrees that were written on the scroll.

³² Then the king said that everyone who lived in Jerusalem and from the tribe of Benjamin should promise that they also would obey those laws. And they did that, agreeing that they would obey the agreement that God, whom their ancestors had worshiped, had made with them.

³³ Josiah instructed his workers to remove all the disgusting idols from all the land of the Israelite people, and he commanded that all those from Israel who were there should worship only Yahweh their God.

As long as Josiah was alive, the people did what was pleasing to Yahweh, the God whom their ancestors worshiped.

Chapter 35

¹ Josiah commanded that the people should celebrate the Passover Festival in Jerusalem. So they slaughtered the lambs for the Passover on the 14th day of the first month. ² Josiah assigned to the priests to the tasks that they should perform at the temple, and encouraged them do their work well. ³ The descendants of Levi were the ones who taught all the Israelite people; they had been set apart for Yahweh. Josiah said to them, "Put the sacred chest in the temple that the workers of David's son King Solomon of Israel built. But carry it on poles; do not carry it on your shoulders. And do well your work for Yahweh your God and for his Israelite people. ⁴ Divide yourselves into your traditional clans, obeying the instructions that King David and his son Solomon wrote.

⁵ Then stand in the temple area, with each of you in your own Levite clan, ready to help your fellow Israelites when they bring their offerings to the temple. ⁶ Slaughter the lambs for the Passover. Do this for your fellow Israelites. Perform the rituals to set yourselves apart for God's honor and to serve Yahweh and do his work. Prepare the sacrifices, doing what Yahweh told Moses to tell you that you should do."

⁷ Josiah provided from his own flocks and herds thirty thousand young sheep and goats for the Passover sacrifices. He also provided three thousand bulls from his own herds.

⁸ His officials also voluntarily contributed animals for the people and the priests and

the other descendants of Levi. Hilkiah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, the officials who were in charge of the temple, gave to the priests 2,600 lambs and three hundred cattle to be sacrifices for the Passover.⁹ Also, Konaniah, along with his younger brothers Shemaiah and Nethanel, and Hashabiah, Jeiel, and Jozabad, the leaders of the descendants of Levi, provided five thousand lambs and five hundred cattle for the other descendants of Levi, to be sacrifices for the Passover.

¹⁰ Everything for the Passover was arranged: The priests and the other descendants of Levi stood in their places in their groups, as the king had commanded. ¹¹ Then they slaughtered the Passover lambs. The priests sprinkled the blood from the bowls that were handed to them, while the other descendants of Levi removed the skins from the animals. ¹² They set aside the animals to be completely burned on the altar, in order to give them to the various family groups to offer to Yahweh, obeying the instructions that were written in the laws God gave Moses. They did the same thing with the cattle. ¹³ Obeying those regulations, they roasted over the fire the lambs for the Passover. And they boiled the meat of the sacred offerings in pots and kettles and pans, and served the meat immediately to all the people who were there. ¹⁴ After that, they prepared meat for themselves and for the priests, because the priests were busy until nighttime, sacrificing the offerings to be completely burned and burning the fat parts of the offerings. So the descendants of Levi prepared meat for themselves and for the priests, who were descendants of Aaron, the first high priest.

¹⁵ The musicians, who were descendants of Asaph, stood in their places, as had been commanded by King David, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun the king's prophet.

The men who guarded the gates of the temple did not need to leave their places, because their fellow descendants of Levi prepared food for them to eat.

¹⁶ So on that day everything that needed to be done for worshiping Yahweh was done. They celebrated the Passover Festival, and they presented offerings to be completely burned on the altar, which was what Josiah had commanded. ¹⁷ The Israelites who were there celebrated the Passover on that day, and for seven days they celebrated the Festival of Unleavened Bread. ¹⁸ The Passover Festival had not been celebrated like that in Israel since the time that the prophet Samuel lived. And none of the kings of Israel had ever celebrated the Passover like Josiah did, along with the priests, the other descendants of Levi, and all the other people of Judah and Israel who were there with the people who lived in Jerusalem. ¹⁹ They celebrated this Passover Festival when Josiah had been ruling for almost eighteen years.

²⁰ After Josiah had done all those things to restore the worship at the temple, King Necho of Egypt went with his army to attack the city of Carchemish alongside the Euphrates River, and Josiah marched with his army to fight against them. ²¹ Necho sent some messengers to Josiah, to tell him, "You are the king of Judah, and there is certainly no reason for you to fight me; we are attacking the army of Babylon. God has told me to hurry. So stop opposing God, who is for me. If you do not stop, God will get rid of you."

²² But Josiah would not listen to him. Instead, he disguised himself in order to be able to attack the army of Egypt without anyone recognizing him. He did not pay any attention to what God had told Necho to say. Instead, he and his army went to fight Necho's army at the plain of

Megiddo.

²³ Some archers shot King Josiah. He told his officers, "Take me away from here because I am badly wounded." ²⁴ So they took him out of his chariot and put him in another chariot that he had brought with him, and they took him to Jerusalem, where he died. He was buried in the tombs where his ancestors had been buried, and all the people of Jerusalem and other places in Judah mourned for him.

²⁵ The prophet Jeremiah composed a song to lament for Josiah, and all the men and women singers in Israel still mourn for Josiah by singing that song. That became a custom in Israel; the words of that song are written in a scroll of funeral songs.

²⁶⁻²⁷ A record of the other things that happened while Josiah ruled, from the time he started to rule until he died, including how he faithfully was devoted to honoring God by obeying all that was written in the laws of Yahweh, is written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.

Chapter 36

¹ Then the people of Judah chose Josiah's son Jehoahaz and appointed him to be the king in Jerusalem.

² Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became the king, but he ruled from Jerusalem for only three months. ³ The king of Egypt captured him and prevented him from ruling any longer. He also forced the people of Judah to pay to him a tax of three and one-third metric tons of silver and thirty-three kilograms of gold. ⁴ The king of Egypt appointed Jehoahaz's younger brother Eliakim to be the king of Judah. He changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim. But Necho seized Jehoahaz

and took him to Egypt.

⁵ Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became the king of Judah, and he ruled from Jerusalem for eleven years. He did many things that Yahweh said were evil. ⁶ Then the army of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon attacked Jehoiakim's army. They captured Jehoiakim, fastened him with bronze chains, and took him to Babylon. ⁷ Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers also took valuable things from the temple. They took them to Babylon and put them in King Nebuchadnezzar's palace there.

⁸ A record of the other things that happened while Jehoiakim was ruling, the disgusting things that he did and the evil things that people said that he did, is written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. After he was taken to Babylon, his son Jehoiachin became the king of Judah.

⁹ Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became the king of Judah, and he ruled from Jerusalem for only three months and ten days. He did many things that Yahweh said were evil. ¹⁰ During the spring of the next year, King Nebuchadnezzar sent soldiers to bring him to Babylon. They also took to Babylon many valuable things from the temple of Yahweh. Then Nebuchadnezzar appointed Jehoiachin's uncle, Zedekiah, to be the king of Judah.

¹¹ Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became the king, and he ruled in Jerusalem for eleven years. ¹² He did many things that Yahweh said were evil. He did not humble himself when the prophet Jeremiah spoke to him a message from Yahweh to warn him. ¹³ He would not return to Yahweh, the God that the people of Israel said that they worshiped. Zedekiah also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had forced him to solemnly promise using God's name to be loyal to him. Zedekiah became very stubborn. ¹⁴ Furthermore, all the leaders of

the priests and also the people of Judah became more wicked again, doing all the disgusting things that the people of the other nations did, and causing the temple in Jerusalem that Yahweh had caused to be holy to become an unacceptable place to worship him.

¹⁵ Yahweh, the God whom the ancestors of the people of Judah worshiped, gave messages to his prophets many times, and the prophets gave those messages to the people of Judah. Yahweh did that because he pitied his people and did not want his temple to be destroyed. ¹⁶ But the people continually made fun of God's messengers. They despised God's messages. They ridiculed his prophets, until finally God became extremely angry with his people, with the result that nothing could stop him from destroying Judah. ¹⁷ He incited the king of Babylon to attack Judah with his army. They killed the young men with their swords, even in the temple. They did not spare anyone, either young men or young women or old people. God enabled the army of Nebuchadnezzar to defeat all of them. ¹⁸ His soldiers took to Babylon all the things that were used in God's temple, big things and little things, all the valuable things, and the valuable things that belonged to the king and his officials. ¹⁹ They burned the temple, and they broke down the wall surrounding Jerusalem. They burned all the palaces in Jerusalem and destroyed all the remaining valuable things there.

²⁰ Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers took to Babylon the remaining people who had not been killed with their swords. Those people became the king's slaves and his son's slaves, until the army of Persia conquered Babylon. ²¹ Moses had said that every seventh year the people must not plant their fields; they must allow the soil to rest. But the people had not done that. So after

the army of Babylon destroyed Judah, the soil was allowed to rest. That continued for seventy years, fulfilling what Yahweh had told Jeremiah would happen.

²² During the first year that Cyrus was the king of Persia, in order that what Yahweh told Jeremiah would happen would occur, Yahweh motivated Cyrus to write this and proclaim it throughout his kingdom:

²³ "I, Cyrus, the king of Persia, declare that Yahweh, the God who rules in heaven, has enabled me to become the ruler of all the kingdoms of this world. And he has appointed me to command that my workers build a temple for him in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. I am allowing any of his people among you to go to Jerusalem. And I will pray that Yahweh will be with them."

EZRA

Chapter 1

¹ During the first year that Cyrus ruled the Persian Empire, he did something that fulfilled the prophecy that Jeremiah had spoken. Yahweh motivated Cyrus to write this message, and then Cyrus caused this message to be proclaimed throughout his empire: ² "I, King Cyrus, rule the Persian Empire, and I say this: Yahweh, the God who is in heaven, has made me ruler of all the kingdoms on earth. And he has assigned me to make sure that his people build a temple for him in Jerusalem, in Judah. ³ All you people who belong to God may go up to Jerusalem to rebuild this temple for Yahweh, the God who lives in Jerusalem, the God of Israel. ⁴ The other people who are living where Israelites are now in exile, whose ancestors were exiled here, must contribute silver and gold to those who go. They should also give the Jews the supplies that they will need for the journey to Jerusalem. They should also give them some livestock and gifts of money to help build the temple of God in Jerusalem."

⁵ Then God motivated some of the priests and Levites and some of the leaders of the tribes that were descended from Judah and Benjamin to return to Jerusalem. Those whom God motivated got ready to return to Jerusalem and build the temple for him there. ⁶ All of their neighbors helped them by giving them silver and golden things, and supplies for the journey, and livestock. They also gave them other valuable gifts, and also gave them money to buy things for building the temple. ⁷ King Cyrus brought out the valuable things that King Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers had taken from the temple of Yah-

weh in Jerusalem and put in the temples of their gods in Babylon. ⁸ Cyrus commanded Mithredath, the treasurer of the Persian Empire, to count all these items and then give them to Sheshbazzar, the leader of the group that was going to return to Judah.

⁹ This is a list of the items that Cyrus donated: Thirty gold basins, one thousand silver basins, twenty-nine other basins, ¹⁰ thirty gold bowls, 410 similar silver bowls, and one thousand other objects. ¹¹ All together, there were 5,400 silver and gold items given to Sheshbazzar to take with him when he and the others returned to Jerusalem.

Chapter 2

¹ King Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers captured many Israelite people and took them to Babylonia. Many years later, some Israelite people returned to Judah. Some returned to Jerusalem, and some returned to other places in Judah. They went to the towns where their ancestors had lived. This is a list of the groups who returned. ² The leaders of those people who returned were Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah.

The groups of people who returned to Judah are listed next. ³ 2,172 descendants of Parosh ⁴ 372 descendants of Shephatiah ⁵ 775 descendants of Arach ⁶ 2,812 descendants of Pahath-Moab, from the families of Jeshua and Joab ⁷ 1,254 descendants of Elam ⁸ 945 descendants of Zattu ⁹ 760 descendants of Zaccai ¹⁰ 642 descendants of Bani ¹¹ 623 descendants of Bebai ¹² 1,222 descendants of Azgad ¹³ 666 descendants of Adonikam ¹⁴ 2,056 descendants of Bigvai ¹⁵ 454 descendants of Adin

¹⁶ Ninety-eight descendants of Ater, who descended from Hezekiah ¹⁷ 323 descendants of Bezai ¹⁸ 112 descendants of Jorah ¹⁹ 223 descendants of Hashum ²⁰ Ninety-five descendants of Gibbar

People whose ancestors had lived in these towns in Judah: ²¹ 123 from Bethlehem ²² Fifty-six from Netophah ²³ 128 from Anathoth ²⁴ Forty-two from Azmaveth ²⁵ 743 from Kiriath Arim, Kephirah, and Beeroth ²⁶ 621 from Ramah and Geba ²⁷ 122 from Michmas ²⁸ 223 from Bethel and Ai ²⁹ Fifty-two from Nebo ³⁰ 156 from Magbish ³¹ 1,254 from Elam ³² 320 from Harim ³³ 725 from Lod, Hadid, and Ono ³⁴ 345 from Jericho ³⁵ 3,630 from Senaah

³⁶ Priests who returned: 973 descendants of Jedaiah (that is, those who descended through Jeshua) ³⁷ 1,052 descendants of Immer ³⁸ 1,247 descendants of Pashur ³⁹ 1,017 descendants of Harim

⁴⁰ Those from the tribe of Levi who returned: Seventy-four descendants of Jeshua and Kadmiel, who were from the family of Hodaviah ⁴¹ 128 singers who were descendants of Asaph ⁴² 139 gatekeepers who were descendants of the gatekeepers Shallum, Ater, Talmon, Akkub, Hatita, and Shobai

⁴³ The temple workers who were descendants of these men: Ziha, Hasupha, Tabbaoth, ⁴⁴ Keros, Siaha, Padon, ⁴⁵ Lebanah, Hagabah, Akkub, ⁴⁶ Hagab, Shalmai, Hanan, ⁴⁷ Giddel, Gahar, Reaiah, ⁴⁸ Rezin, Nekoda, Gazzam, ⁴⁹ Uzza, Paseah, Besai, ⁵⁰ Asnah, Meunim, Nephusim, ⁵¹ Bakbuk, Hakupha, Harhur, ⁵² Bazluth, Mehida, Harsha, ⁵³ Barkos, Sisera, Temah, ⁵⁴ Neziah, and Hatipha.

⁵⁵ The following descendants of King Solomon's servants returned to Jerusalem: Sotai, Hassophereth, Peruda, ⁵⁶ Jaalah, Darkon, Giddel, ⁵⁷ Shephatiah, Hattil, Pochereth Hazzebaim, and Ami.

⁵⁸ Altogether, there were 392 descendants of temple workers and Solomon's servants who returned.

⁵⁹ There was another group who returned to Judah from Tel Melah, Tel Harsha, Cerub, Addon, and Immer in Babylonia. But they could not prove that they were true Israelites. ⁶⁰ This group included 652 people who were descendants of Delaiah, Tobiah, and Nekoda.

⁶¹ The descendants of the priests in this group included people belonging to Habaiah's clan, Hakkoz's clan, and Barzillai's clan. Barzillai had married a woman who was a descendant of Barzillai from the region of Gilead, and he had taken for himself the name of his father-in-law's clan.

⁶² The people in that group searched in the documents that had the names of the ancestors of all the clans, but these men's names were not found. So they were not permitted to do the work that priests did. ⁶³ The governor told them that they would need to ask a priest to consult Yahweh by casting the sacred lots, to determine whether those men were truly Israelites. If the stones showed that those men were Israelites, they would be permitted to eat the shares of the sacrifices that were given to the priests.

⁶⁴ Altogether 42,360 Israelite people returned to Judah. ⁶⁵ There were also 7,337 servants and two hundred musicians, both men and women, who returned. ⁶⁶ The Israelites brought with them from Babylonia 736 horses, 245 mules, ⁶⁷ 435 camels, and 6,720 donkeys.

⁶⁸ When they arrived at the temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem, some of the clan leaders gave money for the supplies needed to rebuild the temple in the same place where the old temple had been. ⁶⁹ They all gave as much money as they were able to give. Altogether they gave about five hun-

dred kilograms of gold, three metric tons of silver, and one hundred robes for the priests.

⁷⁰ Then the priests, the other descendants of Levi, the musicians, the temple guards, and some of the other people started to live in the towns and villages near Jerusalem. The rest of the people went to the other places in Israel there where their ancestors had lived.

Chapter 3

¹ After the Israelite people returned to Jerusalem and they began to live in their towns, in the autumn of that year, they all gathered together in Jerusalem. ² Then Jeshua son of Jehozadak, and his fellow priests, and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and his close friends, all began to rebuild the altar of the God of Israel. They did that in order that they could sacrifice burned offerings on it, according to what the prophet Moses had written in the laws that God had given to him. ³ Even though they were afraid of the people who were already living in that area, they rebuilt the altar at the same place where the previous altar had been. They began to offer sacrifices every morning and every evening. ⁴ Fifteen days after they started to offer these sacrifices, the people celebrated the Festival of Shelters, as Moses had commanded them to do in the decrees that God had given to him. Each day the priests offered the sacrifices that were required for that day. ⁵ In addition, they presented the regular burned offerings and the offerings that were required for the New Moon festivals and the other festivals that they celebrated as special times each year to honor Yahweh. They also brought other offerings only because they desired to bring them, not because they were required to bring them.

⁶ But even though they started bringing burned offerings to Yahweh at the beginning of autumn, they had not yet started building the temple building. ⁷ So the Israelites hired masons and carpenters, and they bought logs from cedar trees from the people of Tyre and Sidon. They gave those people food, wine, and olive oil as payment. They brought the logs down from the mountains in Lebanon to the Mediterranean seacoast and then floated them along the coast of the sea to Joppa. King Cyrus permitted them to do that. Then the logs were brought from Joppa inland up to Jerusalem.

⁸ The Israelites started to rebuild the temple in the spring of the second year after they returned to Jerusalem. Zerubbabel and Jeshua, together with all the people who had returned to Jerusalem, worked on the building. All the Levites supervised this work. ⁹ Jeshua, his sons, and his other relatives, and Kadmiel and his sons, who were descendants of Judah, also helped to supervise the work. The people who were descendants of Henadad, who were also all Levites, joined with them in supervising this work.

¹⁰ When the builders finished laying the foundation of the temple, the priests put on their robes and stood in their places, blowing their trumpets. Then the Levites who were descendants of Asaph clashed their cymbals to praise Yahweh, just as King David had many years previously told Asaph and the other musicians to do. ¹¹ They praised Yahweh and thanked him, and they sang this song about him:

”He is very good to us!

He honors his covenant faithfulness for Israel, and he will love us forever.” Then all the people shouted loudly, praising him because they had finished laying the foundation of his temple. ¹² Many of the old priests, Levites, and leaders of

families remembered what the first temple was like, and they cried aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid because they knew that the new temple would not be as beautiful as the first temple. But the other people shouted joyfully. ¹³ The shouting and the crying were like one very loud sound that even people far away could hear.

Chapter 4

¹ The enemies of the people of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin heard that they had returned from Babylonia and were rebuilding the temple for Yahweh, the God of Israel. ² So they went to Zerubbabel the governor and to the other Jewish leaders and said to them, "We want to help you build the temple, because we worship the same God whom you worship. We have been offering sacrifices to him since Esarhaddon, the king of Assyria, brought us here."

³ But Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the other Jewish leaders replied, "We will not allow you to help us build a temple for our God. It is we alone who will build it for Yahweh, as Cyrus, king of Persia, told us to do."

⁴ Then the people who had been living in that land before the Israelites returned tried to cause the Jews to become discouraged and afraid, so they would stop building the temple. ⁵ They bribed government officials to prevent the Jews from continuing to work on the temple. They did that all during the time that Cyrus was king of Persia and also when Darius became king. ⁶ Then during the first year that Darius' son Ahasuerus was king, the enemies of the Jews wrote a letter to the king saying that the Jews were planning to rebel against the government.

⁷ Later, when Ahasuerus' son Artaxerxes

became king of Persia, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel and their colleagues wrote a letter to him. They wrote the letter in the Aramaic language, and it was translated into the language of the Persians.

⁸ Rehum, the high commissioner, and Shimshai, the provincial secretary, wrote the letter to King Artaxerxes concerning what was happening in Jerusalem. ⁹ They stated that the letter was from Rehum, Shimshai, and their associates, the judges, and other government officials, who were from Erech, Babylon, and Susa in the district of Elam. ¹⁰ They also wrote that they represented the other people groups whom the army of the great and glorious Ashurbanipal had deported and sent to live in Samaria and in other cities in the province west of the Euphrates River.

¹¹ This is what they wrote in the letter: "This letter is for King Artaxerxes, and comes from the officials serving you who live in the province west of the Euphrates River. ¹² "Your Majesty, we want you to know that the Jews who came here from your territories are rebuilding the city of Jerusalem. These people are wicked and want to rebel against you. They are now repairing the foundations of the walls and building the walls of the city. ¹³ It is important for you to know that if they rebuild the city and finish building the walls, they will stop paying any taxes. As a result, there will be less money in your treasury. ¹⁴ Now, because we are loyal to you, and because we do not want you to be humiliated, we are sending this information to you. ¹⁵ And, we suggest that you order your officials to search among the records kept by your ancestors. If you do that, you will find out that the people in this city have always rebelled against the government. You will also find out that from long ago these people caused trouble for kings and for rulers of provinces.

They have always revolted against those who ruled them. That is the reason that this city was destroyed by the Babylonian army. ¹⁶ We want you to know that if they rebuild this city and finish building its walls, you will no longer be able to control the people in this province west of the Euphrates River.” ¹⁷ After the king read this letter, he sent this reply to them: “To you Rehum, the high commissioner, and Shimshai, the provincial secretary, and their colleagues in Samaria and in other parts of the province that is west of the Euphrates River, I send my greetings. ¹⁸ The letter that you sent to me was translated and read to me. ¹⁹ So then, I ordered my officials to search the records. I have found out that it is true that the people of that city have always revolted against their rulers, and that the city is full of people who have rebelled and caused trouble. ²⁰ In the past, powerful kings ruled in Jerusalem, and they also ruled over the whole province west of the Euphrates River. They forced the people there to pay them all kinds of taxes. ²¹ So you must command that the people must stop rebuilding the city. Only if I tell them that they may rebuild it will they be allowed to continue. ²² Do this immediately, because I do not want those people to do anything to harm the things about which I am concerned.”

²³ Messengers took that letter to Rehum and Shimshai and their colleagues and read it to them. Then Rehum and the others went quickly to Jerusalem, and they forced the Jews to stop rebuilding the city wall. ²⁴ The result was that the Jews stopped rebuilding the temple. They did not do any more work to rebuild the temple until the second year after Darius became the king of Persia.

Chapter 5

¹ At that time two prophets were giving messages from God to the Jews in Jerusalem and other cities in Judah. The prophets were Haggai and Zechariah, who was a descendant of Iddo. They spoke those messages representing the God that the people of Israel worshiped. ² Then Zerubbabel and Jeshua led many other people to begin to rebuild the temple of God in Jerusalem. God’s prophets Haggai and Zechariah were also with them and helped them.

³ But Tattenai, the governor of the province west of the Euphrates River, and Shethar-Bozenai, his assistant, together with some of their officials went to Jerusalem and said to the people, “Who has permitted you to rebuild this temple?”

⁴ They also asked the Jews to tell them the names of the men who were working on the temple. ⁵ However, God was taking care of the Jewish leaders and they were not stopped by their enemies. They were waiting for King Darius to make a royal decree that would either give them permission and his protection so they could finish their work on the temple, or stop their work completely.

⁶ So Tattenai, Shethar-Bozenai, and their officials sent a report to King Darius. ⁷ This is what they wrote: “King Darius, we hope that things are going well for you. ⁸ We want you to know that we went to Judah, where the temple of the great God is being rebuilt. The people are building it with huge stones, and they are putting wooden beams in the walls. The work is being done very carefully, and they are progressing well. ⁹ We asked the Jewish leaders, ‘Who has permitted you to rebuild this temple?’ ¹⁰ We also requested them to tell us the names of their leaders, in order that we could tell you who they

were. ¹¹ But instead of telling us their leaders' names, what they said was, 'We serve the God who created the heaven and the earth. Many years ago a great king of Israel told our ancestors to build a temple here, and now we are rebuilding it.' ¹² But God, who rules in heaven, allowed the armies of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylonia, to destroy that temple, because our ancestors did things that caused God to become very angry. Nebuchadnezzar's army took many of the Israelite people to Babylonia. ¹³ However, during the first year that Cyrus king of Babylon started to rule, he decreed that the temple of God should be rebuilt. ¹⁴ Cyrus returned to our leaders all the gold and silver objects that had been taken from the temple and put in the temple in Babylon. Those objects were given to a man named Sheshbazzar, whom King Cyrus had appointed to be the governor in Judah. ¹⁵ The king instructed him to take the objects back to Jerusalem, to the place from where they had been taken. He also decreed that they should rebuild the temple at the place where it had been before. So Cyrus appointed Sheshbazzar to be the governor in Judah. He also sent all those things made of gold and silver, for Sheshbazzar to put into the new temple. ¹⁶ So Sheshbazzar did that. He came here to Jerusalem and supervised the men who laid the foundation of the temple. And since that time, the people have been working on the temple, but it is not finished yet.' ¹⁷ Therefore, your Majesty, please order someone to search in the place in Babylon where the important records are kept, to find out whether it is true that King Cyrus decreed that God's temple should be rebuilt in Jerusalem. Then you can tell us what you want us to do about this matter."

Chapter 6

¹ So King Darius commanded someone to search in the place where important records were kept, but those documents were not there in Babylon. ² They found a scroll in the fortress city of Ecbatana in Media that contained the information that they wanted to know.

This is what was written on that scroll: ³ "During the first year that Cyrus ruled the empire, he sent out a decree concerning the temple of God that was in Jerusalem. He said that they must build a new temple in the same place where the Israelite people had previously offered sacrifices, where the original foundation of the first temple was. The temple must be twenty-seven meters high and twenty-seven meters wide. ⁴ The building must be made from large stones. After putting down three layers of stones, a layer of timber must be put on top of them. This work will be paid for by money from the royal treasury. ⁵ Also, the gold and silver objects that King Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple of God in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon must be taken back to Jerusalem. They must be once again put into God's temple."

⁶ After reading this, King Darius sent this message to the leaders of the Jews' enemies in Jerusalem: "This is a message for Tattenai, the governor of the province west of the Euphrates River, and for his assistant Shethar-Bozenai, and for all your colleagues: Stay away from that area. ⁷ Do not interfere with the work of building the temple of God. The temple must be rebuilt at the same place where the former temple was. And do not hinder the governor of the Jews or their elders while they are doing this work. ⁸ Furthermore, I command you to help these leaders of the Jews as they rebuild this temple of God.

You must give them funds for the building work from my treasury among you. ⁹ The Jewish priests in Jerusalem need young bulls and rams and lambs to sacrifice as they make burned offerings to the God of heaven. You must give them the animals that they need. Also, you must be certain to give them the wheat, salt, wine, and olive oil that they need each day for those sacrifices. ¹⁰ If you do that, they will be able to offer sacrifices that please the God who is in heaven, and they will pray that God will bless me and my sons. ¹¹ If anyone disobeys this decree, my soldiers will pull a beam from his house. Then they will lift that man up and impale him on that beam. Then they will completely destroy that man's house until only a pile of rubble is left. ¹² God has chosen that city of Jerusalem as the place where people will honor him. What I desire is that he will get rid of any king or any nation that tries to change this decree or tries to destroy that temple in Jerusalem. I, Darius, have made this decree. You must completely obey it."

¹³ Tattenai, the governor of the province, and his assistant Shethar-Bozenai and their colleagues read the message and immediately obeyed the decree of King Darius. ¹⁴ So the Jewish leaders continued their work of rebuilding the temple. They were greatly encouraged by the messages that the prophets Haggai and Zechariah preached. The Israelites continued building the temple, just as God had commanded them to do and as King Cyrus and King Darius had decreed. ¹⁵ They finished building it on third day of the month of Adar, during the sixth year that King Darius ruled.

¹⁶ Then the priests and the Levites and all the other Israelite people who had returned from Babylon joyfully dedicated the temple. ¹⁷ During the ceremony to dedicate the temple, they sacrificed one hun-

dred young bulls, one hundred rams, and four hundred lambs. They also sacrificed twelve male goats as an offering so that God would forgive the sins of the people of the twelve tribes of Israel. ¹⁸ Then the Jewish leaders divided the priests and Levites into groups that would take turns to serve at the temple. They did this according to what Moses had written many years previously in the laws that he wrote.

¹⁹ On the 14th day of the first month, the Jews who had returned from Babylon celebrated the Passover Festival. ²⁰ To qualify themselves for offering the sacrifices, the priests and Levites had already purified themselves by performing certain rituals. Then they slaughtered the lambs for the benefit of all the people who had returned from Babylon, for the other priests, and for themselves. ²¹ Those who had returned from Babylon and who had separated themselves from the unclean people around them who had a different culture, language, and worship, and they were able now to worship Yahweh, the God of the Israelite people, and to eat the Passover meal. ²² They celebrated the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days. The Israelite people throughout the land were joyful because Yahweh had changed the attitude of the king of Assyria toward them, and as a result, the king had helped them to rebuild the temple of God, the God of Israel.

Chapter 7

¹ Many years later, while Artaxerxes was the king of Persia, Ezra went from Babylon to Jerusalem. He was the son of Seraiah and the grandson of Azariah, and the great-grandson of Hilkiah. ² Hilkiah was the son of Shallum, who was the son of Zadok, who was the son of Ahitub, ³ who

was the son of Amariah, who was the son of Azariah, who was the son of Meraioth,⁴ who was the son of Zerariah, who was the son of Uzzi, who was the son of Bukki,⁵ who was the son of Abishua, who was the son of Phinehas, who was the son of Eleazar, who was the son of Aaron, the first high priest.⁶ Ezra was a man who knew the laws that Moses wrote very well. Those were the laws that Yahweh, the God of Israel, had given to the Israelite people. He left Babylon after the king had told people to give him anything he requested. Indeed, Yahweh helped Ezra very much in all these matters.⁷ Some of the priests, some descendants of Levi, some singers, some gatekeepers, and some men who worked in the temple, and some other Israelite people went up with Ezra to Jerusalem. That was during the seventh year that Artaxerxes was the king of Persia.

⁸ Ezra and the group with him arrived in Jerusalem in the fifth month of the seventh year that Artaxerxes was king.⁹ They had left Babylon on the first day of the first month, which was the first day of the Jewish year. Because God acted very kindly toward them, they arrived safely in Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month of that year.¹⁰ During Ezra's entire life, he devoted himself to studying the laws of Yahweh and how to obey those laws. He had also taught those laws and all the decrees to the Israelite people for many years.

¹¹ Before Ezra left Babylon to go to Jerusalem, King Artaxerxes wrote a letter and gave a copy to him. This is what the king wrote:¹² "This letter is from me, Artaxerxes, the greatest of the kings. I am giving it to Ezra the priest, who has studied very well all the rules and regulations that the God who is in heaven gave to the Israelite people.¹³ Ezra, I command

that when you return to Jerusalem, any of the Israelite people in my kingdom who want to be allowed to go with you. That includes any priests and descendants of Levi who will work in the temple who want to go.¹⁴ I, along with my seven counselors, am sending you to Jerusalem, in order that you can determine what is happening there and in other towns in Judah. You are taking with you a copy of God's laws; make sure that the people are doing everything that is written in those laws.¹⁵ We are also telling you to take with you the silver and gold that I and my advisors are wanting to give to you, in order that you will present it as an offering to the God of Israel who lives in Jerusalem.¹⁶ You should also take any silver and gold that the people in the entire Babylonia province give to you, and the money that the priests and other Israelite people have happily said that they would give to you to be offerings for building the temple of their God in Jerusalem.¹⁷ With this money, you should buy the bulls, rams, lambs, and the grain and wine that the priests will burn on the altar outside the temple of your God in Jerusalem.¹⁸ If there is any silver or gold that remains after you have bought all those things, you and your companions are permitted to use it to buy whatever you desire, but buy only things that you know that God wants you to buy.¹⁹ We have given to you some valuable items to be used in the temple of your God. Take them also to Jerusalem.²⁰ If you need any other things for the temple, you are permitted to get the money for those things from the royal treasury here.²¹ And I, King Artaxerxes, command this to all the treasurers in the province west of the Euphrates River: Give to Ezra the priest who has studied very well the laws of the God who is in heaven, everything that he requests, and give it to him quickly.²² Give him up to three and one-third met-

ric tons of silver, five hundred bushels of wheat, two and one-fifth kiloliters of wine, the same of olive oil, and all the salt that they need. ²³ Be sure that you provide whatever their God requires for his temple, because we certainly do not want him to be angry with me or with my descendants who will later be kings. ²⁴ We are also commanding that none of the priests, descendants of Levi who work in the temple, musicians, temple guards, or other men who work in the temple, will be required to pay any taxes. ²⁵ Ezra, your God has enabled you to become very wise. Using that wisdom, appoint men in the province west of the Euphrates River who will judge cases involving the people, and men who will judge cases involving the government. You must appoint men who know the laws of your God. All of you must teach God's laws to others who do not know them. ²⁶ Everyone who does not obey God's laws or the laws of my government must be punished severely. Some of them will be executed, some will be put in prison, some will be sent out of the country or have all their property taken away from them."

²⁷ Ezra said, "Praise Yahweh, the God whom our ancestors worshiped! He has caused the king to want to honor his temple in Jerusalem. ²⁸ Because God acted kindly and faithfully toward me, the king and all his advisors and all his powerful officials have also acted kindly toward me. Because God has helped me, I have been encouraged, and I have been able to persuade some of the Israelite leaders to go up to Jerusalem with me."

Chapter 8

¹ This is a list of the names of the leaders of the clans who came with me up

to Jerusalem from Babylonia when Artaxerxes was king of Persia: ² Gershom, in the clan descended from Aaron's grandson Phinehas. Daniel, in the clan descended from Aaron's son Ithamar. Hattush, a descendant of Shecaniah in the clan descended from King David. ³ Zechariah and 150 other men in the clan descended from Parosh. ⁴ Eliehoenai son of Zerariah and two hundred other men in the clan descended from Pahath-Moab. ⁵ Ben Jazziel and three hundred other men in the clan descended from Shecaniah. ⁶ Ebed son of Jonathan and fifty other men in the clan descended from Adin. ⁷ Jeshiah son of Athaliah and seventy other men in the clan descended from Elam. ⁸ Zebadiah son of Michael and eighty other men in the clan descended from Shephatiah. ⁹ Obadiah son of Jehiel and 218 other men in the clan descended from Joab. ¹⁰ Ben Josiphiah and one hundred sixty other men in the clan descended from Shelomith. ¹¹ Zechariah son of Bebai and twenty eight other men in the clan descended from another man whose name was Bebai. ¹² Johanan son of Hakkatan and one hundred ten other men in the clan descended from Azgad. ¹³ Also Eliphelet, Jeuel, and Shemaiah, who returned here later with sixty other men in the clan descended from Adonikam. ¹⁴ Uthai and Zaccur and seventy other men in the clan descended from Bigvai.

¹⁵ Ezra said, "I gathered together all of Jews at the canal that goes from Babylon to Ahava. We set up our tents there and stayed there for three days. During that time I read the lists of names and found out that there were priests going with us, but no other descendants of Levi who could help them in the temple. ¹⁶ So I summoned Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, another man named Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah, and Meshulam, who were all leaders of the people.

I also summoned Joiarib and yet another man named Elnathan (three in all), who were teachers. ¹⁷ I sent them all to Iddo, the leader of the descendants of Levi, who was living in Kasiphia, to request that he and his relatives and other men who had worked in the temple in Jerusalem send us some men who would go with us to work in God's new temple.

¹⁸ Because God acted kindly toward us, they brought to us a man named Sherebiah and eighteen of his sons and other relatives. Sherebiah was a very wise man, a descendant of Mahli, who was a grandson of Levi. ¹⁹ They also sent to us Hashabiah, along with Jeshaiiah, descendants of Levi's son Merari, and twenty of their relatives. ²⁰ They also sent 220 other men to work in the temple. Those men's ancestors had been appointed by King David to assist the descendants of Levi. I listed the names of all those men.

²¹ There alongside the Ahava Canal, I announced a time for us all to fast and pray. I told them that we should humble ourselves in the presence of our God. We prayed that God would protect us while we traveled, and also protect our children and our possessions. ²² Previously we had told the king that our God takes care of all those who truly trust in him, but that he becomes very angry with those who refuse to obey him. So I would have been ashamed to ask the king to send soldiers and men riding on horses to protect us from our enemies while we were traveling along the road. ²³ So we fasted and requested God to protect us, and we prayed to him.

²⁴ I chose twelve of the leaders of the priests, Sherebiah and Hashabiah and ten others. ²⁵ I assigned them to supervise the transport to Jerusalem of the gifts of silver and gold and the other valuable items that the king and his advisors and

other officials, and the Israelite people who were living in Babylonia, had contributed for the temple of our God. ²⁶ As I gave these various items to those priests, I weighed each of the items. This was the total: About twenty-one and one-half metric tons of silver, one hundred items made from silver that altogether weighed three and one-third metric tons, three and one-third metric tons of gold, ²⁷ twenty gold bowls that altogether weighed about eight and one-half kilograms, and two items made of polished bronze that were as valuable as ones made of gold.

²⁸ I said to those priests, 'You are specially set apart for Yahweh, the God whom our ancestors worshiped, and these valuable things are special to him in the same way. The people themselves gave these things to be offerings to Yahweh voluntarily. ²⁹ So guard them carefully, and when we arrive in Jerusalem, weigh them in the presence of the priests, the descendants of Levi who will help the priests, and the other Israelite leaders there. They will then put them in the storerooms in the new temple.' ³⁰ So the priests and descendants of Levi took from me all the gifts of silver and gold and the other valuable items, in order to carry them to the temple in Jerusalem.

³¹ On the twelfth day of the first month, we left the Ahava Canal and started to travel to Jerusalem. Our God took care of us, and while we traveled, he prevented our enemies and bandits from attacking us. ³² After we arrived in Jerusalem, we rested for three days. ³³ Then on the fourth day we went to the temple. There the silver and gold and the other items were weighed and given to the priest Meremoth son of Uriah. Eleazar the son of Phinehas and two descendants of Levi, Jozabad son of Jeshua and Noadiah son of Binnui, were with him. ³⁴ They counted everything, and

wrote down how much they weighed, and wrote a description of each item.

³⁵ We who had returned from Babylonia offered to God sacrifices on the altar. We offered twelve bulls for all us Israelite people. We also offered ninety-six rams and seventy-seven lambs. We also sacrificed twelve goats to atone for the sins that all the people had committed. These were all completely burned on the altar. ³⁶ Some of us who returned from Babylonia took to the governors and other officials of the province west of the Euphrates River the letter that the king had given to us. After they read the letter, they did all that they were able to do for us Israelite people and for the temple of God.”

Chapter 9

¹ “Some time later, the Jewish leaders came to me and said, ‘Many Israelites, and even some priests and other men who are descendants of Levi who work in the temple, have not kept themselves from doing what the other people who are living in this land do. They are doing the same disgusting things that are being done by the Canaan, Heth, Periz, Jebus, Ammon, and Amor people groups, and by the people from Moab and Egypt, ² Specifically, some Israelite men have married women who are not Israelites, and they have allowed their sons to do the same thing. So we, God’s sacred people, have become polluted. And some of our leaders and officials have been the first ones to betray God in this way!’

³ When I heard that, I was overwhelmed, so I tore my clothes and tore some hair from my head and from my beard. Then I sat down, ashamed of my people since the Israelites knew that God had warned us that he would punish us if we disobeyed

what he had said to us about marrying women who are not Israelites. ⁴ So many of them trembled when they heard that some of those who had returned from Babylonia had sinned like that. They came and sat with me until it was time to offer the evening sacrifices of grain.

⁵ When it was time to offer those sacrifices, I was still sitting there, wearing those torn clothes and mourning. I stood up, and then I quickly prostrated myself on the ground. I lifted up my hands to Yahweh, my God, ⁶ and this is what I prayed: ‘Yahweh my God, I am very ashamed to raise my head in front of you. The sins that we Israelites have committed are very great; it is as though they have risen up higher than our heads. As for our guilt for committing those sins, it is as though it rises up to the heavens. ⁷ Since the time that our ancestors lived until now, we have been very guilty. That is the reason that we and our kings and our priests have been defeated by the armies of the kings of other lands. They killed some of our people, they captured some, they robbed some, and they caused them all to be disgraced, just as we are today. ⁸ But now, Yahweh God, you have acted very kindly toward us. You have allowed some of us to survive. You have revived our spirits and allowed us to escape from being slaves in Babylonia and to return safely to live in this sacred place. ⁹ We were slaves, but you did not abandon us. Instead, because you are always faithful to your covenant with us, you caused the kings of Persia to act very kindly toward us. You have allowed us to continue to live and to rebuild your temple which had been completely destroyed. You have allowed us to start to live safely here in Jerusalem and in other towns in Judah. ¹⁰ Our God, what more can we say now? In spite of all that you have done for us, we have disobeyed your commands. ¹¹ They are com-

mands that you gave to your servants, the prophets, to tell to us. They told us that the land that we would occupy was polluted because of the detestable things that were done by the people who lived there. They said that the land was filled from one end to the other with people who did immoral things. ¹² They said that we should not allow our daughters to marry their sons! We should not allow our sons to marry their daughters! We should not even try to cause things to go well for those people! They said that if we obeyed these instructions, our nation would be strong, and we would enjoy the good crops that grow on the land, and the land would belong to our descendants forever. ¹³ But you punished us because we were very guilty for having done wicked things. Still, you have not punished us as much as we deserve to be punished. I say this because you, our God, have allowed some of us to survive. ¹⁴ However, some of us are again disobeying your commands, and we are marrying women who do those detestable things. If we continue to do that, surely you will get rid of all of us, with the result that none of us will remain alive. ¹⁵ Yahweh, God of Israel, you always do the right thing! We are guilty. We are only a few people who have escaped from Babylonia, but we are praying to you, even though we do not deserve to be in your presence.”

Chapter 10

¹ While Ezra was kneeling down in front of the temple and praying and crying, he was confessing the sins that the Israelite people had committed. Many people, men and women and children, gathered around him and also cried very much. ² Then Shecaniah son of Jehiel in the clan of Elam, said this to him: “We have disobeyed God. Some of us have married

women who are not Israelites. But we can still hope that Yahweh will be merciful to us Israelite people. ³ We will do what you, and the others who have an awesome respect for what our God has commanded, tell us to do. We will do what God told us in his laws. We will make a covenant with our God, saying that we will divorce our wives who are not Israelites, and we will send them away with their children. ⁴ It is your responsibility to tell us what to do. So get up, and be courageous, and do what is necessary. We will support you.”

⁵ So Ezra stood up and demanded that the leaders of the priests, the descendants of Levi, and all the other Israelite people solemnly declare that they would do what Shecaniah said that they should do. So they all solemnly promised to do that. ⁶ Then Ezra went away from in front of the temple and went to the room where Jehohanan lived. He stayed there that night, but he did not eat or drink anything. He was still sad because some of the Israelites who had returned from Babylonia had not faithfully obeyed God’s laws.

⁷ Then the leaders sent a message to all the people in Jerusalem and in other towns in Judah, saying that all those who had returned from Babylonia should come to Jerusalem immediately. ⁸ The leaders also said that if any of them did not arrive within three days, they would order that all the property of those people be taken from them, and that they must no longer be considered to belong to the Israelite people; they would be considered to be foreigners.

⁹ So within three days, all the people of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin gathered in Jerusalem. They were there, sitting in the courtyard in front of the temple. They were shaking because it was raining hard and because they were worried that they would be punished for what

they had done. ¹⁰ Then Ezra stood up and said to them, "Some of you men have committed an act of treason against God. You have married women who are not Israelites. By doing that, you have made us Israelite people more guilty than we were before. ¹¹ So now you must worship Yahweh, the God whom your ancestors worshiped, and you must do what he wants. Separate yourselves from the people of other nations and from the women from those nations whom you have married."

¹² The whole group answered, shouting loudly, "Yes, what you have said is right! We will do what you have said. ¹³ But we are a very large group, and it is raining hard. Also, there are many of us who have committed this evil sin. This is something that we cannot take care of in one or two days, and we cannot stand here in this rain. ¹⁴ So allow our leaders to decide for all of us what we should do. Tell everyone who has married a woman who is not Israelite to come at a time that you decide. They should come with the elders and judges from each city. If we do that, our God will stop being angry with us because of what we have done."

¹⁵ Jonathan son of Asahel, and Jahzeiah son of Tikvah disagreed with this, and Meshullam and Shabbethai, a descendant of Levi, supported them.

¹⁶ But all the others who had returned from Babylonia said that they would do it. So Ezra chose leaders of each of the clans, and I wrote down their names. On the first day of the tenth month these men came and sat down to investigate the matter. ¹⁷ By the first day of the first month of the next year they had finished determining which men had married women who were not Israelites. ¹⁸ This is a list of the names of the priests who had married non-Jewish women, and

the clans to which they belonged. In the clan of Jeshua and his brothers, who were sons of Jehozadak, there were Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib, and Gedaliah. ¹⁹ They solemnly promised to divorce their wives, and they each sacrificed a ram to be an offering to atone for their sins. ²⁰ In the clan of Immer there were Hanani and Zebadiah. ²¹ In the clan of Harim there were Maaseiah, Elijah, Shemaiah, Jehiel, and Uziah. ²² In the clan of Pashhur there were Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad, and Elasa. ²³ The descendants of Levi who had married non-Jewish women were Jozabad, Shimei, Kelaiah (whose other name was Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer. ²⁴ There was Eliashib the musician. Among the temple guards there were Shallum, Telem, and Uri. ²⁵ This is a list of the names of the other Israelites who had married foreign wives: In the clan of Parosh there were Ramiah, Izziah, Malchijah, Mijamin, Eleazar, Malchijah, and Benaiah. ²⁶ In the clan of Elam there were Mattaniah, Zechariah, Jehiel, Abdi, Jeremoth, and Elijah. ²⁷ In the clan of Zattu there were Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Jeremoth, Zabad, and Aziza. ²⁸ In the clan of Bebai there were Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, and Athlai. ²⁹ In the clan of Bani there were Meshullam, Malluk, Adaiah, Jashub, and Sheal Jeremoth. ³⁰ In the clan of Pahath-Moab there were Adna, Kelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, Binnui, and Manasseh. ³¹ In the clan of Harim there were Eliezer, Ishijah, Malkijah, Shemaiah, Shimeon, ³² Benjamin, Malluk, and Shemariah. ³³ In the clan of Hashum there were Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, and Shimei. ³⁴ In the clan of Bani there were Maadai, Amram, Uel, ³⁵ Benaiah, Bedeiah, Keluhi, ³⁶ Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib, ³⁷ Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasu. ³⁸ In the clan of Binnui there were Shimei, ³⁹ Shelemiah,

Nathan, Adaiah, ⁴⁰ Maknadebai, Shashai, Sharai, ⁴¹ Azarel, Shelemiah, Shemariah, ⁴² Shallum, Amariah, and Joseph. ⁴³ In the clan of Nebo there were Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Iddo, Joel, and Benaiah. ⁴⁴ Each of those men had married a woman who was not an Israelite, and some of them had children by those women.

NEHEMIAH

Chapter 1

¹ I am Nehemiah son of Hakaliah. I am writing this account of what I did when I returned to Jerusalem. During the twentieth year after King Artaxerxes began to rule the Persian Empire, in the month of Kislev. I was in Susa, the capital of Persia.

² My brother Hanani came to see me. He and some other men were from Judah. I asked them questions about the small number of Jews who had escaped from the Babylonian exile, and about the city of Jerusalem.

³ They said to me, "The Jews who survived the captivity are living there in Judah with great difficulty and shame. The wall of the city was pushed down at many places so an army could easily come through it, and not only so, but the gates of the city have been completely destroyed by fire."

⁴ When I heard that, I sat down and cried. For many days I mourned and fasted, and I prayed to the God who is in heaven. ⁵ I said, "Yahweh, you are the God who is in heaven. You are the great and awesome God, and you keep your sacred bond and promise with everyone who loves you and who obeys your rules and commands. ⁶ Now please look at me and listen to what I am praying. I pray during the day and at night for your Israelite people. I confess that we have sinned. Even I and my family have sinned against you. ⁷ We have acted very wickedly. Many years ago your servant Moses gave us your laws and all the decrees you commanded us to do, but we did not keep them.

⁸ But please remember what you told your servant Moses. You said, 'If you do not live with faith and obedience before me,

I will scatter you among the nations. ⁹ But if you return to me and obey my commands, even if you have been exiled to a very remote place, I will gather all of you up and bring you back to this place where I showed you how great and glorious I am.'

¹⁰ We are your servants. We are the people whom you have delivered from slavery by your very great power. You did that because you are able to do whatever you desire. ¹¹ Yahweh, please hear my prayer, I who am your servant. Please hear the prayers of all your people who have great joy when they honor you for who you are and what you do. Now I pray you would give me success when I go to the king; and protect me as I make a request of the king that could put my life in jeopardy. Give me mercy."

I was serving as one of the most trusted servants to the king.

Chapter 2

¹ In the month of Nisan during the twentieth year of the rule of King Artaxerxes, it was time to serve wine to him during a feast. I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had never looked sad when I was before the king. ² But that day, the king looked at me and he said to me, "Why are you so sad? You do not look sick. Perhaps your spirit is troubled?" Then I was very afraid.

³ I replied, "O King, may you rule for many, many years! I am sad for a reason, because the city in which my ancestors are buried has been turned to rubble, and all the gates around the city have been burned to ashes."

⁴ The king replied, "What do you want me to do for you?"

And before I answered him, I prayed to God in heaven. ⁵ Then I replied, "If you are willing to do it, and if I have pleased you, then you could send me to Jerusalem, where my ancestors are buried, so that I may rebuild the city."

⁶ The king (with queen sitting beside him) asked me, "If I allow you to go, how long will you be gone? And when will you return?" He gave me permission to go as soon as I gave him the dates of my going there and coming back again.

⁷ I also said to the king, "As a reward for my faithful service to you, please give me letters addressed to the governors who oversee the area beyond the Euphrates River. Please give them orders to allow me to travel safely through their province on my way to and from Judah. ⁸ Also, please write a letter to Asaph, who manages all the timber in your forest, and tell him to make beams to repair the gates of the fortress next to the temple, and to repair the walls of the city, and the house in which I will live." The king did what I requested him to do, because God was helping me get what I needed for these repairs.

⁹ I left to travel to Judah. The king sent some army officers and soldiers riding on horses to accompany me, to protect me. When we came to the region where the governors ruled, I gave them the letters from the king.

¹⁰ But when two government officials, Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant, heard that I had arrived, they were very angry that someone had come to help the people of Israel.

¹¹ So I came to Jerusalem and stayed there three days. ¹² I went out of the city in the evening, and I took a few men with me. We only had one animal, the one that I was riding on. I said nothing to anyone

about what God had inspired me to do in Jerusalem.

¹³ I passed through the Valley Gate and went outside of the city wall. Then I went around the city and passed by the well called the Jackal's Well. Then I proceeded to the Dung Gate. I inspected all the walls around Jerusalem and found they were all broken open, and the wooden gates all around the wall were burned to ashes.

¹⁴ Then I went to the Fountain Gate and to the pool called the King's Pool, but my donkey could not get through the narrow opening. ¹⁵ So I turned back and went along the Kidron Valley and I inspected the wall there before I turned back and entered the city again at the Valley Gate. ¹⁶ The city officials did not know where I had gone, or what I had done. I had not said anything about it to the Jewish leaders or the officials or the priests or any of the others who would do the repair work.

¹⁷ I said, "You all know very well the terrible things that have happened to our city. The city is lies in ruins, and even the gates are burned down. Come, let us do the work to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. If we do that, we will no longer be ashamed of our city." ¹⁸ Then I told them about how God had kindly helped me when I talked to the king, and what the king had said to me.

They replied, "Let us get up and build!" So they got ready to do this good work.

¹⁹ But Sanballat, Tobiah the Ammonite servant, and Geshem the Arabian, heard about what we planned to do. They mocked and made fun of us. They said, "What is this work that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?"

²⁰ But I replied, "The God who is in heaven will give us success. But you have no right to this city, you have no deed, you have no lawful claim to it, and you have no historic

connection to the city of Jerusalem.”

Chapter 3

¹ Then Eliashib, the high priest of Israel, working with the other priests, rebuilt the Sheep Gate. They set it apart for the honor of Yahweh, and set the doors of the gate in place. Then they rebuilt the wall as far as the Tower of the Hundred, and they set it apart to honor Yahweh. They also rebuilt the Tower of Hananel. ² Next to them, men from Jericho were rebuilding. Next to them, Zaccur son of Imri, was rebuilding.

³ The sons of Hassenaah built the Fish Gate. They laid in the wooden beams above the gates, and also set the doors in place. Then they affixed the bolt and the bars for a strong lock. ⁴ Next to them, Meremoth, the son of Uriah and grandson of Hakkoz, repaired the walls to make them strong. Next to him, Meshullam son of Berekiah and grandson of Meshezabel, repaired part of the wall. Next to him, Zadok son of Baana repaired part of the wall. ⁵ Next to him, Tekoites repaired part of the wall, but the leaders of Tekoa refused to do the work that their supervisors assigned to them.

⁶ Joiada son of Paseah, and Meshullam son of Besodeiah, repaired the Old Gate. They also put in their places the beams above the gate and put in the bolts and the bars for locking the gate. ⁷ Next to them Melatiah the Gibeonite and Jadon the Meronothite, who were men from Gibeon and Mizpah, made repairs on the portion where the governor of the province beyond the River lived. ⁸ Next to him, Uzziel son of Harhaiah, and Hananiah, but they worked on a section of the wall as far as the Broad Wall. Harhaiah made things from gold, and Hananiah made perfumes.

⁹ Next to them, Rephaiah son of Hur, who ruled half of the district of Jerusalem, repaired part of the wall. ¹⁰ Next to him, Jedaiah son of Harumaph repaired part of the wall near his house. Next to him, Hattush son of Hashabneiah repaired part of the wall. ¹¹ Malchijah son of Harim, and Hashub son of Pahathmoab, repaired a section of the wall, and also repaired the Tower of the Ovens. ¹² Next to him, Shalum son of Hallohesh, who ruled the other half of the district of Jerusalem, repaired part of the wall. His daughters helped him with the work.

¹³ Hanun and people from the city of Zanoah repaired the Valley Gate. They put the gates in their places, and also put in the bolts and bars for locking the gate. They repaired the wall for 460 meters, as far as the Dung Gate.

¹⁴ Malchijah son of Recab, who ruled the district of Beth Haccherem, repaired the Dung Gate. He also put in their places the bolts and bars for locking the gate.

¹⁵ Shallum son of Colhozeh, who ruled the district of Mizpah, repaired the Fountain Gate. He put a roof over the gate, and put in their places the gates and the bolts and the bars for locking the gate. Near the Pool of Siloam he built the wall next to the king's garden, as far as the steps that went down from the city of David. ¹⁶ Next to him, Nehemiah son of Azbuk, who ruled half of the district of Beth Zur, repaired the wall as far as the tombs in the city of David, to the pool that was man-made, and to the House of the Heroes.

¹⁷ Next to him, several descendants of Levi who helped the priests repaired parts of the wall. Rehum son of Bani repaired one section. Hashabiah, who ruled half of the district of Keilah, repaired the next section on behalf of the people of his district.

¹⁸ Binnui son of Henadad, who ruled the other half of the district of Keilah, re-

paired the next section along with other descendants of Levi. ¹⁹ Next to him, Ezer son of Jeshua, who ruled the city of Mizpah, repaired another section in front of the steps which went up to the armory, up to the point where there is a buttress at the corner of the wall. ²⁰ Next to him, Baruch son of Zabbai repaired a section of the wall with great enthusiasm. He worked on the section from the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest to the end of his house. ²¹ Next to him, Meremoth son of Uriah and grandson of Hakkoz repaired a section from the door of Eliashib's house to the end of his house.

²² Next to him, several priests repaired parts of the wall. The priests from the area near Jerusalem repaired one section.

²³ Next to them, Benjamin and Hasshub repaired a section in front of their house. Azariah son of Maaseiah and grandson of Ananiah, repaired the next section in front of his house. ²⁴ Next to him, Binnui son of Henadad repaired a section, from Azariah's house to where the wall turns a bit. ²⁵ Next to him, Palal son of Uzai repaired a section, from where the wall turns and from where the watchtower is taller than the upper palace. The watchtower is near the courtyard where the guards lived. Next to Palal, Pedaiah son of Parosh repaired the wall. ²⁶ Next to him the temple servants repaired a section facing the Water Gate on the east side of the tall tower. ²⁷ Next to him, the Tekoites repaired a second section that was in front of the tall tower as far as the wall of Ophel.

²⁸ A group of priests repaired the wall north from the Horse Gate. Each one repaired the section in front of his own house. ²⁹ Next to them, Zadok son of Immer repaired the section in front of his house. Next to him, Shemaiah son of Shecaniah, who was the gatekeeper at the

east gate, repaired the next section. ³⁰ Next to him, Hananiah son of Shelemiah, and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired a section. That was the second section that they repaired. After him Meshullam son of Berechiah repaired the walls in the section that faced the rooms where he lived. ³¹ Next to them, Malchijah, who also made things from gold, repaired a section as far as the building used by the temple servants and merchants, which was in front of the Appointment Gate and the upper apartments on the corner. ³² Other men who worked with gold, making beautiful things, along with merchants, repaired the last section of the wall as far as the Sheep Gate.

Chapter 4

¹ When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the city wall, the fact that they were rebuilding Jerusalem burned like a fire within him, and he was furious and he spoke of the Jews with disgust. ² While his counselors and officials of the army troops who had come from Samaria were listening he said, "These Jews can hardly stand on their own legs, what do they think they are doing? Will they rebuild the city and live in it themselves? Will they restore the temple and the all the sacrifices that the priests gave to Yahweh? Will they finish such a great work in only a day? Will they turn these burned and useless rocks into useful material to rebuilt the wall and will they bring life to the city again?"

³ Tobiah was standing beside Sanballat. He said, "That wall they are building is so weak that even if a little fox climbed up on it, their stone wall would fall to the ground!"

⁴ Then I prayed. I said, "Our God, hear us,

because they are ridiculing us! Cause the words of their insults to fall back on themselves! Allow their enemies to come and capture them and force them to go to a foreign land! ⁵ They are guilty. Do not take away their guilt and let them answer for the sin they committed before you. With their insults, they are making those who are rebuilding the walls become very angry!”

⁶ But after some time, the workers built the wall around the whole city to about half its total height. They were able to accomplish this because they wanted to do the best work they could do.

⁷ But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabians, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the work on the wall was continuing and that we were filling in the gaps in the wall, they became very angry.

⁸ They all made a plan together to come and fight against the people of Jerusalem, and to cause confusion within it. ⁹ But we prayed to our God to protect us, and we put men around the walls to guard the city day and night because of these who were so angry with us for rebuilding the wall.

¹⁰ Then the people of Judah started to say, “The men who are working on the wall have used up all their strength. There is too much heavy rubble that we must move away; we are not able to finish this work. It is too much for us.

¹¹ Besides, our enemies are saying, ‘Before the Jews see us, we will rush down on them and kill them and stop their work on the wall!’”

¹² The Jews who were living near our enemies came and told us many times, to warn us about the wicked plans our enemies were planning to carry out against us.

¹³ So I put people from each of the families to stand guard at the wall. They

were put at the lowest points of the wall, at the places where the wall would be most easily crossed over. They would protect it with their swords, their spears, and their bows and arrows. ¹⁴ Then after I inspected everything, I summoned the leaders and other officials and many of the other people, and I said to them, “Do not be afraid of our enemies! Keep in mind God is great and glorious! And fight to protect your families, your sons and daughters, your wives, and your homes!”

¹⁵ Our enemies heard that we knew what they were planning to do and that God had spoiled all their plans to stop our work. So we all returned to work on the wall, at the same places we were working before.

¹⁶ But after that, only half of the men there were doing the work on the wall. The others stood there holding their spears, shields, bows and arrows, and wearing armor for protection. The leaders stood guard behind the people of Judah. ¹⁷

Those who were building the wall and those who carried the heavy loads on their backs, all of them built the wall with one hand and held a weapon in the other hand. ¹⁸ All who were building the wall had his sword fastened to his side. The man who would blow the trumpet if our enemies attacked was standing at my side.

¹⁹ Then I said to the officials, the other important men, and the other people, “This is a huge job, and we are far apart from each other along the wall. ²⁰ If you hear the man blowing the trumpet, gather around at that place. Our God will fight for us!”

²¹ So we continued to work. Half of the men continued to hold their spears all day, from when the sun rose in the morning until the stars appeared at night. ²² At that time, I also said to the people, “Tell every worker and his helper that they must stay inside Jerusalem at night. By doing that,

they can guard us at night, and they can work on the wall during the daytime.”²³ During that time, I did not put away my clothing, and I always carried my weapon. The same was true of my brothers, my servants, and the men who followed me and served as guards. All of us did the same, even if we just went to get a drink of water.

Chapter 5

¹ Later, many of the men and their wives cried out for justice because of what some of the other Jews were doing. ² Some of them said, “We have many children. So we need a lot of grain to be able to eat and stay alive.”

³ Others said, “it has been necessary for us to mortgage the fields and vineyards and houses that we own so that we may get grain to eat during this famine.”

⁴ Others said, “We have needed to borrow money to pay the taxes we owe the king for our fields and our vineyards. ⁵ We are Jews just like the other Jews. Our children are just as important to us as their children are to them. But we have been forced to sell our children to become slaves in order to pay what we owe. We have already sold some of our daughters to become slaves. Our fields and vineyards have been taken away from us, so now we do not have the money to pay what we owe.”

⁶ I was very angry when I heard these things about which they were so concerned. ⁷ So I thought about what I could do about it. I told the leaders and officials, “You are charging interest to your own relatives when they borrow money from you. You know that is wrong!” Then I called together a large group of people to bring charges against them. ⁸ I said to them,

“Some of our Jewish relatives have been forced to sell themselves to become slaves of the nations. As much as we have been able, we have been buying them back. But now you are even selling your own relatives so that they might be sold back to us, their fellow Jews!” When I said that to them, they were silent. They did not answer with even a single word.

⁹ Then I said to them, “What you are doing is terrible. Should you not obey God and do what is right? If you did, you would prevent our enemies from treating us with disrespect. ¹⁰ I and my fellow Jews and my servants have lent money and grain to people. But let us all stop charging interest on any of these loans. ¹¹ Also, you must give back to them their fields, their vineyards, their olive tree orchards, and their houses that you have taken from them. You must also give back to them the interest that you charged them when they borrowed money, grain, wine, and olive oil from you. You must do this today!”

¹² The leaders replied, “We will do what you have said. We will return to them everything that we forced them to give to us, and we will not require that they give us anything more.”

Then I summoned the priests, and I made them give an oath that they would do what they promised. ¹³ I shook out the folds of my robe and said to them, “If you do not do what you have just now promised to do, I hope that God will shake you like I am shaking my robe.”

They all replied, “Amen, let it be so!” And they praised Yahweh. Then they did what they had promised to do.

¹⁴ I was appointed to be the governor of Judea in the twentieth year that Artaxerxes was the king of Persia. From that time until the thirty-second year, during those twelve years neither I nor my offi-

cials accepted the money that we were allowed to receive to buy food because of my being the governor. ¹⁵ The men who were governors before me had burdened the people by requiring them forty silver coins each day for their food and wine. Even their servants oppressed the people. But I did not do that, because I wanted to give honor and respect to God.

¹⁶ I also continued to work on this wall, and we did not buy any land from the people. All those who worked for me joined me to work on the wall. ¹⁷ Also, every day I was responsible to feed at our table the Jews and the officials, one hundred and fifty people; and we also fed the visitors who came from other countries around us. ¹⁸ Each day I told my servants to serve us the meat from one ox, six very good sheep, and birds. And every ten days I gave them a large new supply of wine. But I knew that the people were burdened by paying a great deal of money for taxes, so I did not accept the money that I was entitled to as governor.

¹⁹ My God, think of me, and reward me for all that I have done for this people.

Chapter 6

¹ Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem, and our other enemies heard a report that we had finished rebuilding the wall, and that now there were no more gaps, although we had not yet replaced the doors in the gates. ² So Sanballat and Geshem sent me a message that read, "Come and talk with us at a place in the plain of Ono north of Jerusalem." But it was no secret that they wanted to harm me.

³ So I sent messengers to them, to tell them, "I am doing an important work, and I cannot go down there. This work should not be delayed just so I can go down to talk

with you. ⁴ They sent me the same message four times, and each time when I replied to them I said the same thing.

⁵ Then Sanballat sent one of his servants to me, bringing a fifth message. This one was written, but it was not sealed and he held it in his hand. ⁶ This is what was written in the message:

"Some people in the nearby countries have heard a report that you and the other Jews are rebuilding the wall in order to be able start a rebellion against the king of Babylon, and that you are planning to become the king of the Israel. Geshem has told us that this is the truth.

⁷ People are also saying that you have appointed some prophets to proclaim in Jerusalem that you, Nehemiah, are now the king in Judea. King Artaxerxes will certainly hear these reports, and then you will be in big trouble. So I suggest that we should meet together to talk about this matter."

⁸ When I read that message, I sent the messenger back to Sanballat to say, "None of what you are saying is true. You have made this up in your own imagination." ⁹ I said that because I knew that they were trying to cause us to be afraid, so that they thought, "They will become so discouraged that they will not work on the wall any more, and the work will never be finished." So I prayed, "O God, give me courage."

¹⁰ One day I went to talk with Shemaia son of Delaiah and grandson of Mehetabel. I went to talk with him in his house. He was ordered not to leave his house. He said to me, "You and I must enter the temple, and we must go to one of the rooms in the center of the temple, and lock the doors. They are going to come to kill you. They are coming tonight to kill you."

¹¹ I replied, "I am not that kind of person!

I would not run and hide in the temple to save my life! No, I will not do that!”¹² I thought about what he had said, and I saw that God had not told Shemaiah what to say to me. Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.¹³ They had hired him to frighten me. They wanted me to disobey God’s commands and sin by hiding in the temple. If I did that, they would give me a bad name for what I had done, and then they would humiliate me.

¹⁴ So I prayed, “My God, do not forget what Tobiah and Sanballat have done. And do not forget the prophetess Noadiah and the other prophets who tried to make me be afraid.”

¹⁵ We finished rebuilding the wall in the month of Elul, on the twenty-fifth day of the month. We did all the work in fifty-two days.¹⁶ When our enemies in the nearby countries heard about that, they became very afraid and they were humiliated, because they knew it was God who helped us complete this work.

¹⁷ During this time, the Jewish leaders had been sending many messages to Tobiah, and Tobiah had been sending messages back to them.¹⁸ Many people in Judea had sworn their allegiance to Tobiah. He was the son-in-law of Shecaniah son of Arah, and Tobiah’s son Jehohanan married the daughter of Meshullam son of Berekiah.¹⁹ People often talked in my presence about all the good deeds that Tobiah had done, and then they would tell him everything that I said. So Tobiah sent many letters to me to try to cause me to become afraid.

Chapter 7

¹ After the wall had been finished and we had put the gates in their places, we assigned to the temple guards and to the

members of the sacred choir and the other descendants of Levi the work that they were to do.² I appointed my brother Hanani as governor of Jerusalem. He was a faithful man who respected God and honored him, more than many others. In addition, Hananiah was appointed commander of the fortress there in Jerusalem.³ I said to them, “Do not open the gates of Jerusalem until the sun is hot. And close the gates and put the bars across the doors only when gatekeepers are guarding the gates.” I also told them to appoint some people who live in Jerusalem to be guards, and to assign some of them to guard stations around the city, and some would guard near their own houses.”

⁴ The city of Jerusalem covered a large area, but at that time not many people lived in the city, and they had not rebuilt any of the houses.⁵ God gave me the idea to summon the leaders and officials and other people, and to enroll them by their families in the books of the records of the families. I also found the records of the people who had been the first ones to return to Jerusalem. This is what I found written in those records.

⁶ “This is a list of the people who returned to Jerusalem and to other places in Judea. They had been living in Babylonia. Nebuchadnezzar had taken them there. They returned to Jerusalem and to Judah. Each one who returned went back to his own city where his ancestors had lived before the exile.⁷ They came back with Zerubbabel, Joshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, and Baanah.

The number of men from the people who returned to Judah are listed next.⁸ From the descendants of Parosh, 2,172,

⁹ from the descendants of Shephatiah, 372,

¹⁰ from the descendants of Arah, 652.
¹¹ From the descendants of Pahathmoab, the descendants of Jeshua and Joab, 2,818,
¹² from the descendants of Elam, 1,254,
¹³ from the descendants of Zattu, 845,
¹⁴ from the descendants of Zakkai, 760.
¹⁵ From the descendants of Bani, 648,
¹⁶ from the descendants of Bebai, 628,
¹⁷ from the descendants of Azgad, 2,322,
¹⁸ from the descendants of Adonikam, 667.
¹⁹ From the descendants of Bigvai, 2,067,
²⁰ from the descendants of Adin, 655,
²¹ from the descendants of Ater, whose other name is Hezekiah, 98,
²² from the descendants of Hashum, 328.
²³ From the descendants of Bezai, 324,
²⁴ from the descendants of Hariph, whose other name is Jorah, 112,
²⁵ from the descendants of Gibeon, whose other name is Gibbar, ninety-five.
²⁶ Men whose ancestors had lived in these towns also returned:
Men from Bethlehem and Netophah, 188.
²⁷ There were also men from Anathoth, 128,
²⁸ men from Beth Azmaveth, forty-two,
²⁹ men from Kiriath Jearim, Kephirah and Beeroth, 743,
³⁰ men from Ramah and Geba, 621.
³¹ There were men from Micmash, 122,
³² men from Bethel and Ai, 123,
³³ men from Nebo, fifty-two,
³⁴ men from Elam, 1,254.

³⁵ There were men from Harim, 320,
³⁶ men from Jericho, 345,
³⁷ men from Lod, Hadid, and Ono, 721,
³⁸ men from Senaah, 3,930.
These priests also returned:
³⁹ The descendants of Jedaiah, who are the family of Jeshua, 973,
⁴⁰ the descendants of Immer, 1,052,
⁴¹ the descendants of Pashhur, 1,247,
⁴² the descendants of Harim, 1,017.
⁴³ Descendants of Levi who returned were:
the descendants of Jeshua, Kadmiel, Binnui, and Hodeva, seventy-four,
⁴⁴ singers who were descendants of Asaph, 148.
⁴⁵ Also 138 temple gatekeepers from the descendants of Shallum, Ater, Talmon, Akkub, Hatita, and Shobai, returned.
⁴⁶ Temple workers who returned were descendants of these men:
Ziha, Hasupha, Tabbaoth,
⁴⁷ Keros, Sia, Padon,
⁴⁸ Lebanah, Hagabah, Shalmi,
⁴⁹ Hanan, Giddel, Gahar,
⁵⁰ Reaiah, Rezin, Nekoda,
⁵¹ Gazzam, Uzza, Paseah,
⁵² Besai, Meunim, Ephusesim who is also called Nephushesim,
⁵³ Bakbuk, Hakupha, Harhur,
⁵⁴ Bazluth who is also called Bazluth, Mehida, Harsha,
⁵⁵ Barkos, Sisera, Temah,
⁵⁶ Nezhiah, and Hatipha.
⁵⁷ Descendants of the servants of King Solomon who returned were:

Sotai, Sophereth, Perida,

⁵⁸ Jaalah, Darkon, Giddel,

⁵⁹ the descendants of Shephatiah, the descendants of Hattil, the descendants of Pochereth Hazzebaim, the descendants of Amon.

⁶⁰ Altogether, there were 392 temple workers and descendants of Solomon's servants who returned.

⁶¹⁻⁶² Another group of 642 people from the clans of Delaiah, Tobiah, and Nekoda returned from the towns of Telmelah, Telharsha, Kerub, Addon, also known as Addon, and Immer in Babylonia. But they could not prove that they were descendants of Israel.

⁶³ Priests from the descendants of Hobaiah, Hakkoz, and Barzillai also returned. Barzillai had married a woman who is a descendant of a man named Barzillai from the region of Gilead, and he had taken his wife's family name. ⁶⁴ They searched in the records that contained the names of people's ancestors, but they could not find the names of those families, so they were not allowed to have the rights and duties that priests had. They did not qualify to be priests because they could not trace their family history. ⁶⁵ The governor told them they should not be allowed to eat the priests' share of the food, taken from the sacrifices, and they should come who could use the marked stones to find what God said about their being priests once more.

⁶⁶ Altogether, there were 42,360 people who returned to Judea. ⁶⁷ There were also 7,337 of their servants, and two-hundred and forty-five singers, counting both men and women. ⁶⁸ The Israelites also brought back from Babylonia 736 horses, 245 mules, ⁶⁹ 435 camels, and 6,720 donkeys.

⁷⁰ Some of the leaders of the clans gave

gifts for the work of rebuilding the temple. The governor gave eight and one-half kilograms of gold, fifty bowls to be used in the temple, and five-hundred and thirty robes for the priests. ⁷¹ The other leaders gave to the treasury one-hundred and seventy kilograms of gold, and the leaders of the clans gave a total of one and one-fifth metric tons of silver. ⁷² The rest of the people gave one-hundred and seventy kilograms of gold, and one metric ton of silver, and sixty-seven robes for the priests.

⁷³ So the priests, the Levites who helped the priests, the temple guards, the musicians, the temple workers, and many ordinary people, who were all Israelites, started to live in the towns and cities of Judea where their ancestors had lived.

By the seventh month the people of Israel had gone to their cities and they were living in them.

Chapter 8

¹ All the people gathered together in the plaza that was close to the Water Gate. Men and women and children who were old enough to understand gathered together. They asked Ezra to bring out the scroll of the law that Moses had written down, and which Yahweh had given as the law for the people of Israel, for them to obey its rules and commands. ² Ezra, who served God through the sacrifices in the temple, brought out the law and presented it before all the people, to both men and women, and anyone else who could understand what he read. He did this on the first day of the seventh month of that year. ³ So he brought it out and read it to the people. He read it from early in the morning until the middle of the day. All the people listened, men and women, anyone who was able to understand what he

read. The people listened with great interest to what Ezra read from the book of the law.

⁴ Ezra stood on top of a high wooden platform that had been built by the people for this purpose. At his right side stood Matithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah. At his left side stood Pedahiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashum, Hashbadanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam.

⁵ Ezra opened the scroll as he stood on the platform above the people, and all could see him, and as he opened the book all the people stood up. ⁶ Then Ezra praised Yahweh, the great God, and all the people lifted up their hands and said, "Amen! Amen!" Then they all bowed down with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped Yahweh.

⁷ Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, and Pelaiah, were all Levites. They explained the meaning of the laws of Moses to the people who were standing there. ⁸ They also read from scrolls the law that God gave to Moses, and they translated it into the Aramaic language, making the meaning clear for those who could understand it.

⁹ Then Nehemiah the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were interpreting what was being read to the people, said to them, "Yahweh your God considers that this day is set apart from other days. So do not be sad or cry!" For all the people were crying when they heard the law of Moses read by Ezra.

¹⁰ Then Nehemiah said to them, "Now go home and enjoy some good food and have something sweet to drink. And send some of it to people who do not have anything to eat or drink. This is a day set apart to worship our Lord. Do not be filled with sadness! The joy that Yahweh gives will

make you strong."

¹¹ The Levites also caused the people to be quiet, saying "Hush, do not cry, for this is a day set apart for Yahweh. Do not be sad!"

¹² So the people went away, and they ate and drank, and they sent portions of food to those who did not have any. They were very happy, because they understood the meaning of the words that been read to them.

¹³ On the next day, the leaders of the families and the priests and the Levites came together with Ezra to study so they would gain insight from the words of the law. ¹⁴ They read in the law how Yahweh had ordered Moses to command the people of Israel to live in temporary shelters that entire month, to remember that their ancestors lived in shelters when they walked in the wilderness. ¹⁵ They also learned that they should proclaim in Jerusalem and in all the towns that the people should go to the hills and cut branches from olive trees and from wild olive trees and from myrtle trees, palm trees and shade trees. They should make shelters from these branches to live in during the festival, just as Moses wrote about this.

¹⁶ So the people went out of the city and cut branches and used them to build shelters. They built shelters on the flat roofs of their houses, in their courtyards, in the courtyards of the temple, and in the plazas close to the Water Gate and the Ephraim Gate. ¹⁷ All of the Israelite people who had returned from Babylon built shelters and lived in them for one week. The Israelite people had not celebrated that festival like that since the time that Joshua lived. And the people had very great joy.

¹⁸ Every day during that week Ezra read to the people from the book of the law of God. Then on the eighth day, they followed the decree and called for all the peo-

ple to come together, so they could bring the festival to an end.

Chapter 9

¹ On the twenty-fourth day of the same month, the people gathered together. They did not eat food for a while, and they wore clothes they made from bags used to carry wheat and other grains, and they put the dust of the earth on their heads. ² The descendants of Israel separated themselves away from all the foreigners. They stood there and confessed their own sins and the wicked things their ancestors had done. ³ They stood and for three hours they read from the law of Yahweh, and for another three hours they spoke out loud about their sins before Yahweh, and they bowed down and worshiped him. ⁴ There were Levites standing on the stairs. They were Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, another Bani, and Kenani. ⁵ Then the leaders of the Levites called out to the people. They were Jeshua, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah. They said, "Stand there and give praise to Yahweh your God, who has always lived and will live forever! Yahweh, we praise your glorious name! Your name is more important than everything else that is good and wonderful! ⁶ You are Yahweh, and no one else. You made the sky and the heavens above everything, and all the angels who do God's will. You made the earth and everything that is on it, and you made the seas and everything that is in them. You give life to everything. All the angel armies in heaven worship you.

⁷ Yahweh, you are God. You chose Abram and brought him out of Ur in the Chaldees. You gave him the name Abraham. ⁸ You saw deep inside of him, and

you knew he was a trustworthy person. Then you made a promise to him pledged with blood, promising that you would give to his descendants the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, and the Girgashites. And you, Yahweh, have done what you promised, because you always do what is right.

⁹ You saw how much our ancestors were suffering in Egypt. You heard them cry to you for help when they were beside the Sea of Reeds. ¹⁰ You performed many kinds of miracles that caused the king, his servants, and all his people to suffer. As a result, you, Yahweh, made a great name for yourself, and it is still known to be great even today! ¹¹ You divided the sea into two parts, and your people walked through the middle of it on dry land. You drowned the soldiers of the Egyptian army under the waters, and they sank as a stone sinks in the deep! ¹² During the day you led them with a cloud like a pillar for them to follow, and at night you gave them the light of a pillar of fire, to show them where to walk.

¹³ On Mount Sinai you came down from heaven and spoke to them. You gave them many regulations and decrees that are just and reliable, and you gave them commands and laws that are good. ¹⁴ You taught them about your holy Sabbath, and you gave them commands, and rules, and a list of laws to obey from your servant Moses. He would tell them to the people. ¹⁵ When they were hungry, you gave them bread from heaven. When they were thirsty, you gave them water from a rock. You said to them to go and take the land you promised with a vow to give them.

¹⁶ But our ancestors were very proud and stubborn. They refused even to listen to what you commanded them to

do. ¹⁷ They refused to listen to you. They forgot about all the miracles that you had performed for them. They became stubborn, and because they rebelled against you, they appointed a leader to take them back to Egypt, where they would be slaves again! But you are a God who forgives again and again. You are slow to be angry, and your love for them is never-ending and it is great. You did not abandon them. ¹⁸ So, you did not desert them, even though they melted precious metals and cast an idol that looked like a calf. They presented this calf to the people and said, 'This is your god, who brought you up out of Egypt,' while they cursed God and did what he had forbidden.

¹⁹ You always acted mercifully, and you would not abandon them when they were in the desert. The bright cloud which was like a huge pillar continued to lead them during the daytime, and the fiery cloud showed them where to walk at night. ²⁰ You sent your good Spirit to instruct them. You did not withhold the manna from them when they were hungry and you provided water when they were thirsty. ²¹ For forty years you took care of them in the desert. During all that time, they did not have need of anything. Their clothes did not wear out, and their feet did not swell up.

²² You gave them kingdoms and nations of people. They took possession of even the most distant places in this land. They occupied the land over which King Sihon ruled from Heshbon and the land over which King Og ruled in the Bashan. ²³ You caused our ancestors' children to become as numerous as the stars in the heavens, and you brought them into this land, the land you told their fathers to enter and take for themselves so they might live there. ²⁴ They went in and took the land from the people who lived there.

You enabled the Israelites to control the Canaanites and their kings so they could do to those people whatever they needed to do. ²⁵ Our ancestors' children captured cities that had walls around them for protection. They took possession of fertile land. They occupied houses that were full of good things and wells that were already dug. They took possession of vineyards, groves of olive trees, and fruit trees. They ate all that they wanted to, and they were satisfied, and they grew fat, and they were delighted because you were so good to them.

²⁶ But they disobeyed you and rebelled against you. They turned their backs on your law. They killed the prophets who warned them that they should return to you. They said and did very evil things against you. ²⁷ So you handed them over to their enemies to defeat them. But when their enemies caused them to suffer, they called out to you. You heard their cry from heaven, and because you are very merciful, you sent them people to help them, and those leaders rescued them from their enemies.

²⁸ But after there was a time of peace again, our ancestors again did evil things that you hated. So you allowed their enemies to conquer them and ruled over them. But whenever they cried out to you again to help them, you heard them from heaven, and because you act mercifully you rescued them.

²⁹ You warned them that they should again obey your laws, but they became proud and stubborn, and they disobeyed your decrees—and it is by obeying them that a person lives. They purposely ignored what you commanded them to do and became stubborn and refused to obey. ³⁰ You were patient with them for many years. You warned them by the messages your Spirit gave to the prophets. But

they did not listen to those messages. So again you allowed the armies of the nations nearby to defeat them. ³¹ But because you act mercifully, you did not destroy them completely or abandon them. You are a gracious and merciful God!

³² Our God, you are great! You are mighty! You are awesome! You faithfully love us as you promised in your covenant with us that you fulfill! But now we are having great difficulties in all these things. Do not let our hardships become unimportant to you! They have come on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our ancestors, and on all your people, from the days of the kings of Assyria until today. ³³ We know that you acted justly each time you punished us. You have treated us faithfully, but we have done evil things. ³⁴ Our kings and the leaders they appointed and our priests and our other ancestors did not obey your laws. They did not heed your commands or the warnings that you gave them. ³⁵ Even when they had their own kings, and they enjoyed the good things that you did for them in this large and fertile land that you gave to them, they did not serve you and they would not stop doing what was evil.

³⁶ So now we are slaves here in this land that you gave to our ancestors, the land that you gave to them in order that they could enjoy all the good things that grow here. But we became slaves here! ³⁷ Because we have sinned, we cannot eat the things that grow here. The kings who now rule over us are enjoying the things that grow here. They rule us and take our cattle. We must serve them and do the things that please them. We are in great misery.

³⁸ Because of all this, we, the people of Israel are making a solemn agreement on a scroll. We will write on it the names of our

leaders, the names of the Levites, and the names of the priests, and then we will seal it.”

Chapter 10

¹ This is a list of those who signed the agreement:

I, Nehemiah son of Hakaliah, the governor and also Zedekiah.

² The priests who signed it were:

Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah,

³ Pashhur, Amariah, Malchijah,

⁴ Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluk,

⁵ Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah,

⁶ Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch,

⁷ Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin,

⁸ Maaziah, Bilgai, and Shemaiah.

⁹ The descendants of Levi who signed it were:

Jeshua son of Azaniah, Binnui from the clan of Henadad, Kadmiel,

¹⁰ Shebaniah, Hodiah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan,

¹¹ Mika, Rehob, Hashabiah,

¹² Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah,

¹³ Hodiah, Bani, and Beninu.

¹⁴ The Israelite leaders who signed it were:

Parosh, Pahath-Moab, Elam, Zattu, and Bani.

¹⁵ Bunni, Azgad, Bebai,

¹⁶ Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin,

¹⁷ Ater, Hezekiah, Azzur,

¹⁸ Hodiah, Hashum, Bezai,

¹⁹ Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai,

²⁰ Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir,

²¹ Meshezabel, Zadok, and Jaddua.

- ²² Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah,
²³ Hoshea, Hananiah, Hasshub,
²⁴ Hallohesh, Pilha, Shobek,
²⁵ Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah,
²⁶ Ahiah, Hanan, Anan,
²⁷ Malluk, Harim, and Baanah.

²⁸ The rest of the people made a solemn agreement, including the priests, gatekeepers, singers, and temple workers. They also included all the men from other neighboring peoples who had left their people and were living in Israel. These men, along with their wives, their sons and daughters who were old enough to understand what they were doing, promised they would obey God's law. ²⁹ They all joined with their leaders in making this solemn agreement. They agreed to obey all the laws that God had given to Moses. They agreed to follow and to obey everything that Yahweh our God had commanded, and all his decrees and instructions. They promised to do the following.

³⁰ "We will not allow our daughters to marry people who live in this land who do not worship Yahweh, and we will not allow our sons to marry them.

³¹ If people from other countries who live in this land bring us grain or other things to sell to us on Sabbath days or any other sacred day, we will not buy anything from them. And in every seventh year, we will give rest to the fields and we will not plant any crops that one year, and we will cancel all debts to other Jews.

³² We each also promised ourselves that every year we will pay about 5 grams of silver for those who serve and take care of the temple. ³³ With that money they can buy these things: The bread on display before God, the flour that is offered to God by burning it on the altar each day, the animals that were killed and completely

burned on the altar, the sacred offerings for the Sabbath days and for celebrating the new moons and other festivals and offerings that are dedicated to God, the animals to be sacrificed to pay the penalty for the sins of the people of Israel, and anything else that is needed for the work of taking care of the temple.

³⁴ Each year the priests, the descendants of Levi who help the priests, and the rest of us will cast lots to determine for that year which families within the Levites will provide wood to burn on the altar to burn the sacrifices in the house of our God, as it is written in the law of God.

³⁵ We promise that each year each family will take to the temple an offering from the first food that we grow in our soil and harvest for food, and from the firstfruits that grow on our trees that year.

³⁶ We will take to the house of God our firstborn sons and we will also bring firstborn calves and lambs and baby goats to be dedicated to God. That is what is written in God's laws that we must do.

³⁷ We will also take to the priests at the temple the flour made from the first grain that we harvest each year, and our other offerings of wine, olive oil, and fruit. We will also take the tithes to the descendants of Levi who help the priests. ³⁸ A priest, one who is a descendant of Aaron, will be with the Levites and supervise them when they collect the tithes. Then the descendants of Levi must take a portion of it, ten percent of the things that people bring, and put it in the storerooms in the temple. ³⁹ The descendants of Levi and some of the people of Israel must take the offerings of grain, wine, and olive oil to the storerooms where the various utensils are kept that are used by those who serve in the temple. That is the place where the priests who are serving at that time, the gatekeepers, and where those who sing in

the temple choir, live.

We promise that we will not neglect taking care of the temple of our God.”

Chapter 11

¹ The Israelite leaders and their families settled in Jerusalem. The remainder of the people cast lots to select one family out of ten who would live in Jerusalem, the city set apart for God. The remaining nine lived in the other towns. ² Those people asked God to bless those who volunteered to live in Jerusalem.

³ These are the provincial officials who came to live in Jerusalem. But in the cities of Judah everyone lived on his own family property in their towns. Some from Israel, the priests, the Levites, the temple servants, and the descendants of Solomon’s servants came to live in Jerusalem. ⁴ But some of the people of Judah and the people of Benjamin stayed and lived in Jerusalem.

These are from the relatives of Judah: Athaiah son of Uziah, the son of Zechariah, the son of Amariah, the son of Shephatiah, the son of Mahalalel, a descendant of Perez.

⁵ And there was Maaseiah the son of Baruch, who was the son of Colhozeh, who was the son of Hazaiah, who was the son of Adaiah, who was the son of Joiarib, who was the son of Zechariah, who was a descendant of Judah’s son Shelah. ⁶ There were 468 men who were descendants of Perez who lived in the city of Jerusalem. These men were very brave and skilled in combat.

⁷ One of the men of the tribe of Benjamin who decided to live in Jerusalem was Sallu son of Meshullam, the son of Joed, the son of Pedaiah, the son of Kolaiah, the son of

Maaseiah, the son of Ithiel, the son of Jeshaiiah. ⁸ Two of Sallu’s relatives, Gabbai and Sallai, also settled in Jerusalem.

Altogether, 928 people from the tribe of Benjamin settled in Jerusalem. ⁹ Their leader was Zichri. The official who was second in command in Jerusalem was Has-senuah.

¹⁰ The priests who settled in Jerusalem were Jedaiah son of Joiarib,

¹¹ Seraiah the son of Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, who was previously the leader of all the priests. ¹² Altogether, 822 members of that clan worked in the temple.

Another priest who settled in Jerusalem was Adaiah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of Pashhur, the son of Malchijah. ¹³ Altogether, there were 242 members of that clan who were leaders of the clan who settled in Jerusalem.

Another priest who settled in Jerusalem was Amashsai the son of Azarel, the son of Ahzai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer. ¹⁴ There were 128 members of that clan who were valiant soldiers who settled in Jerusalem. Their leader was Zabdiel the son of Haggadolim.

¹⁵ Another descendant of Levi who settled in Jerusalem was Shemaiah the son of Hasshub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni.

¹⁶ Two others were Shabbethai and Jozabad, who were prominent men, leaders of the Levites, who supervised the work outside the temple. ¹⁷ Another one was Mattaniah, the son of Mika, the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph. Mattaniah directed the temple choir when they sang the prayers to thank God. His assistant was Bakbukiah. Another one was Abda, the son of Shammua, the son of Galal, the

son of Jeduthun. ¹⁸ Altogether, there were 284 Levites in the city set apart for God.

¹⁹ The gatekeepers who settled in Jerusalem were Akkub and Talmon. Altogether, there were 172 of them and their relatives who settled in Jerusalem.

²⁰ The other Israelite people including descendants of Levi and priests lived on their own property in other towns and cities in Judea.

²¹ But the temple workers lived in Ophel in Jerusalem. They were supervised by Ziha and Gishpa.

²² The man who supervised the descendants of Levi who lived in Jerusalem was Uzzi the son of Bani, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Mika. Uzzi belonged to the clan of Asaph, the clan that was in charge of the music in the temple. ²³ The king of Persia had commanded that the clans should decide what work each clan should do to lead the music in the temple each day.

²⁴ Pethahiah son of Meshezabel, who was from the clan of Zerah and a descendant of Judah, was the ambassador of the Israelites to the king of Persia.

²⁵ Some of the people who did not settle in Jerusalem lived in villages close to their farms. Some from the tribe of Judah lived in villages near Kiriath Arba, Dibon, and Jekabzeel. ²⁶ Some lived in Jeshua, in Moladah, in Bethpelet, ²⁷ in Hazarshual, and in Beersheba and the villages near it. ²⁸ Others lived in Ziklag, in Mekonah and the villages near it, ²⁹ in Enrimmon, in Zorah, in Jarmuth, ³⁰ in Zanoah, in Adullam, and in the villages near those cities. Some lived in Lachish and in the nearby villages, and some lived in Azekah and the villages near it. All of those people lived in Judea, in the area between Beersheba in the south and Hinnom Valley in the north, at the edge of Jerusalem.

³¹ The people of the tribe of Benjamin lived in Geba, Micmash, Aija, Bethel and its nearby villages, ³² in Anathoth, in Nob, in Ananiah, ³³ in Hazor, in Ramah, in Gittaim, ³⁴ in Hadid, in Zeboim, in Neballat, ³⁵ in Lod, in Ono, and in Craftsmen's Valley.

³⁶ Some of the Levites who had lived in Judea were sent to live with the people of Benjamin.

Chapter 12

¹ These are the names of the priests and descendants of Levi that returned from Babylonia with Zerubbabel and Jeshua the high priest. They included

Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra,

² Amariah, Malluk, Hattush,

³ Shecaniah, Rehum, Meremoth,

⁴ Iddo, Ginnethon, Abijah,

⁵ Mijamin, Moadiah, Bilgah,

⁶ Shemaiah, Joiarib, Jedaiah,

⁷ Sallu, Amok, Hilkiyah, and Jedaiah.

All those men were leaders of the priests and their associates during the time that Jeshua was the leader of all the priests.

⁸ Here is a list of the descendants of Levi who returned: Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah. Mattaniah and his brothers led the people in singing songs to thank God. ⁹ Bakbukiah and Unni, their associates, formed a choir that stood across from the other group when they sang.

¹⁰ Jeshua the high priest was the father of Joiakim, who was the father of Eliashib, who was the father of Joiada, ¹¹ who was the father of Jonathan, who was the father of Jaddua.

¹² When Joiakim was the leader of all the priests, these were the leaders of the families of priests:

Meraiah, of the family of Seraiah,
Hananiah, of the family of Jeremiah,

¹³ Meshullam, of the family of Ezra,
Jehohanan, of the family of Amariah,

¹⁴ Jonathan, of the family of Malluk,
Joseph, of the family of Shecaniah.

¹⁵ More leaders were Adna, of the family of Harim,

Helkai, of the family of Meremoth,

¹⁶ Zechariah, of the family of Iddo,
Meshullam, of the family of Ginnethon,

¹⁷ Zicri, of the family of Abijah.

There was also a leader of the family of Miniamin.

Piltai, of the family of Moadiah.

¹⁸ Shammua, of the family of Bilgah,
Jehonathan, of the family of Shemaiah,

¹⁹ Mattenai, of the family of Joiarib,
Uzzi, of the family of Jedaiah,

²⁰ Kallai, of the family of Sallu,
Eber, of the family of Amok,

²¹ Hashabiah, of the family of Hilkiah,
and Nethanel, of the family of Jedaiah.

²² During time when Eliashib led the Levites, this is a list of them all: Elisahib, Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua were the leaders of all the priests. They wrote the names of the families who were descendants of Levi. When Darius was king of Persia, the priests were responsible for recording the names of those who were the heads of families. ²³ They wrote the names of the leaders of the families who were descendants of Levi in the book of

the annals until the time that Eliashib's grandson Johanan was the leader of all the priests.

²⁴ These were the leaders of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, Jeshua son of Kadmiel, and their brothers who stood across from them to praise and give thanks to God. They did that just as King David, the man who served God, had instructed them.

²⁵ Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, and Akkub were the gatekeepers. They stood guard at the storerooms close to the gates of the temple. ²⁶ They did that work during the time of Joiakim son of Jeshua and the grandson of Jehozadak, during the time of Nehemiah the governor and Ezra the priest. Ezra also knew the Jewish laws very well.

²⁷ When we dedicated the wall around Jerusalem, we summoned the descendants of Levi from the places around Israel where they lived, so they could come to celebrate the dedication of the wall. They would sing songs to thank God and many of them made music by playing cymbals and harps and other stringed instruments. ²⁸ We summoned the descendants of Levi who constantly sang together. They came to Jerusalem from nearby areas where they had settled, and from places around Netophah, southeast of Jerusalem. ²⁹ They came also from three places northeast of Jerusalem, Beth Gilgal and the areas around Geba and Azmaveth. Near Jerusalem the singers built villages where they lived.

³⁰ The priests and descendants of Levi performed rituals to make them clean in God's eyes, and they did the same for all the people, and even for the gates of the city and finally, for the wall. ³¹ Then

I gathered together the leaders of Judah on top of the wall, and I appointed them to lead two large groups to march around

the city on top of the wall, thanking God. As they faced the city, one group walked to the right toward the Dung Gate. ³² Behind their leaders marched Hoshaiah and half of the leaders of Judah. ³³ Those who followed after them were Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, ³⁴ Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, Jeremiah, ³⁵ and some of the priests' sons who played their trumpets, including Zechariah the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micaiah, the son of Zaccur, a descendant of Asaph. ³⁶ Behind them marched other members of Zechariah's family, including Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani. They all were playing the same kinds of musical instruments that King David had played many years previously. Ezra, the man who knew the Jewish laws very well, marched in front of this group. ³⁷ When they reached the Fountain Gate, they went up the steps to the city of David, past the location of David's palace, and then to the wall at the Water Gate, on the east side of the city.

³⁸ The other choir who were singing and thanking Yahweh marched to the left on top of the wall. I followed them with half of the people. We marched past the Tower of the Ovens to the Broad Wall. ³⁹ From there we marched past Ephraim Gate, Jeshanah Gate, the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel, the Tower of the Hundred Soldiers, to the Sheep Gate. We finished marching near the gate into the temple. ⁴⁰ Both the groups reached the house of God as they were singing and thanking him. They stood in their places there. I and the leaders who were with me also stood in our places.

⁴¹ My group included the priests Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, with their trumpets. ⁴² There was another named

Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchijah, Elam, and Ezer. The singers sang with Jezrahiah who was their leader. ⁴³ After we went outside the temple, we offered many sacrifices. We men all rejoiced because God had caused us to be very happy. The women and the children also rejoiced. People far away could hear the noise that we made there in Jerusalem.

⁴⁴ On that day men were appointed to be in charge of the storerooms where they kept the money that people gave for the temple. They also were in charge of the tithes and the first part of the grain and fruit that was harvested each year. They also brought into the storerooms a part of the harvest from the fields for the priests and the descendants of Levi. This was done because the people of Judah were so happy to have servants serving in the house of Yahweh. ⁴⁵ The priests and Levites were serving Yahweh in their rituals to purify things, and the musicians in the temple and the gatekeepers also did their work as King David and his son Solomon had declared that they should do. ⁴⁶ Ever since the time of David and Asaph, there have been directors of the singers, and they sang songs to praise and thank God. ⁴⁷ During the years of Zerubabel and in the days of Nehemiah the governor, all Israel contributed the food that the singers and temple gatekeepers needed every day. They set aside what the Levites needed to live on, and the Levites set aside for the descendants of Aaron, the first leader of all the priests, what they needed.

Chapter 13

¹ On that day the priests read and the people listened, and the passage was read

with the laws God gave Moses that said no Amonite or Moabite was ever to be allowed to come into the place where God's people worship. ² The reason for that was that the people of Ammon and the people of Moab did not give any food or water to the Israelites while the Israelites were going through their areas after they left Egypt. Instead, the people of Ammon and Moab paid money to Balaam to influence him to curse the Israelites. But God turned that attempt to curse Israel into a blessing. ³ So when the people heard these laws being read to them, they sent away all the people whose ancestors had come from other countries.

⁴ Previously, Eliashib the priest had been appointed to be in charge of the storerooms in the temple. He was a relative of Tobiah. ⁵ He allowed Eliashib to use a large room. There they had stored the grain offerings and the incense. They put there the equipment that is used in the temple. They put in there the offerings the people gave for the Levites. They brought in tithes of grain and wine and olive oil that God had commanded for the Levites, for the musicians, and the gatekeepers. And they brought in the gifts to support the other priests.

⁶ During that time I was not in Jerusalem. It was the thirty-second year that Artaxerxes was the king of Babylonia, and I had gone back to report to the king what I had been doing. After I had been there a while, I requested the king to allow me to return to Jerusalem. ⁷ When I returned, I found out that Eliashib had done an evil thing. He let Tobiah take over a storeroom in the very house of God for his own use. ⁸ I became very angry. I went to that room and I threw out everything that belonged to Tobiah. ⁹ Then I commanded that they perform a ritual cleansing of that room to make it pure again. And I also ordered

that all the equipment used in the temple and all the grain offerings and incense should be put back in that room, where they belonged.

¹⁰ I also found out that the temple musicians and other Levites had left Jerusalem and returned to their fields, because the people of Israel had not been bringing into the storerooms the food they needed. ¹¹ So I rebuked the officials, saying to them, "Why have you not taken care of the services to be held in the temple? So I got them together and put them back at their stations.

¹² Then all the people of Judah again started to bring to the temple storerooms their tithes of grain, wine, and olive oil.

¹³ I appointed these men to be in charge of the storerooms. Shelemiah the priest, Zadok, an expert in the Jewish laws, and Pedaiah, a descendant of Levi. I appointed Hanan son of Zaccur and grandson of Mattaniah to assist them. I knew that I could trust those men to distribute the offerings fairly to their fellow workers.

¹⁴ My God, do not forget all these good deeds that I have done for your temple and for the work that is done there!

¹⁵ During that time, I saw some people in Judea who were working on the Sabbath day. Some were pressing grapes to make wine. Others were putting grain, bags of wine, baskets of grapes, figs, and many other things on their donkeys and taking them into Jerusalem. I warned them not to sell things to the people of Judea on Sabbath days. ¹⁶ I also saw some people from Tyre who were living there in Jerusalem who were bringing fish and other things into Jerusalem to sell to the people of Judea on the Sabbath day. ¹⁷ So I rebuked the Jewish leaders and told them, "This is a very evil thing that you are doing! You are making the Sabbath

days into something God never wanted it to be. ¹⁸ Your ancestors did things like this, so God punished them. He allowed this city to be destroyed because of their sin! And now by breaking the laws for the Sabbath day, you are going to cause God to be angry with us, and he will punish us even more!”

¹⁹ When it became dark at the gates of Jerusalem, I put some of my men there, so they would make sure that no one could bring any goods into the city to sell on that day. ²⁰ The merchants and sellers of all kinds of goods and merchandise camped outside Jerusalem a few times on Friday evening when the Sabbath begins, hoping to sell something the next day. ²¹ I warned them, “It is useless for you to stay here outside the walls on Friday night! If you do this again, I will take you and remove you myself!” So after that, they did not come on Sabbath days. ²² I also commanded the descendants of Levi to perform the ritual to purify themselves and to take up their stations to guard the City Gates, to make sure that the Sabbath was kept holy by not allowing merchants to enter it on that holy day.

My God, do not forget what I have done for you! And be kind to me, as kind as your love is for me.

²³ During that time, I also found out that many of the Jewish men had married women from Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. ²⁴ Half of their children spoke the language that people in Ashdod speak or some other language, and they did not know how to speak the language of Judah, only the language of the people where they lived. ²⁵ So I rebuked those men, and I asked God to curse them, and I struck some of them with my fists, and some of them I pulled out their hair! Then I forced them to make a solemn promise, knowing that God was listening, that they would

never again marry foreigners and never allow their children to marry foreigners. ²⁶ I said to them, “Solomon, the king of Israel, sinned as a result of marrying foreign women. He was greater than any of the kings of other nations. God loved him and set him as the king over all the people of Israel. But his foreign wives caused even him to sin. ²⁷ Do you think that we should do what you have done, you who married foreign wives, and do what we know is wrong, and commit a great sin against our God by marrying foreign women who worship idols?”

²⁸ One of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the leader of all the priests, married the daughter of Sanballat. So I ran Joiada’s son out of Jerusalem.

²⁹ My God, remember those who brought shame to the priesthood, and they broke the covenant of the priesthood and of the Levites by what they have done!

³⁰ I took away everything from them that was from other nations and religions, I also established regulations for the priests and descendants of Levi, so they would know what work each of them should do.

³¹ I made sure that there was wood to be burned on the altar at the set times and days. I also arranged for the people to bring into the storerooms the first portion of the harvest.

My God, do not forget that I have done all these things, and bless me for doing them.

ESTHER

Chapter 1

¹ King Ahasuerus ruled a very big empire which had 127 provinces. It extended from India in the east to Ethiopia in the west. ² He ruled the empire while he lived in the most strongly fortified part of the city of Susa. ³ During the third year after he had become king, he invited all his administrators and other officials to a feast. He invited the armies of Persia and Media to come to the feast. He also invited the governors and other leaders of the provinces. ⁴ The celebration lasted for 180 days. During that time the king showed to the guests all his wealth and other things that made his kingdom great.

⁵ At the end of the feast, the king invited people to another celebration. He invited to the feast all the men who worked in the palace, including both those who did important work and those who did less important work. This celebration lasted for seven days. It was in the courtyard that was part of the palace garden. ⁶ The garden courtyard was decorated with curtains of white cotton and violet, with cords of fine linen and purple, hanging from silver rings that were suspended from pillars of marble. There were couches of gold and silver arranged on a mosaic pavement that was made from porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl, and colored paving stones. ⁷ The guests drank wine from gold cups. Each cup had a different design on it. The king was generous with the wine, and they had much to drink. ⁸ There was a lot of wine, because the king wanted the guests to drink as much as they wanted, but the rule was, "No one is forced to drink."

⁹ Queen Vashti invited the women to a

feast in another place in the palace.

¹⁰ On the seventh day of those banquets, when King Ahasuerus was partially drunk from drinking wine, he spoke with Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Karkas (these were the seven servants who filled his personal needs and wishes). ¹¹ He told them to bring Queen Vashti to him, wearing her royal crown. He wanted his guests to see how beautiful she was. ¹² But Queen Vashti refused to go to the king. She refused to obey the command that the servants brought to her from the king.

This made the king very angry. ¹³ So the king talked with the men who were known to be wise, who understood the things that happened in their lives and the laws about these things. ¹⁴ Now the ones close to him were Karshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memukan, seven princes of Persia and Media. They held the highest positions in his kingdom, and the king paid attention to them when they spoke. ¹⁵ The king said to them, "Queen Vashti has refused to obey me when I sent my servants to tell her to come here. What do our laws say that we should do to someone who acts like that?"

¹⁶ While the other officials were present, Memukan told the king, "Your majesty, Queen Vashti has insulted you, and she has insulted all the officials and all the people in all the provinces of your Majesty. ¹⁷ All the women throughout the empire will hear what she has done, and they will say, 'The king commanded Queen Vashti to come to him, and she refused.' So they will not obey their husbands, and they will show them disrespect. ¹⁸ Before this day ends, the wives of all the officials in Persia and Media will hear what the queen did, and they will say to all of your Majesty's officials what the queen has said. They will

have contempt and anger for all men. ¹⁹ So if it pleases your Majesty, you should write a law, like all the laws of Persia and Media, to be a law that no one can change. This law should say that Queen Vashti will never be allowed to see you again, and you will choose another woman to be queen, a woman who deserves to be queen more than she does. ²⁰ When everyone in your empire hears what you have commanded, all the wives, those who are important and those who are not important, will honor their husbands.”

²¹ The king and the other officials liked what Memukan suggested, and the king put it into action. ²² Then he sent letters to all the provinces, stating that all men should have complete authority over their wives and their children. He wrote the letters in every language and wrote it in every unique alphabet written in every province.

Chapter 2

¹ After a while, when King Ahasuerus's anger had quieted down, he remembered Vashti. He also thought about the law he had made because of what she had done. ² So his personal servants said to him, “Your Majesty, you should send some men to search for beautiful young virgin girls for the king. ³ After they find some, you can appoint some officials in each province to bring them to the place where you keep your wives here in Susa. They are to be cared for by Hegai (the king's eunuch) who is who protects and cares for these women, he can arrange for their cosmetics. ⁴ Then the young girl who pleases you most can become queen instead of Vashti.” The king liked what they suggested, so he did it.

⁵ At that time there was a Jew living in the

city of Susa, whose name was Mordecai. He was the son of Jair who was the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, and he was a member of the tribe of Benjamin. ⁶ Many years before that, Nebuchadnezzar, who had been king of Babylonia, had taken Mordecai and brought him from Jerusalem to Babylon. This was at the same time that he took away King Jehoiachin from Judah, along with many others. ⁷ Mordecai was caring for his cousin, whose Hebrew name was Hadassah. She had a beautiful face and a lovely figure, and she was called Esther. After her father and mother died, Mordecai took care of Esther as though she were his own daughter. ⁸ After the king commanded that they search for some beautiful women, servants brought Esther and many other young women to the king's palace in Susa, and put them under the care of Hegai. ⁹ Hegai was pleased with Esther. He immediately arranged for her to have the cosmetics she wanted, and he arranged for special food to be given to her. He assigned servant girls from the king's palace and arranged for her to stay in the best rooms in the women's part of the palace.

¹⁰ Esther did not tell anyone that she was a Jew, or anything about her relatives, because Mordecai had told her not to tell anyone. ¹¹ Every day Mordecai walked near the courtyard of the place where those women stayed. He stood in the courtyard hoping to find out what was happening to Esther.

¹² Before these women were taken to the king, for twelve months they received beauty treatments, and for six months they were treated with olive oil mixed with myrrh. ¹³ When one of these women was summoned to go to the king, she was allowed to have whatever she wished to take with her from the house of the women, when she went to the king's

palace. ¹⁴ In the evening, she would go to the king, and the next morning she would return to the second house of the women, and to the protection of Shaashgaz, the king's official in charge of the concubines. She would not return to the king again, except when the king wanted her and called her by name.

¹⁵ Now when the time came for Esther (the daughter of Abihail, who was the uncle of Mordecai) to go in the king, she did not ask for anything from the house of the women to take with her, but only what Hegai, the king's official in charge of the women, suggested. Now Esther pleased everyone who saw her.

¹⁶ Esther was taken up to King Ahasuerus into royal the residence on the tenth month (which is the month of Tebeth), in the seventh year of his reign. ¹⁷ The king loved Esther more than any of the other women whom they brought to him. So he put a crown on her head and declared that Esther would be the queen instead of Vashti. ¹⁸ To celebrate her becoming the queen, he gave a great feast in her honor, that he prepared for all his officials and servants. He granted relief from paying taxes to all the provinces and gave expensive gifts to all with generosity that only a king can give.

¹⁹ Later all those young women were gathered together again. By that time Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, where the elders and leaders would hold court and settle disputes for others in the kingdom. ²⁰ But Esther still did not tell anyone about her family, or about her people, the Jews. She continued to do what Mordecai had told her to do; she continued to respect him and honor him by doing what he said. ²¹ One day when Mordecai was at the king's gate, two of the king's officials were there. Their names were Bigthana and Teresh. They were the guards who

protected the king, standing just outside the king's own rooms. They became angry with the king, and they were planning how they could do him great harm. ²² But Mordecai heard about what they were planning, he told Queen Esther. Then she told the king, and she told the king that the information came from Mordecai, calling him by name. ²³ The king investigated it and confirmed. So the king ordered those two men be hanged from a gallows. When that was done, an official wrote a report about it in the book called The History of the King.

Chapter 3

¹ After these things happened, King Ahasuerus promoted Haman the Agagite son of Hammedatha above all the other officials and he made it clear that Haman was over all others who served under him. ² All the other officials bowed down in front of Haman to honor him, and they gave him great honor, as the king commanded they should. But Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman or to give him that kind of honor.

³ The other officials saw that, and they asked Mordecai, "Why do you disobey the king's command?" ⁴ They spoke with him day after day and he would not do what they said, or answer them. So they reported to Haman to see if he would tolerate Mordecai's actions, for Mordecai had told them that he was a Jew.

⁵ When Haman learned that Mordecai refused to kneel down or prostrate himself to him, he became extremely angry. ⁶ He was too proud to want to punish only Mordecai. Because the king's servants had made it known that Mordecai was Jewish, Haman wanted all the Jews to be killed. So this matter became an opportu-

nity to kill all the Jews everywhere in Ahasuerus' kingdom.

⁷ In the first month (which is known as the month of Nisan), in the twelfth year of Ahasuerus' reign, they cast Pur (that is, they cast lots) in Haman's presence. They wanted to select a month and a day in which to set this plan in motion. They cast lots for each month and day until they decided on the twelfth month, the month of Adar.

⁸ Then Haman went to the king and said to him, "Your Majesty, there is a certain group of people who live in many areas of your empire whose laws are different from ours. They even refuse to obey your laws. You should certainly not let them stay, but instead get rid of them. ⁹ If it pleases you, command that they should all be killed. If you do that, I will give 330 metric tons of silver to be weighed out and given into the accounts of those who are in of your treasury."

¹⁰ The king liked what Haman said, so, and to confirm what he decided, he gave the ring that had his official seal from his signet ring, and gave it to Haman, the Agagite, the one who hated the Jews. ¹¹ The king told Haman, "I am giving the money back to you and your people. Do with it as you please."

¹² Then the king's scribes were called together on the thirteenth day of the first month. On that day, an order was written that had everything Haman commanded. The order was sent out to the king's provincial governors—those who were over all the provinces, to the governors of all the various people who were living in the kingdom, and to the officials of all the people. The order was written in every language and in the writing of those languages so they could be read and understood. It was written in the name of King Ahasuerus and was sealed

with the his own ring, which he had given to Haman to use. ¹³ Couriers in every province in the kingdom spread the decree. The order was to kill every Jew, to kill them all, and to destroy the Jewish people, from young to old, children and women. This was to be done on one day—on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month (which is the month of Adar). When the Jews were dead, the rest of the people would be allowed to take all their possessions.

¹⁴ A copy of the letter was made law, by order of the king, in every province. In every province all the people learned that they should get ready for that day. ¹⁵ Then, according to what the king commanded, men riding horses took these letter quickly to every province in the kingdom. And one of the letters was read aloud to the people who lived and worked within the palace in Susa. Then the king and Haman sat down to drink together, but the people in the city of Susa were very perplexed.

Chapter 4

¹ When Mordecai found out about those letters, he was so anguished that he tore his clothes and put on the clothes of mourning—rough sackcloth—and he sat in ashes, to show his distress. Then he went into the city, crying very loudly with bitterness and sorrow. ² He stood outside the king's gate, he was not allowed to enter the palace, because the law forbid anyone dressed in sackcloth to be admitted through the king's gate. ³ In every province of the empire, when the letter from the king was read to the Jewish people, they cried and mourned. They fasted, and wailed loudly, and were filled with sorrow. Many of them lay, dressed

in sackcloth and sat in ashes. ⁴ When Esther's servant women and the male servants came to her and told her about the king's decree and the coming danger, she was very distressed. So she sent to Mordecai some good clothes so he could take off his sackcloth, but he refused to accept them. ⁵ Then Esther summoned Hathak, one of the king's officials, whom he had appointed serve and protect her. She told him to go out and talk to Mordecai to find out what the trouble was about. ⁶ Hathak went to Mordecai in the city square in front of the gate to the king's palace. ⁷ Mordecai told him everything that had happened. He told him how much silver Haman had promised to deposit in the king's treasury in order to kill the Jews. ⁸ Mordecai also gave Hathak a copy of the decree that had been issued in Susa, so that he might show it to Esther. Mordecai wanted to command Esther to take action about this order from the king and to beg favor from the king. He wanted her to go to the king and try to help the Jewish people. ⁹ So Hathak went to Esther and told her what Mordecai said. ¹⁰ Then Esther ordered Hathak to return to Mordecai, and to tell him this: ¹¹ "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that no one can come before the king unless the king invites him to come. There is only one result of breaking this law: The person is put to death. The only exception would be that the king would hold out his golden scepter to someone who came before him, and that would be the sign that the king would permit that person to live. About my own contact with the king, I have not been called to come to the king for thirty days." ¹² So Hathak went back to Mordecai and told him what Esther had said. ¹³ Mordecai told Hathak to tell this to Esther: "Do not think that just because you live there in the palace, you will escape when all the other Jews are

killed. ¹⁴ If you remain silent at this time, someone else will rescue the Jews in some other way, but you and your father's family will die. Who knows, perhaps it was for just for a time like this that you were made queen." ¹⁵ Then Esther sent this message to Mordecai, ¹⁶ "Go and gather together all the Jews here in Susa, and tell them to fast for for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. My young girls and I will fast in the same way. Then I will go to the king, even though I know it is against the law. And if I die, I die." ¹⁷ Mordecai went and did what Esther told him to do.

Chapter 5

¹ After three days, Esther put on her royal clothing. Then she went and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, before the front of the king's house. At that time, the king was sitting on his royal throne in his house, facing the entrance to the house. ² When the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, the king was glad and welcomed her. He held out to her the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther approached the king and touched the tip of the scepter. ³ Then the king said to her, "What is it that you want Queen Esther? What is your request? I will give you up to half my kingdom, if that is what you request." ⁴ Esther replied, "Your Majesty, if it pleases you, will you and Haman come to a feast that I have prepared for you?" ⁵ The king said to his servants, "Go and tell Haman to come quickly and do what Esther has said!" So the king and Haman went to the feast that Esther had prepared. ⁶ The king said to Esther when the wine of the feast was being served, "What is your petition? It shall be granted you. What is your request? I will give you up to half of my kingdom, if that is what you request." ⁷ Esther answered,

"My petition and my request is this, ⁸ if you are pleased with me, if you are willing to do this for me: will you and Haman come to another feast I am preparing for you tomorrow. At that time, I will answer your question."

⁹ Haman was feeling very happy when he left the feast. But he saw Mordecai sitting at the gate of the palace, and once again, Mordecai did not stand up or shake with fear in front of him. So Haman was filled with anger toward Mordecai. ¹⁰ However, he did nothing to show that he was angry. He went to his house and gathered his friends. He also called for his wife, Zeresh. ¹¹ Haman told them all about the great riches he had accumulated. He talked about his many sons, and how he had achieved more than all the other officials and the servants of the king. ¹² Then Haman added, "Even Queen Esther invited just two of us, me and the king, to a banquet she prepared for us today. And she is inviting just the two of us to another banquet that she will give us tomorrow!" ¹³ Then Haman said, "But these things mean nothing to me as long as I can see Mordecai the Jew sitting there at the king's gate!" ¹⁴ Then Zeresh his wife said to Haman and all his friends, "Why do you not quickly set up a gallows? Make it twenty-three meters high. Then in the morning speak to the king for them to hang Mordecai on it. After that, you can go to the banquet with the king and be happy." This idea pleased Haman, and he had the gallows set up.

Chapter 6

¹ That night the king was unable to sleep, so he summoned a servant and told him to bring the book of the history of all that happened during the time he had

been king. So the servant brought the records and read aloud to the king. ² The servant read about Bigthana and Teresh, the two officials who had guarded the entrance to the king's rooms. He read the account of when Mordecai had found out that they planned to assassinate King Ahasuerus and that he had told the king about it. ³ The king asked, "What was done to honor Mordecai for what he did for the king?" The young men serving the king answered, "Nothing has been done for him." ⁴ The king said, "Is there anyone in the courtyard?" At that moment, Haman had entered the outer courtyard of the palace. He wanted to talk to the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows he had just set up. ⁵ His servants replied, "Haman is in the courtyard." The king said, "Bring him in." ⁶ When Haman came in, the king asked him, "What should I do for someone whom I want to honor?" Now Haman thought to himself, "Whom would the king like to honor more than me?" ⁷ So he replied to the king, "For the one you want to honor, ⁸ you should tell your servants to bring out some robes that you yourself have worn, and to bring out one of the horses you have ridden and that bears a royal crest on his head. ⁹ Give the robes and the horse to your very important officials so that they may put the royal clothes on that man, and let them lead that man who sits on the horse through the city streets. As he goes, other servants will shout, 'This is what happens when the king wants to honor someone!'" ¹⁰ The king replied to Haman, "Hurry, take the robes and horse, as you have said, and do this for Mordecai the Jew who sits at the king's gate! Do not forget anything you have said!" ¹¹ So Haman took the robes and the horse. He put the royal clothes on Mordecai, and Haman led him on the horse through the city streets proclaiming "This is what is

done for a man when the king wants to honor him!” ¹² Then, Mordecai returned to the king’s gate. But Haman hurried to his house. He was mourning and had covered his face. ¹³ Haman told Zeresh his wife and all his friends about everything that had happened to him. Then his men known for their wisdom, and Zeresh his wife, said to him, “If Mordecai is Jewish, and if you have been humiliated before him, you will not defeat him. You are sure to be defeated by him.” ¹⁴ While they were still talking, some of the king’s officials arrived to quickly take Haman to the feast that Esther had prepared.

Chapter 7

¹ So the king and Haman arrived at the second feast with Queen Esther. ² On the second day of the feast, while servants were serving the wine, the king said to Esther, “What is your petition, Queen Esther? I will give you whatever you ask for. What do you want? I would give you up to half of my kingdom.” ³ Esther replied, “If you are pleased with me, my king, and if you are willing to do what I ask, save my life! And save the lives of my people. ⁴ For I and my people have been condemned to destruction by a decree. I and my people, we have been handed over to be annihilated—to be killed, destroyed. If we had only been sold into slavery, I would have kept quiet, for that kind of trouble would not have been worth bothering you about.” ⁵ Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, “Who is the man who did this? Where is the one whose heart is full of this kind of evil?” ⁶ Esther replied, “The man who is our enemy is this evil man Haman!” Then Haman was terrified before the king and queen. ⁷ The king got up in a rage. He left his wine and went outside into the palace garden to decide

what to do. But Haman stayed in order to plead with Queen Esther, for her to intervene to save his life. He knew the king had decided to kill him. ⁸ Then the king returned from the palace garden and went back to where they were serving the wine. Just then Haman had fallen on the couch where Esther was. The king said, “Will he assault the queen in my own house, with me standing by?” As soon as he said this, the servants put a cloth over Haman’s face. ⁹ Then Harbona, one of the king’s officials who served him said, “Outside, near Haman’s house, there is a gallows. It is twenty-three meters high. Haman made it for Mordecai, the one who spoke to protect the king!” The king said, “Hang him on it.” ¹⁰ So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king became less angry.

Chapter 8

¹ Later on that same day, King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther all the possessions of Haman, who had been the Jews’ enemy. Mordecai served the king because Esther had by now told the king how she was related to him. ² When Mordecai came in, the king took off the ring that had his official seal on it, the ring that he had recovered from Haman, and he gave it to Mordecai. Esther appointed Mordecai to be in charge of Haman’s property.

³ Esther again came to talk to the king. She prostrated herself at his feet and pleaded with him with tears. She asked that the king stop the evil plan that Haman had developed to kill the Jews. ⁴ The king held out his gold scepter toward Esther, so Esther arose and stood before the king. ⁵ She said, “Your Majesty, if it pleases you, and if I have found grace in your eyes, make a new law to cancel

out what Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite decreed, that all the Jews in all the provinces in your empire should be killed. ⁶ How can I bear to see disaster come on my people? How can I endure seeing the destruction of all my relatives?" ⁷ King Ahasuerus replied to Queen Esther and Mordecai the Jew, "Because Haman tried to get rid of all the Jews, I have given to Esther everything that belonged to Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows. ⁸ So now I am also permitting you to write another letter with a new decree in it, so that you may save your people. You may put my name on the letters and use my ring to seal them. This is because no letter that has my name on it and that is sealed with my ring can ever be revoked." ⁹ Then the king's scribes were called at that time (in the third month, which is the month of Sivan, on the twenty-third day of the month). Mordecai dictated to them a new decree in order to protect the Jews. It was written to the provincial governors, the governors and officials of the provinces that are from India all the way to Ethiopia, in total, 127 provinces. The letter was written to every province in the way that every language was written. It was also written to the Jews in their writing and language. ¹⁰ Mordecai wrote the decree in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed it with the king's signet ring. He sent the documents by couriers riding on the fast horses that were used in the king's service, bred in the king's stables. ¹¹ The king gave to the Jews living in every city permission to gather together and to fight together to protect their lives. He allowed them to kill any armed men in any province, belonging to any people group, who might attack them or their families, or who might try to take their possessions. ¹² This was to be in effect in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which was the month of

Adar. ¹³ The king ordered them to make copies of this decree and to show them to all the people groups. With this decree, he allowed the Jews to get ready to take revenge on their enemies. ¹⁴ The king commanded the men who took these letters to all the provinces to ride quickly on the king's horses. And copies of the letter were also posted and read to the people who lived and worked in the palace in Susa. ¹⁵ Mordecai left the palace, wearing the blue and white robe and a large gold crown that the king gave him. He also put on a robe of fine purple cloth. When the people in Susa heard the new law, they all shouted and cheered. ¹⁶ The Jews in Susa were now happy, instead of being afraid. They rejoiced instead of fearing, and other people honored them. ¹⁷ When the new decree arrived in every city and province, the Jews there celebrated and prepared feasts and were very joyful. And many people throughout the empire became Jews, because they had become very afraid of the Jews.

Chapter 9

¹ It was in the twelfth month, the month of Adar, on the thirteenth day, that the Jews' enemies had hoped to destroy them completely. They would have been following the king's decree. However, it all turned out differently, for the Jews defeated their enemies. ² The Jews gathered together in their cities in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to attack those who wanted to harm them. No one could fight against the Jews, because all the people in the areas were afraid of them. ³ All the king's officials everywhere helped the Jews, because they had become afraid of Mordecai and the power that the king had given to him. ⁴ Mordecai was now the king's most important official in the

king's palace, and his fame was spreading throughout the provinces because he was becoming very powerful. ⁵ So the Jews attacked their enemies and killed them. They defeated all those who hated them, and they were completely victorious. ⁶ Just in Susa alone, the fortified city, they killed five hundred men. ⁷ Among those whom they killed were the ten sons of Haman. These were among the dead: Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, ⁸ Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, ⁹ Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vaizatha. ¹⁰ And the ten grandsons of Hammedatha, the sons of Haman—the enemy of the Jews. The Jews killed them, but they did not take their possessions. ¹¹ At the end of that day someone reported to the king the number of people whom the Jews killed in Susa, the fortified city. ¹² Then the king told Queen Esther, “The Jews have killed five hundred people right here in Susa, including Haman’s ten sons! What must they have done in the rest of my provinces? Now what else do you ask me to do for you? You tell me. What else do you want? And I will do it.” ¹³ Esther replied, “If it pleases you, allow the Jews here in Susa to do again tomorrow what you commanded them to do today. And also command that the bodies of Haman’s ten sons be hanged on the gallows.” ¹⁴ So the king commanded that the Jews be permitted to kill more of their enemies the next day. After he issued another order in Susa, the bodies of Haman’s ten sons were hanged. ¹⁵ The Jews in Susa gathered together and killed three hundred more people. But again, they did not take away any of their possessions. ¹⁶ That happened on the 14th day of the month of Adar. On the following day, the Jews in Susa rested and celebrated. In all the other provinces, the Jewish people gathered together to defend themselves, and they killed seventy-five thousand people who hated them, but again, they took none of their possessions. ¹⁷ On the thirteenth day of the month of Adar, and on the fourteenth day, they rested and made that a day of feasting and celebration. ¹⁸ But the Jews who were in Susa came together on the thirteenth and the fourteenth days to fight, but on the fifteenth day they rested and made it a day of feasting and celebration. ¹⁹ That is why the Jews of the villages, the Jews who live in the rural towns, observe the fourteenth day of the month of Adar as a day of gladness and celebration, when they send gifts of food to one another. ²⁰ Mordecai wrote down all the things that had happened. Then he sent letters to the Jews who lived throughout the empire of King Ahasuerus. ²¹ He called them to observe the fourteenth and the fifteenth day of Adar every year, ²² because those were the days when the Jews got victory over their enemies. It was in that month that their sorrow was turned to joy. Mordecai’s letter told them that they should celebrate on those days by feasting and giving gifts of food to each other and especially to the poor people. ²³ So the Jews agreed to do what Mordecai wrote. They agreed to celebrate on those days every year. ²⁴ They would remember how Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, became an enemy of all the Jews. They would remember how he had made an evil plan to kill the Jews, and that he had cast lots to find a day to crush and destroy them. ²⁵ They would remember that when the king learned about Haman’s plan, he arranged that the evil plan to kill the Jews would result instead in Haman’s own destruction, that Haman would be killed in place of the Jews, that he and that his sons would be hanged. ²⁶ Therefore they called these days Purim, after the name of Pur (the lots that they cast). So that is what was written in this letter, what they had seen, and what had happened to them. ²⁷ The

Jews throughout the empire agreed to celebrate in that manner on those two days every year. They said that they would tell their descendants and anyone who became Jewish to be certain to celebrate this festival every year. They should celebrate just as Mordecai told them to do in the letter that he wrote.²⁸ They said that they would remember and celebrate on those two days every year, observed in every generation, by every family, in every city, and in every province. They solemnly declared that they and their descendants would never stop remembering and celebrating those days called Purim.²⁹

Then Mordecai and Queen Esther, who was the daughter of Abihail, wrote a second letter about the Purim festival. Esther used the authority that she had because of being the queen to confirm that what Mordecai had written in the first letter was true.³⁰ These letters were sent to all the Jews in the 127 provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus—words of peace and truth—³¹ to establish these days of Purim at their appointed times, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had established, just as the Jews had established for themselves and their descendants, matters that included their times of fasting and lamenting.³² The command of Esther confirmed these regulations that explained how they should celebrate the Purim festival. The instructions about the feast and the account of these events were written down in the book of history.

there is a history of the great things done by Mordecai, and of the honor that the king gave him.³ Mordecai the Jew, was second in rank to King Ahasuerus, and all the Jews also considered him to be a very great man. He was respected by his Jewish brothers and sisters, for he sought the welfare of his people, and he spoke to gain security for all of them.

Chapter 10

¹ King Ahasuerus made the people living on land and along the sea pay a tax.² And all the great things that Ahasuerus did because of his power have been written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia. Also written

JOB

Chapter 1

¹ In the land named Uz, there was a man named Job. He obeyed God and always avoided doing evil things. ² He had seven sons and three daughters. ³ He owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, one thousand oxen, and five hundred donkeys. He also had many servants. This was the man who was the richest in all the area east of the Jordan River.

⁴ Job's sons often held feasts in their houses. Whenever each one made a feast, he would invite all his brothers and sisters to come and eat together. ⁵ After each celebration, Job would summon them. He would ask Yahweh to purify them from any action they might have committed during their feasting that would make them unacceptable to him. He would get up early in the morning, kill animals, and burn them on the altar as sacrifices, one for each of his children. For Job always said, "Perhaps my children have sinned and said something evil about God in their hearts."

⁶ One day, the angels came and gathered together in front of Yahweh, and Satan came, too. ⁷ Yahweh asked Satan, "Where have you just come from?"

Satan replied, "I have come from the earth, where I been traveling back and forth to see what is happening."

⁸ Yahweh said to Satan, "Have you noticed Job, who worships me? No one else on earth honors me and lives in such a right way as he does. He always refuses to do anything evil." ⁹ Satan replied to Yahweh, "What you say is true, but Job honors you only because of what you have done for him. ¹⁰ You have always protected him,

his family, and everything he owns. You make him succeed in whatever work he tries to do, and he has very much livestock all over his land. ¹¹ But if you attacked what he owns and took it away, he would curse you in front of everyone."

¹² Yahweh replied to Satan, "So this is what you want me to do! All right, I will permit you to take away everything that he has. But do not harm him in his own body."

Satan agreed and then left Yahweh in order to plan how he would attack Job.

¹³ One day after that, Job's sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the home of their oldest brother. ¹⁴ While they were doing that, a messenger arrived at Job's home and said to him, "While your oxen were plowing the fields and the donkeys were grazing nearby, ¹⁵ a group of men from the people group of Sheba came and attacked us. They killed all your servants who were working in the fields and took away all the oxen and donkeys! I am the only one who has escaped to come and tell you what happened."

¹⁶ While he was still talking to Job, another messenger arrived. He said to Job, "Lightning from the sky struck and killed all the sheep and all the men who were taking care of them! I am the only one who has escaped to come and tell you what happened."

¹⁷ While he was still talking to Job, a third messenger arrived. He said to Job, "Three groups of robbers from the region of Chaldea came and attacked us. They stole all the camels and killed all the men who were taking care of them. I am the only one who has escaped to come and tell you what happened."

¹⁸ While he was still talking to Job, a fourth messenger arrived. He said to Job: "Your sons and daughters were feasting in the

home of their oldest brother. ¹⁹ Suddenly a very strong wind came from the desert and struck the house. The house collapsed on your sons and daughters and killed them all! I am the only one who has escaped to come and tell you what happened.”

²⁰ Then Job stood up and tore his robe and shaved his head because he was very sad. Then he laid down on the ground to worship God. ²¹ He said,

”When I was born, I was wearing no clothes.

When I die, I will not take any clothes with me.

It is Yahweh who gave me everything that I possessed,

and it is Yahweh who has taken it all away.

But we must always praise Yahweh!”

²² So in spite of all the things that happened to Job, he did speak not like a foolish man—he did not sin by saying that what God had done was wrong.

Chapter 2

¹ On another day, the angels came again and gathered together in front of Yahweh; Satan also came again. ² Yahweh asked Satan, “Where have you come from this time?” Satan replied, “I have come from the earth, where I have been traveling back and forth to see what is happening.”

³ Yahweh asked Satan, “You have you noticed my servant Job, who worships me, have you not?

He continues to honor me; he is very exceptional, for he lives in a way that is more right than anyone else on the earth. He does this even though you persuaded me to attack him for no reason.”

⁴ Satan replied to Yahweh, “He praises you only because you have helped him. People will give up everything they have to save their own lives. ⁵ But if you harm his body, he will surely curse you in front of everyone!”

⁶ Yahweh replied to Satan, “All right, you may do to him whatever you like, but do not cause him to die.”

⁷ So Satan left, and he caused Job to suffer with very painful boils, from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet. ⁸ Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped the boils on his skin, and he sat in ashes to mourn and wail.

⁹ His wife said to him, “Are you still trying to be loyal to God? You should curse God, and then go ahead and die.”

¹⁰ But Job replied, “You talk like people talk who do not know God. We should not only accept the good things that God does for us. We should also accept the bad things.” So in spite of all these things that happened to Job, he did not offend God by saying anything against him.

¹¹ Among Job’s friends were Eliphaz from the town of Teman, Bildad from the land of Shuah, and Zophar from the land of Naamah. When they heard about all the terrible things that had happened to Job, they left their homes and went together to Job to mourn with him and to comfort him. ¹² But when they saw Job from a distance, they almost did not recognize him. They wailed loudly, they tore their robes, and they threw dust into the air that settled on their heads. They did this to show how sorry they were for him. ¹³ Then they sat on the ground with Job for seven days. None of them said anything to him, because they saw that he was suffering greatly, and they did not think that anything that they could say would lessen his pain.

Chapter 3

¹ Finally, Job spoke, and he cursed the day that he was born. ² He said,

³ "I wish that the day when I was born could be eradicated,

the night when I was born.

⁴ I wish that the day when I was born could have been dark.

I wish that God who is in heaven would forget about that day,

and that the sun would not have shone on it.

⁵ I wish that thick darkness would have filled that day,

and that death would have come over it like a shadow

and blotted out all light,

and caused the people then to be terrified.

⁶ I wish that the night when I was born would be erased from the calendar,

that it would never again appear as one night in any month,

and that it would not be included in any calendar.

⁷ I wish that no child would again be born on that date,

and that no one would again be happy then.

⁸ The magicians who are able to awaken the great sea monster—I want them to curse the day I was born.

⁹ I wish that the stars that shone early in the morning on that day after I was born may not shine again.

If only those stars had wished in vain for light to shine,

and that they had not shone on that day.

¹⁰ That was an evil day because my mother's womb was not closed;

instead, I was born, and I have now experienced all these terrible things.

¹¹ I wish that I had died when I was born;

I wish I had perished when I came out from my mother's womb.

¹² I wish that my mother had never welcomed me.

I wish that she had not nursed me at her breasts.

¹³ If I had died at the time when I was born,

I would now be asleep, resting peacefully.

¹⁴ I would be resting with kings who built beautiful tombs which are now in ruins,

and I would be resting with their officials who have also died.

¹⁵ I would be resting with princes who were wealthy,

whose palaces were filled with gold and silver.

¹⁶ I wish that I had been buried like a child who had died in its mother's womb and never lived to see the light.

¹⁷ After wicked people die, they do not cause any more troubles;

those who are very tired now will rest.

¹⁸ Those who were in prison rest peacefully after they die;

they no longer have slave drivers who curse them.

¹⁹ Rich people and poor people are alike after they die,

and those who were slaves no longer have to obey their masters.

²⁰ Why does God allow those who are suffering greatly like me to continue to remain alive?

Why does he allow them to live, those who are very miserable?

²¹ They long to die, but they do not die.

They desire to die more than people desire to find hidden treasure.

²² When they finally die and are buried, they are very happy.

²³ I do not understand why God keeps alive anyone whom he keeps from being happy,

anyone whom he forces to live in misery.

²⁴ I cry very much; as a result, I cannot eat;

I groan as easily as a river flows with water.

²⁵ Things that I always worried might happen to me—these things have happened to me;

things that I always dreaded have come upon me.

²⁶ Now I have no peace in my heart;

I have no quietness;

I cannot rest;

instead, I have only troubles.”

Chapter 4

¹ Then Eliphaz replied to Job. He said,

² “Will you please allow me to say something to you?

I am not able to remain silent any longer.

³ In the past, you have instructed many people,

and you have encouraged those for whom it was difficult to trust in God.

⁴ In the past, when you spoke to others who were suffering, you helped them;

they were able to rejoice again because of God.

⁵ But now, when you yourself suffer from disasters, you become discouraged.

The disasters hit you, and you are stunned.

⁶ You say that you honor God; so you should be trusting in him, for him not to let you suffer.

If you really had not sinned, you would have been confident that God would not let these disasters happen to you!

⁷ Think about this: No innocent people ever die when they are still young!

God never kills innocent people!

⁸ I have seen this happen: if farmers plant bad seeds, they do not harvest good crops;

anyone who starts trouble for others later brings trouble on himself.

⁹ These people die when God commands them to,

because he is very angry with them.

¹⁰ Even though wicked people may be very powerful like young lions,

God destroys them.

¹¹ They will die like older lions that starve to death when there are no animals left to eat.

Their children will scatter from each other like young lions that separate from each other to find food.

¹² I heard a message that someone came and whispered to me.

¹³ He spoke to me at night when I was having a bad dream that disturbed me.

¹⁴ It caused me to be afraid and tremble;
it caused all my bones to shake.

¹⁵ A ghost glided past my face
and caused the hair on the back of my neck to stand straight up.

¹⁶ It stopped, but I could not see what it really looked like.

But I knew that there was some being in front of me,

and it said in a quiet voice,

¹⁷ 'No human being can be more righteous than God.

No man can be better than God, who made him.

¹⁸ God cannot be sure that his own angels will always do what is right;

he declares that some of them have done wrong.

¹⁹ So he certainly cannot trust human beings whom he has made from dust and clay,

human beings, whom disaster crushes as easily as you can crush a moth!

²⁰ People are sometimes in good health in the morning, but by the evening they are dead.

They are gone forever and no one even pays attention.

²¹ Their families and possessions are like tents that collapse suddenly when you pull up their stakes;

they perish suddenly without anyone ever knowing why."

Chapter 5

¹ "Job, no one will stop you from calling out for someone to help you,

but I am certain that no angel will come to you!

² Foolish people die because they are resentful;

people whom others easily deceive—these people die because they envy others.

³ I have seen foolish people who seemed to be successful,

but suddenly they experienced disaster because I cursed their home.

⁴ Their sons are never safe;
they always lose to their opponents in court,

because there is no one to defend them.

⁵ Hungry people steal the crops that foolish people harvest;

they even steal the crops that grow among thorns,

and greedy people take away the wealth of those foolish people.

⁶ But it is not the farmland that makes bad things happen;

troubles do not grow up from the ground like plants.

⁷ People make trouble for themselves from the time that they are born;

this is as certain as the fact that sparks shoot up from a fire.

⁸ If I were suffering like you are, I would ask God for help

and tell him what I am complaining about.

⁹ He does great things, things that we cannot understand;

we cannot even count the marvelous things that he does.

¹⁰ He sends rain on the ground;
he makes it rain on our fields.

¹¹ He defends those who are humble,
and puts those who mourn into places
where they are safe.

¹² He causes crafty people to not be able
to do what they plan to do,
with the result that they achieve nothing.

¹³ The people who think they are wise—
he makes their own traps catch them;
the result is that they do not succeed.

¹⁴ It is as though even in the daytime
they were living in darkness
and were groping around trying to
find the road at noontime like people do
at night.

¹⁵ But God saves helpless people
from the wicked who say evil things about
them;

he saves poor people from powerful
people harming them.

¹⁶ So poor people confidently expect that
good things will happen to them;

but God stops wicked people from
saying evil things.

¹⁷ But those whom God corrects are fortunate;

so do not despise it when God, who
can do anything, disciplines you.

¹⁸ He wounds people, but then he puts
bandages on those wounds;

he hurts people, but he also heals
them.

¹⁹ He will rescue you many times from
your troubles,

with the result that nothing evil will
happen to you.

²⁰ When there is little food to eat, he will
not allow you to die,

and when there is a war, your enemies
will not kill you.

²¹ God will protect you when people say
false, evil things about you;

you will not be afraid when many
things around you perish.

²² You will be able to laugh when that
happens and when there is nothing to eat,
and you will not be afraid of wild
animals.

²³ You will not worry about having big
rocks in your fields that will make plow-
ing difficult,

and you will not worry that wild ani-
mals might attack you.

²⁴ You will know that things will go well
for you in your home;

when you look at your livestock, you
will see that they are all there.

²⁵ You will be certain that you will have
many descendants,

who will be as numerous as blades of
grass.

²⁶ You will become very old before you
die,

like sheaves of grain continue to grow
until it is time to harvest and thresh them.

²⁷ My friends and I have thought care-
fully about these things, and we know that
they are true,

so pay attention to what I have said!"

Chapter 6

¹ Then Job spoke again to Eliphaz:

² "If all my troubles and misery could be put on a scale and weighed,

³ they would be heavier than all the sand along the ocean shores.

That is why I spoke very rashly about the day that I was born.

⁴ It is as though Almighty God has shot me with arrows.

It is as though those arrows have poison on their tips, and that poison has gone into my spirit.

The things that God has done to me are like soldiers lined up to attack me.

⁵ Just like a wild donkey does not complain by braying when it has plenty of grass to eat,

and an ox does not complain by bellowing when it has food to eat,

I would not complain if you were really helping me.

⁶ People complain when they must eat food that has no salt

or food that is slimy and tasteless;

that is what your words are like, Eliphaz.

⁷ I do not want to eat food like that,

because it disgusts me,

and I do not like what you have said to me.

⁸ I wish that God would do for me what I have asked of him:

⁹ I wish that he would crush me and let me die.

I wish that he would reach out his hand and take away my life.

¹⁰ If he would do that, I would be comforted because I would know that in spite of the great pain that I have suffered,

I have always obeyed what God, the Holy One, has commanded.

¹¹ But now I do not have enough strength to endure all these things.

And since I have nothing to hope for in the future,

it is difficult for me to be patient now.

¹² I am not strong like rocks are,

and my body is not made of bronze.

¹³ So I am not able to help myself;

I am not wise enough for that.

¹⁴ When a man has many troubles, his friends should be kind to him,

even if he stops honoring Almighty God.

¹⁵ But you, my friends, are not dependable.

You are like streams in the wilderness: They spill over their banks in the spring

¹⁶ when the melting ice and snow make them overflow,

¹⁷ but when the dry season comes, there is no water flowing in those streams,

and the channels dry up.

¹⁸ The caravans of merchants turn off their road to search for water,

but there is no water in those streambeds,

so the merchants die in the desert.

¹⁹ The men in those caravans searched for some water

because they were sure that they would find some.

²⁰ But they did not find any,

so they were very disappointed.

²¹ Similarly, you friends have not helped me at all!

You have seen that terrible things have happened to me,

and you are afraid that God might do similar things to you.

²² After I lost all my wealth, I did not ask any of you for money.

I did not plead with any of you to spend some of your money to help me.

²³ I never asked any of you to rescue me from my enemies,

and I did not ask you to save me from those who oppressed me.

²⁴ Answer me now, and then I will be quiet;

tell me what wrong things I have done!

²⁵ When people speak what is true, it can be painful for the listener to hear honest words.

But what have all your arguments proven about me?

²⁶ I am a man who has nothing to hope for,

but you try to correct me, and you think what I say is as useless as the wind!

²⁷ You do not sympathize with me at all for the things that I am suffering.

You will do anything to get something for yourselves! You would even play a game to see who gets an orphan as a prize!

²⁸ Please look at me! I will not lie while I am talking straight to you.

²⁹ Stop saying that I have sinned, and stop criticizing me unjustly!

You should realize that I have not done things that are wrong.

³⁰ Do you think that I am lying?

No, I am not lying, because I know what is right to say, and what is wrong."

Chapter 7

¹ "People need to work hard on this earth like soldiers do;

all during the time that we are alive, we need to work as hard as any hired worker.

² We are like slaves who keep wanting to be in the cool of evening,

and we are like workers who keep waiting to be paid.

³ God has given to me many months in which I think that it is useless to remain alive;

he has assigned to me many nights during which I feel miserable.

⁴ When I lie down at night I say, 'How long will it be until I get up?'

But the nights are long, and I toss on my bed until the dawn.

⁵ My body is covered with maggots and scabs;

pus oozes out of my open sores.

⁶ My days pass as quickly as a weaver's shuttle;

when one day ends, I never expect that things will be better the next day.

⁷ God, do not forget that my life is as short as a single breath;

I think that I will never again experience being happy.

⁸ God, you see me now,

but some day you will not see me anymore.

You will search for me, but I will be gone because I will be dead.

⁹ Like a cloud passes and disappears,

people die and descend to the place where dead people are, and they do not return;

¹⁰ they never return to their houses,
and the people who are still alive do
not remember them anymore.

¹¹ So I will not be silent;
while I am suffering, I will speak;
I will complain to God about what has
happened to me
because I am very angry.

¹² God, why do you watch closely what
I am doing?

Do you think that I am a dangerous
sea monster?

¹³ When I lie down at night, I say to my-
self, 'I will go to sleep and stop suffering;
my pain will be less while I am sleep-
ing.'

¹⁴ But then you give me dreams that
cause me to be afraid;

you give me visions that terrify me;

¹⁵ these things make me wish that some-
one would strangle me to death,

rather than for me to continue to be
alive when I am only a bunch of bones.

¹⁶ I detest continuing to be alive; I do
not want to live for many more years.

Allow me to be alone, because I will
be alive for only a very short time.

¹⁷ We human beings are not very impor-
tant;

so why do you pay so much attention
to us ?

¹⁸ You look at us every morning to see
what we are doing,

and you examine us every moment
to see if we are doing what is right.

¹⁹ When will you stop looking at me
and leave me alone for a little time, long
enough to swallow my own spit?

²⁰ Why do you watch me constantly?

If I sin, that certainly does not harm
you!

Why have you set me up like a target to
shoot at?

Do you consider me to be a heavy load
that you are forced to carry?

²¹ If I have sinned, are you not able to
forgive me

for the wrong things that I have done?

Soon I will lie in my grave;

you will search for me, but you will not
find me because I will be dead and gone."

Chapter 8

¹ Then Bildad, from the Shuah area, spoke
to Job. He said,

² "Job, how much longer will you talk
like this?

What you say is as useless as a big
wind.

³ Almighty God certainly never does
anything unfairly.

He always does what is right.

⁴ Your children have sinned against him;

this is evident because he has pun-
ished them for those evil things.

⁵ But now, if only you will earnestly re-
quest Almighty God to help you!

⁶ If only you were pure and honest!

Then he will surely do something good
for you

and reward you by giving your family
back to you and making you prosper.

⁷ Even though you were not very pros-
perous before,

during the last stage of your life you would become very wealthy.

⁸ I request you to think about what happened long ago

and to consider what our ancestors found out.

⁹ It seems as though we were born only yesterday

and we know very little;

our time here on the earth disappears quickly, like a shadow that is here and then gone.

¹⁰ So why not allow your ancestors to teach you anything?

Let them tell you what they learned!

¹¹ Papyrus certainly does not grow away from marshland;

reeds certainly cannot grow where there is no water.

¹² If the water dries up while they are blossoming,

they wither more quickly than any other plant.

¹³ Those who do not pay attention to what God says are like those reeds;

godless people stop confidently expecting that good things will happen to them.

¹⁴ The things they confidently expect to happen do not happen;

things they trust will help them are as weak as a spider's web.

¹⁵ If they think they will be safe because they are wealthy, they will not be safe;

the things they think will keep them safe—those things will disappear.

¹⁶ Godless people are like plants that are watered before the sun rises:

their shoots spread all over the gardens.

¹⁷ The roots of those plants twist around the piles of stones

and cling tightly to the rocks.

¹⁸ But if a gardener pulls those plants out,

it is as though the place where they were planted says, 'They were never here!'

That is what happens to wicked people who do not pay attention to what God says.

¹⁹ Truly, this is all the joy that evil people have:

other people just come and take their places.

²⁰ So, I tell you, Job, God will not reject you if you honor him,

but he does not help evil people.

²¹ He will always enable you to laugh and to shout joyfully.

²² But those who hate you will be very ashamed,

and the homes of wicked people will disappear."

Chapter 9

¹ Then Job replied,

² "Yes, yes, I know.

But how can anyone say to God, 'I am innocent'?

³ If someone wanted to argue with God about that,

God could ask him a thousand questions

and that person would not be able to answer any of them!

⁴ God is very wise and powerful;

no one who has tried to argue against him has ever been able to win.

⁵ He even moves mountains in earthquakes without telling anyone in advance.

When he is angry, he turns the mountains upside down.

⁶ He sends earthquakes that shake the ground;

he causes the columns that support the earth to shake.

⁷ Some days he speaks to the sun, and it does not rise,

and some nights he prevents the stars from shining.

⁸ He alone stretched [stretches] out the sky;

he alone puts his feet on the waves and stops their violence.

⁹ He set in their places the groups of stars—the Bear, Orion, the Pleiades, and the groups of stars in the southern sky.

¹⁰ He does great things that we cannot understand;

he does more marvelous things than we are able to count.

¹¹ He passes by where I am, but I cannot see him;

he moves further on, but I do not see him go.

¹² If he wants to snatch someone away, no one could stop him;

no one dares ask him, ‘Why are you doing that?’

¹³ God will not very easily stop being angry;

he defeated the servants of Rahab, the great sea monster.

¹⁴ If God took me to court,

what could I say to answer him?

¹⁵ Even though I would be innocent, I would not be able to answer him.

All I could do would be to request God, my judge, to act mercifully toward me.

¹⁶ If I summoned him to come to the courtroom and he said that he would come,

I would not believe that he would pay attention to what I would say.

¹⁷ He sends storms to batter me, and he bruises me many times without any reason.

¹⁸ It is as though he will not let me get my breath

because he causes me to suffer all the time.

¹⁹ If I tried to wrestle with him, there would be no way to defeat him,

because he is stronger than I am.

If I called him to appear in court, there is no one who could force him to go there.

²⁰ Even though I was innocent, anything I said would cause him to punish me;

even though I had not done anything wrong, he would still prove that I was guilty.

²¹ I have not done anything wrong, but that is not important anymore because I do not care what happens to me.

I despise living.

²² Nothing is important to me

because God will get rid of all of us, both those who are innocent and those who are wicked.

²³ When people experience disaster and it causes them to suddenly die,

God laughs at it, even if they are innocent.

²⁴ God has allowed wicked people to control what happens in the world.

It is as though he had caused judges to be blind, no longer able to judge fairly.

If it is not God who has done that,
who, then, has done it?

²⁵ My days pass very quickly, like a fast runner who passes one by;

it is as though the days run away, and nothing good ever happens to me.

²⁶ My life goes by very rapidly, like a swiftly sailing boat made from reeds

or like an eagle that swoops down to seize an animal.

²⁷ If I smile and say to God, 'I will forget what I am complaining about;

I will stop looking sad and try to be cheerful,'

²⁸ then I become afraid because of all that I am suffering

because I know that God does not consider that I am innocent.

²⁹ He will condemn me anyway,
so why should I keep trying in vain to defend myself?

³⁰ If I washed myself with snow
or cleansed my hands with lye
to get rid of my guilt,

³¹ he would still throw me into a filthy pit;

as a result it would be as though even my clothes would detest me.

³² God is not a human, as I am,
so there is no way that I could answer him to prove that I am innocent

if we went together to have a trial in a courtroom.

³³ There is no one to mediate,

no one who has authority over both of us.

³⁴ I wish someone else could stop God from making me suffer,

and that he would not continue to terrify me.

³⁵ If he did that, I would declare that I am innocent without being afraid of him

because I know within myself that I really have not done what is wrong like God thinks that I have.

Chapter 10

¹ I detest living any longer.

I will not stop saying why I am complaining.

Since I am very unhappy, I will speak.

² I will say to God, 'Do not just say that you must punish me;

in addition, tell me what wrong you saw that I have done.

³ Does it please you to oppress me,
to abandon me, whom you created,
and, at the same time, to help wicked people to do the things that they plan to do?

⁴ Do you understand things the way that we humans do?

⁵ Do you live for only a few years, like [as] we do?

⁶ So why do you continue to search for my faults

and to hunt for my sins?

⁷ You know that I am not guilty,
and that no one can rescue me from your power.

⁸ With your hands you created me and shaped my body,

but now you are deciding that you should not have done that, and you are destroying me instead.

⁹ Do not forget that you made me from a piece of clay;

are you going to cause me to become soil again?

¹⁰ You certainly formed me when I was conceived,

and you put me together inside my mother's womb.

¹¹ You fastened my bones together with sinews,

and then you covered them with flesh inside my skin.

¹² You have caused me to be alive; you have faithfully loved me,

and you have carefully preserved me.

¹³ But you kept secret what you were planning to do to me;

I am certain that you were planning to do these things to me.

¹⁴ You were watching to see if I would sin,

so that, if I did sin, you would refuse to forgive me.

¹⁵ If I am a wicked man, I hope that terrible things will happen to me.

But even if I am righteous, I still must bow my head and feel ashamed

because I am very disgraced and feel miserable.

¹⁶ And if I am proud, you hunt me like a lion hunts for some animal to kill,

and you act powerfully to injure me.

¹⁷ You constantly find more witnesses to testify that I have done what is wrong,

and you continually become more angry with me.

It is as though you are [were] always bringing new troops to attack me.

¹⁸ God, why did you allow me to be born?

I wish had died when I was born, and that no one had ever seen me.

¹⁹ I think it would have been better if I had been carried directly from my mother's womb to the grave

than for me to live.

²⁰ I think that there are only a few days for me to remain alive;

so allow me to be alone, in order that I may have a little peace

²¹ before I go to the place from which I will never return,

[a place] where it is always gloomy and very dark,

²² a place of darkness and dark shadows where everything is confused

[and] where even the small light there is like darkness."

Chapter 11

¹ Then Zophar, the friend from the region of Naamah, said this to Job:

² "Should no one answer all that you have said?

Just because you talk a lot, that fact should not persuade us to declare that you are innocent.

³ Job, should your babbling really cause us to be silent?

When you make fun of what we think, certainly there should be someone to rebuke you and cause you to be ashamed!

⁴ You say, 'What I say is true;

God knows that I am innocent.'

⁵ But I wish that God would talk

and say something to answer you!

⁶ God knows everything about everything,

so I wish that he would tell you the secrets that he knows because he is wise.

It would be good if you realized that God is punishing you less than you deserve!

⁷ Tell me, will you ever be able to find out the things about God that are very difficult to understand?

Will you be able to find out everything that there is to know about Almighty God?

⁸ What there is to know about God is greater than the distance from earth to heaven;

so there is no way that you can understand it all.

It is greater than the distance from here to the place of the dead;

so it is impossible for you to know it all.

⁹ What there is to know about God is wider than the earth

and wider than the ocean.

¹⁰ If God comes to you and puts you in prison and then brings you to a trial,

who can stop him?

¹¹ He knows which people are worthless;

and when he sees people doing wicked things, he certainly does not ignore them.

¹² Stupid people like you will start to become wise

when wild donkeys start giving birth to people.

¹³ Job, repent and make your heart humble;

reach out your hands toward God and plead with him.

¹⁴ If you have done evil things, stop doing them;

and do not allow any people in your house to do wicked deeds.

¹⁵ If you do that, surely you will be able to carry your head high, because you will not be ashamed;

you will be strong and not afraid of anything.

¹⁶ You will forget all your troubles;

they will be like the water that has all flowed away and dried up.

¹⁷ Your troubles will be ended, like the darkness ends at the dawn;

it will be as though the sun were shining brightly on you, like it shines at noon.

¹⁸ You will feel safe, because you will be confident that good things will happen to you;

God will protect you and allow you to rest safely each night.

¹⁹ You will lie down to sleep, and no one will make you afraid.

And many people will come and request you to be kind to them.

²⁰ But wicked people will not be able to understand why bad things are happening to them;

they will not have any way to escape from their troubles.

The only thing that they will want to do is to die. ”

Chapter 12

¹ Then Job said to his three friends,

² ”There is no doubt that you are the people to whom everyone should listen,

and that when you die, there will be no more wise people alive.

³ But I have as much good sense as you do;

I am no less wise than you are.

Certainly everyone knows all that you have said.

⁴ My friends all laugh at me now.

Previously I habitually requested God to help me, and he always answered me.

I am righteous, and I honor God, but now everyone laughs at me.

⁵ It is easy for people like you, who have no troubles, to laugh at people like me;

you make us who are already suffering to have even more troubles.

⁶ Meanwhile, bandits live peacefully,

and no one threatens those who cause God to become angry;

the god they worship is their own strength.

⁷ But ask the wild animals what they know about God;

if they could speak they would teach you.

If you could ask the birds,

they would tell you.

⁸ If you could ask the creatures that crawl on the ground, or the fish in the sea,

they would tell you about God.

⁹ All of them certainly know that it is Yahweh who has done this.

¹⁰ He directs the lives of all living creatures;

he gives breath to all us humans to enable us to live.

¹¹ When we hear what people like you say,

we think carefully about what they say to determine what is good and what is bad,

like we taste food to know what is good and what is bad.

¹² Old people are usually very wise;

because they have lived a long time, they understand much.

¹³ And God is wise and very powerful;

he has good sense and understands everything.

¹⁴ If he tears something down, no one can rebuild it;

if he puts someone in prison, no one can open the door to let that person to escape.

¹⁵ When he prevents rain from falling, everything dries up.

When he causes a lot of rain to fall, the result is that there are floods.

¹⁶ He is the one who is truly strong and wise;

he rules over those who deceive others and those whom they deceive.

¹⁷ He sometimes causes the king's officials to lose their wisdom and grieve because of it'

and he causes judges to become foolish.

¹⁸ He takes from kings the ornaments that they wear

and puts loincloths around their waists, causing them to become slaves.

¹⁹ He also makes priests grieve,

and he takes power away from those who rule others.

²⁰ He sometimes causes those whom others trust to be unable to speak,

and he causes old men to no longer have good sense.

²¹ He causes people to despise those who rule,

and he causes those who are powerful to become weak.

²² He shows to us things that were secret,

even things that were in the world of the dead.

²³ He causes some nations to become very great,

and later he destroys them;

he causes the territory of some nations to become much larger,

and later he brings others to defeat them and take them prisoner.

²⁴ He causes some rulers to become foolish,

and then he causes them to wander around, lost, as if they were in the wilderness with no way out.

²⁵ It is as if they were feeling around in the darkness, without any light;

as if they were drunk, not knowing what they should do.”

Chapter 13

¹ ”I have seen everything that you have seen,

and I have heard and understood all that you have said.

² What you know, I also know;

I do not know less than you.

³ But I would like to speak with Almighty God, not with you;

I would like to argue with him and show him that I am innocent.

⁴ As for you, you tell lies and do not allow people to know unpleasant truth,

like someone who covers up the bad surface of a wall with whitewash.

You are all like doctors who sell people useless medicine.

⁵ I wish that you would be silent;

that would be wiser than anything you have said to me.

⁶ Listen to what I will say to you now;

listen while I am saying what is true about myself.

⁷ You are telling lies to help God;

you are saying what is false in order to help him!

⁸ You would really like to be kind to him by defending what he does, would you not?

It is as if you were trying to prove in a court that he is innocent!

⁹ But if he, sitting as the judge, looked closely at you, he would find that what you are doing for him is bad!

You have deceived other people, but do not think that you can lie about him in court and say that you are defending him!

¹⁰ If you say clever things to persuade God to take your side,

he will surely rebuke you.

¹¹ He will certainly bring the full force of his power against you;

you will become very afraid of him.

¹² What you have said—the things that you think are so wise—are as useless as ashes;

what you say to defend how you think is no better than clay that quickly crumbles.

¹³ So be quiet and allow me to speak;

after that, it will not matter what happens to me.

¹⁴ I am ready to risk my life;

I am even willing to risk that God will execute me for what I say.

¹⁵ If he kills me, then I will not have anyone else whom I can confidently expect to help me,

but I am going to defend my behavior in his presence anyway.

¹⁶ No wicked person would dare to stand in the presence of God,

but because I say that I have not done things that are wrong,

perhaps, if I can prove that to God, he will declare me innocent.”

¹⁷ “God, listen very carefully to what I say; pay attention to me.

¹⁸ I am ready to argue that I am innocent,

and I know that you also will declare that I am not guilty.

¹⁹ I certainly do not think that you or anyone else will say that what I say is false;

if you did so, then I would speak no more, and I would die.

²⁰ I am requesting you to do two things for me;

if you do them, I will not try to hide from you.

²¹ The first thing that I request is that you stop punishing me,

and the second thing that I request is that you stop terrifying me.

²² Speak first, and then I will reply;

or allow me to speak first, and then you reply.

²³ What have I done that is wrong? What sins have I committed?

Show me how I have disobeyed you.

²⁴ Why do you refuse to be friendly to me?

Why do you act toward me as though I were your enemy?

²⁵ I am as insignificant as a leaf that the wind blows.

Why are you trying to make me afraid ?

Why are you making me suffer?

After all, I am as useless as a bit of dry chaff!

²⁶ It seems that you are writing things to accuse me of having sinned,

and that you are writing down even the bad things I did when I was young.

²⁷ It is as though you have put my feet in stocks

and that you were watching me wherever I walk;

it is as though you were following my footprints to see where I have gone.

²⁸ Because of this, my body is falling apart like rotten wood,

like a piece of cloth that the larvae of moths are eating.

Chapter 14

¹ We humans are very frail. We are born, and

we live only a short time; we experience much trouble.

² We disappear quickly, like flowers that grow from the ground quickly and then wither and die.

We are like shadows that disappear when the sun stops shining.

³ Yahweh, why do you keep watching me to see if I am doing something that is wrong?

Do you want to take me to court to judge me?

⁴ No one can bring something acceptable to God out of something that is not acceptable to him.

⁵ You have decided how long our lives will be.

You have decided how many months we will live,

and we cannot live longer than the time that you have decided.

⁶ So please stop examining us, and allow us to be alone

so that we might enjoy our life of hard labor, if a hired worker can possibly do so.

⁷ If we cut a tree down,

sometimes we hope that it will sprout again and grow new branches.

⁸ Its roots in the ground may be very old,

and its stump may decay,

⁹ but if some water falls on it,

it may bud and send up shoots like a young plant.

¹⁰ But when we people lose all our strength and die,

we stop breathing, and then we are gone forever.

¹¹ Just as water evaporates from a lake, or as a riverbed dries up,

¹² people lie down and die and do not get up again.

Until the heavens do not exist any longer;

people who die do not wake up, and no one can wake them up.

¹³ Yahweh, I wish that you would put me safely in the place of the dead and forget about me, so that I do not suffer any more

until you are no longer angry with me.

I wish that you would decide how much time I would spend there,

and then remember that I am there.

¹⁴ When we humans die, we will certainly not live again.

If I knew that we would live again, I would wait patiently

for you to release me from my sufferings.

¹⁵ You would call me, and I would answer.

You would be eager to see me, one of the creatures that you had made.

¹⁶ You would carefully see where I went,

and you would not be interested in seeing whether I sinned or not.

¹⁷ The record of my sins would be sealed in a small bag,

and you would cover them.

¹⁸ But, just as mountains crumble and rocks fall down from a cliff,

¹⁹ and just as water slowly wears away the stones, and just as floods wash away soil,

you eventually destroy us; you do not allow us to continue to hope that we will keep on living.

²⁰ You always defeat us, and then we die.

You cause our faces to look ugly after we die,

and you send us away.

²¹ When we die, we do not know if our sons will grow up and do things that will cause other people to honor them.

Or if they become disgraced, we do not know that either.

²² We will feel our own pain; we will not feel anything else;

we will be sorry for ourselves, not for anyone else.”

Chapter 15

¹ Then Eliphaz replied to Job:

² “If you were truly wise, you would not have replied to us by claiming that you know a lot;

what you are saying is just a lot of hot air.

³ You should not be saying things that do not benefit anyone;

you should not say things that do no one any good.

⁴ You are teaching others not to respect God,

and you are keeping them from honoring him.

⁵ You are wicked, and that is why you say what you do;

you talk like deceptive people talk.

⁶ Everything that you say shows that God should punish you;

it is not necessary for me to prove that.

⁷ Tell me, why do you think you know so much? You do not think that you were the first person who was ever born, do you?

You do not think that you were born before God created the mountains, do you?

⁸ Were you listening when God made all his plans?

Do you think that you are the only person who is wise?

⁹ What do you know that we others do not know?

You do not understand anything that is not also clear to us.

¹⁰ My friends and I are also wise;

we acquired wisdom from old gray-haired people,

from people who were born before your father was.

¹¹ God wants to comfort you

and to speak gently to you;

that should be enough for you, but it is not enough, is it?

¹² Why do you allow yourself to be excited by your emotions?

Why do your eyes flash with anger?

¹³ You are angry with God,

and so you say harsh things against him.

¹⁴ How can any person, including you, be sinless?

How can anyone on the earth be completely righteous?

¹⁵ God does not even trust his angels;

he does not consider the heavens to be completely pure.

¹⁶ So he certainly does not trust disgusting people,

those who commit evil deeds as often as they drink water.

¹⁷ Job, listen to what I tell you.

I will declare to you what I know,

¹⁸ things that wise men have told me,
truths that their ancestors did not
keep hidden.

¹⁹ (God gave this land to those ancestors
who were truly wise;

no one from another country came
and caused them to think wrongly about
God.)

²⁰ Wicked people suffer with great pain
all the time that they are alive;

that is what happens to those who
oppress others.

²¹ They constantly hear sounds that ter-
rify them;

while they are prospering, robbers
attack them.

²² Wicked people do not really think that
they will escape from darkness;

they are sure that someone is waiting
to kill them with a sword.

²³ They wander around, searching for
food, saying 'Where can I find some?'

They know that they will soon expe-
rience disasters.

²⁴ Because they are afraid of those things
happening to them, they worry

that these things will attack them as
a king's army waits to attack its enemies
and causes them to suffer.

²⁵ These things happen to them because
they shook their fists against Almighty
God

and thought that they were strong
enough to defeat him.

²⁶ They stubbornly rush to attack God
thinking that a strong shield will pro-
tect them.

²⁷ But they are so fat that they are un-
able to fight.

²⁸ They have lived in cities that have
been abandoned,

cities which God declared would be-
come a heap of ruins.

²⁹ But they will not remain rich very
long;

Others will take everything that they
own,

and even their shadows will disappear
from the earth.

³⁰ They will not escape from the dark-
ness of death;

they will be like trees whose branches
burn up.

When God gives the command, they
will die.

³¹ If they are very foolish, with the re-
sult that they trust in things that are really
worthless,

then things that are worthless will be
all that they get.

³² While they are still young, they will
disappear;

they will be like branches that wither
and never become green again.

³³ They will be like vines whose grapes
fall off before they are ripe,

like olive trees whose blossoms fall
off before they produce any fruit.

³⁴ Groups of wicked people will not have
any descendants,

and fires will completely burn up
the homes of those who took money from
bribes.

³⁵ They plan to cause trouble and to do
evil things,

and in their hearts they are always
preparing to deceive people."

Chapter 16

¹ Job replied to Eliphaz and the others,

² "I have heard things like that before;
all of you, instead of helping me, are
only causing me to feel more miserable.

³ Will your speeches, which are only
wind, never end?

Eliphaz, what bothers you that makes
you continue replying like this to me?

⁴ If it were you three and not I who were
suffering,

I could, in your place, say the things
that you are saying.

I could make great speeches to criticize
you,

and I could shake my head at you to
ridicule you.

⁵ Then you would see whether my words
encouraged you or not;

you would see whether they made
you feel your pain less.

⁶ But now, if I talk, my pain does not
decrease,

and if I am silent, my pain still cer-
tainly does not go away.

⁷ God, you have now taken away all my
strength;

you have destroyed all my family.

⁸ You have shriveled me up,
and people think that shows me to be
a sinner.

They see that I am only skin and bones,
and they think that proves that I am
guilty.

⁹ Because God is very angry with me
and hates me,

it is as though he were a wild animal
that tore me apart with his teeth

because he was my enemy.

¹⁰ People gape at me with their mouths
open to sneer at me;

they have struck me on the face to
ridicule me,

and they crowd around me to threaten
me.

¹¹ It is as though God has handed me
over to people who refuse to honor him

and has put me into the power of the
wicked.

¹² Previously, I was living peacefully,
but he crushed me;

it is as though he grabbed my neck and
smashed me to pieces;

it is as though he set me up like a
target.

¹³ It is as though I were a target, and that
people were surrounding me and shoot-
ing arrows at me.

God's arrows pierce my kidneys

and cause the bile from my liver to
spill onto the ground;

God does not pity me at all.

¹⁴ It is as though I were a wall that he is
breaking through time after time;

he rushes at me like a soldier who is
attacking his enemy.

¹⁵ Because I am mourning, I wear pieces
of rough cloth that I have sewed together,

and I sit here in the dirt, very de-
pressed.

¹⁶ My face is red because I have cried
very much,

and there are dark circles around my
eyes.

¹⁷ All this has happened to me even though I have not acted violently toward anyone,

and even though I always pray sincerely to God.

¹⁸ When I die, I want the ground to act as though I had been murdered; I want it to cry out against those who killed me,

and I do not want anyone to stop me while I am demanding that God act justly toward me.

¹⁹ But even now, I know that there is someone in heaven who will testify for me,

and he will say that what I have done is right.

²⁰ My three friends scorn me,

but my eyes are full of tears while I cry out to God.

²¹ I pray that the one who knows what I have done would come to plead with God for me

as a person pleads for his friend.

²² I say this because within a few years I will die;

I will walk along the road to a place from which I will never return."

Chapter 17

¹ "My time to live is almost ended; I have no strength left;

those who have dug my grave are waiting for me.

² Those who are around me are making fun of me;

I must always see them mocking me."

³ "God, it is as though I were in prison;

please pay the money in order that I may be released,

because there is certainly no one else who will help me.

⁴ You have prevented my friends from understanding what is true about me,

but you will not allow them to triumph over me, saying that I have done wrong things.

⁵ Our ancestors said, 'It often happens that when someone betrays his friends in order to get some of their property,

it is that person's children who will be punished for it;'

so I desire that will be true of these friends of mine who are lying about me.

⁶ But now people use that saying of our ancestors when they talk about me;

they spit to insult me.

⁷ My eyes have become dim because I am very sad,

and my arms and legs are as thin as shadows.

⁸ People who are truly righteous will be shocked when they see what has happened to me;

they will be angry at those who refuse to honor God.

⁹ Those who are truly righteous will continue to do what is right,

and those who live righteously will continue to become stronger.

¹⁰ But all you friends of mine,

I do not find even one among you who is wise.

¹¹ My time to live is almost ended; I have not been able to do the things that I planned to do.

As for the things I have most desired, there is no hope of them happening.

¹² My friends do not know when it is night and when it is day;

when it is night, they claim that it is daylight;

when it is becoming dark, they claim that it is getting light.

¹³ I know that my home will be the place where dead people are,

where I will sleep in the darkness.

¹⁴ I can say to the grave, 'Where I am buried, that place will be like a father to me.'

I can say to the maggots, 'You will be like a mother or younger sisters to me because that is where I will always be.'

¹⁵ There is certainly no more hope left for me.

No one expects that I will have any more happiness.

¹⁶ After I descend to the place where the dead are, I will not be able to expect anything good there.

I and the things I hope for will go down together into the soil."

Chapter 18

¹ Then Bildad replied again:

² "Please stop talking!

If you would stop talking and listen, we could tell you something.

³ Why do you think that we are as stupid as cattle and as unrighteous?

⁴ By being very angry, you are only hurting yourself.

Do you think that everyone on the earth must leave to prove that you are right,

or do you think that God must move the rocks in the mountains to please you?

⁵ What will happen is that the lives of wicked people like you end

as quickly as we can put out a light or extinguish the flame of a fire.

⁶ When the lamps above them in their tents are extinguished,

there will be no light in those tents.

⁷ While they are alive, they walk confidently,

but later it will be as though they stumbled and fell,

because they themselves do not pay attention to the advice that they give to others.

⁸ It will be as though they had walked into their own net

or had fallen into a pit that they themselves dug.

⁹ It will be as though a trap had grabbed their heels and held them fast,

¹⁰ as though the end of a rope that was hidden on the ground

had sprung up and seized them when they walked on it.

¹¹ Everywhere they go, there will be things that cause them to be terrified;

it will be as though those things were pursuing them and biting at their heels.

¹² They will become hungry, with the result that they will be strong no longer.

They will continually experience disasters.

¹³ Diseases will spread all over their skin;

diseases will cause their bodies to decay.

¹⁴ When they die, they will be snatched away from their tents

and brought to the one who rules over the dead.

¹⁵ Then other people will live in their tents,

but only after they sprinkle sulfur on those tents to get rid of the disease!

¹⁶ Because they will die and leave no descendants,

they will be like trees whose roots have dried up and whose branches have all withered.

¹⁷ No one on the earth will remember them anymore;

no one on any street will even remember their names.

¹⁸ They will have to leave the earth, where there is light,

and rush into the place where it is dark.

¹⁹ They will have no children or grandchildren,

no descendants where they will have previously lived.

²⁰ People from the east to the west who hear about what happened to them, everyone,

will be shocked and horrified.

²¹ This is what happens to unrighteous people like you,

people who do not know God."

Chapter 19

¹ Then Job replied:

² "How long will you three torment me and discourage me by calling me wicked?

³ You have insulted me many times;

are you not ashamed for saying these things to me?

⁴ Even if it were true that I had done wrong,

I have not injured you!

⁵ If you truly think that you are better than I am,

and if you argue that I must be guilty because I am suffering,

⁶ you should realize that it is God who has caused me to suffer.

It is as though he has a net and that he has caught me in it.

⁷ I cry out, 'People are murdering me!', but no one answers me.

I call out loudly, but there is no one, not even God, who acts fairly toward me.

⁸ It is as though God has blocked my road,

and I cannot go anywhere;

it is as though he has forced me to try to find the road in the darkness.

⁹ He has taken away my good reputation;

it is as though he has removed a crown from my head.

¹⁰ He batters me from every side, and I will soon die.

I no longer expect him to do anything good for me.

¹¹ He attacks me because he is very angry at me;

he considers me to be his enemy.

¹² It is as though he were sending his army to attack me;

they surround my tent

and get ready to attack me.

¹³ God has caused my brothers to abandon me,

and for all those who know me to act like strangers to me.

¹⁴ All my relatives and good friends have left me.

¹⁵ The people who were guests in my house have forgotten me,

and my female servants consider that I am a foreigner whom they do not know.

¹⁶ When I summon my servants, they do not answer;

When I plead with them to come to help me, they do not come.

¹⁷ My breath smells very bad to my wife so she stays away from me,

and my brothers detest me.

¹⁸ Even young children despise me;

when I stand up to talk to them, they laugh at me.

¹⁹ My dearest friends detest me,

and those whom I love very much have turned against me.

²⁰ My body is only skin and bones;

I am barely alive.

²¹ I plead with you, my three friends, pity me

because God has struck me very hard.

²² Why do you cause me to suffer, also? Do you think you are God?

Why do you never get enough of accusing me of doing wrong?

²³ I wish that someone would take these words of mine

and write them permanently in a book in order that people can read them.

²⁴ Or else, I wish that someone would carve my words on a rock with a chisel

in order that they would last forever.

²⁵ But I know that the one who vindicates me in court is alive,

and that some day he will stand here on the earth and make the final decision about whether I deserve to be punished.

²⁶ And even after diseases have destroyed my body,

still, in my body I will see God.

²⁷ I will see him myself;

I will see him with my own eyes!

My emotions overwhelm me as I think about that!

²⁸ If you three men say, 'This is how we will cause him to suffer!'

and you say, 'He is the one who has caused his own troubles,'

²⁹ you should fear that God will punish you;

he punishes those like you with whom he is angry;

and when that happens, you will know that there is someone who judges people."

Chapter 20

¹ Then Zophar replied again:

² "I am very troubled about what you have said,

so I want to reply very quickly.

³ By saying these things you have insulted me,

but something within my understanding suggests to me how I may reply to you.

⁴ Do you not know that from long ago, ever since God first put people on the earth,

⁵ that wicked people like you do not continue to rejoice for a long time,

and that people who refuse to honor God are happy only for a moment?

⁶ Although their reputations reach up to the sky,

and their fame goes up as high as the clouds,

⁷ they will disappear forever, like their own excrement,

and those who knew them will ask, 'Where did they go?'

⁸ They will disappear as a dream does, and they will exist no more.

They will vanish like dreams that people have during the night.

⁹ Those people who now see those wicked people will never see them again;

even the people who lived with them will not see them anymore.

¹⁰ Their children will be forced to return the valuable things that they stole from poor people.

¹¹ The bodies of the wicked were once young and strong,

but they will die and be buried in the ground.

¹² Although doing wicked things was like having sweet food in their mouths

that they wanted to continue tasting,

¹³ and although they did not want to stop doing those things,

¹⁴ those evil things will someday become like poison that they swallow,

or like the poison from snakes.

¹⁵ Wicked people pile up wealth for themselves, but they do not keep it forever,

just like people do not keep down the food that they vomit.

God takes their wealth from them.

¹⁶ Doing evil deeds is like swallowing snake poison;

doing evil will kill the wicked as the bite of a poisonous snake will kill people.

¹⁷ The wicked will not remain alive to see the abundant blessings from God, which are like a stream that flows.

¹⁸ They will be forced to give back the things that they stole from the poor;

they will not be able to continue to enjoy those things.

They will not remain happy because of what they got from their business

¹⁹ because they oppressed poor people and refused to help them,

and they took other people's houses by cheating them.

²⁰ They were always greedy and never satisfied.

So when they ate, they ate so much that they never saved anything that they enjoyed.

²¹ When they finished eating their food, there was never anything left over because they had greedily eaten it all;

but now their prosperity will end.

²² When they are still very wealthy, they will suddenly experience trouble.

The full power of everyone who lives in misery will crush them.

²³ When the wicked people are filling their stomachs,

God will show that he is very angry with them, and he will punish them;

he will bring down suffering on them like the rain that falls on the ground.

²⁴ They will try to escape from people who will attack them with iron weapons,

but arrows with bronze points will pierce them.

²⁵ The arrows will go completely through their bodies and stick out of their backs;

the shiny points of the arrows will have blood dripping from them,

and those wicked people will be terrified.

²⁶ Their valuable possessions will all be destroyed;

a fire started by God, not by humans, will burn them up

and will destroy the things that are left in their tents.

²⁷ The angels in heaven will reveal the sins that those wicked people have committed,

and people on earth will stand up and testify against them.

²⁸ On the day when God punishes people,

all the possessions in the wicked people's houses will be carried away, as if a flood had come.

²⁹ That is what will happen to wicked people like you;

that is what God has decreed for them."

Chapter 21

¹ Then Job replied in this way:

² "Listen to what I say, all of you;

that is the only thing that you can do that will comfort me.

³ Be patient with me, and allow me to speak.

Then, after I am finished speaking, you can continue to make fun of me.

⁴ It is certainly not people against whom I am complaining, but God!

And it is certainly right for me to be impatient!

⁵ Look at me! Does what you see not cause you to be appalled

and to put your hands over your mouths and say no more?

⁶ When I think about what has happened to me,

I am frightened and my entire body shakes.

⁷ But allow me to ask this: 'Why do wicked people continue to live,

and become prosperous, and not die until they are very old?'

⁸ They see their children around them,

and they watch them while they grow up and start to live in their own houses.

⁹ Wicked people live in their own houses without being afraid,

and God does not punish them.

¹⁰ Their bulls always mate with the cows successfully,

and the cows always give birth to calves and never miscarry.

¹¹ Wicked people send their young children outside to play,

and the children jump around happily like lambs in a pasture.

¹² The children sing to the sound of tambourines and lyres,

and they are happy to hear the sound of flutes.

¹³ Wicked people enjoy having good things all the time that they are alive,

and they die quietly and go down to the place of the dead.

¹⁴ While they are alive, they say to God, 'Leave us alone;

we do not care about how you desire us to conduct our lives!

¹⁵ Why do you, Almighty God, think that we should serve you?

What advantage do we get if we pray to you?'

¹⁶ Wicked people think that they have become prosperous because of what they have done,

but I do not want to have anything to do with their thinking.

¹⁷ How often does it happen that wicked people die,

without experiencing disasters?

Does God ever punish them because he is angry with them?

¹⁸ He does not blow them away as wind blows away straw;

they are never carried off by a whirlwind.

¹⁹ You say, 'When people have committed sins,

God waits and punishes their children because of those sins;'

I say that God should punish those who sin, not their children,

in order that the sinners may know that it is because of their own sins that they are being punished.

²⁰ I hope that wicked people will live to experience God destroying them,

that they will experience Almighty God punishing them.

²¹ After wicked people are dead,

they are not at all concerned for their families who are still alive.

²² Since God judges everyone, even those who are in heaven,

who can teach him anything?

²³ Some people die while they are very healthy,

while they are peaceful and not afraid of anything.

²⁴ Their bodies are fat;

their bones are strong.

²⁵ Other people die being very miserable;

they have never experienced good things happening to them.

²⁶ They die and are buried,

and maggots cover their bodies.

Everyone dies, so it is clear that dying is not always the punishment for being wicked.

²⁷ Listen, I know what you three are thinking,

and I know the evil things that you plan to do to me.

²⁸ You say, 'What happened to the tents in which wicked people were living?

The houses of evil rulers have been destroyed!'

²⁹ Have you never asked people who travel much?

Do you not believe their reports about what they have seen,

³⁰ that wicked people usually do not suffer at the time when there are great disasters;

that when God punishes people, someone rescues the wicked? that wicked people are the ones whom someone else rescues when God punishes people?

³¹ There is no one who accuses wicked people,

and there is no one who pays them back for all the evil things that they have done.

³² When the corpses of wicked people are carried to their graves,

people are put there to guard those graves.

³³ A huge number of people go to the grave site;

some go in front of the procession and some come behind,

and the wicked ones who have died surely feel good when people throw clods of dirt on their graves.

³⁴ So how can you comfort me by talking nonsense?

Every reply that you give me is full of lies!"

Chapter 22

¹ Then Eliphaz replied, saying this:

² "No one can be useful to God!

People who are wise can be useful to themselves, but not to God.

³ If you were righteous, that would not please Almighty God, would it?

If you lived a perfect life, that would not help him, would it?

⁴ Do you honor God, and is that why he punishes you?

Is that the reason that he puts you on trial?

⁵ No, it certainly must be because you are extremely wicked.

It must be that no one can count the evil things that you have done!

⁶ You must have lent money to others and wrongly forced them to give you things to guarantee that they would pay that money back to you;

you must have taken all their clothes and left them with nothing to wear.

⁷ You must not have given water to those who were thirsty,

and you must have refused to give food to those who were hungry.

⁸ Because you were very powerful, you must have taken over all the people's land,

and then you began to live on that land, even though others honored you very much.

⁹ When widows came to you for help, you must have sent them away without giving them anything,

and you must have oppressed orphans.

¹⁰ Because you did all those things, now there are traps that will catch you;

now things appear that terrify you and cause you to tremble.

¹¹ It is as though it had become very dark, with the result that you cannot see anything,

and it is as though a flood covered you.

¹² But consider this, Job: God lives high up in the heavens.

From there he looks down on the highest stars.

¹³ So why do you say, 'God knows nothing about what we are doing'?

And why do you say, 'Dark clouds keep him from seeing us, so he cannot judge us'?

¹⁴ Do you think that while he walks on the dome that covers the sky,

where there are thick clouds around him, he cannot see what we do?’

¹⁵ Will you, Job, continue to conduct your life in the old way

that evil people have done for many years?

¹⁶ They suddenly died while they were still young;

they disappeared like everything disappears when there is a flood .

¹⁷ They kept saying to God, ‘Leave us alone,’ ‘Allow us to be alone,’

and they also said defiantly, ‘Almighty God can do nothing to harm us!’

¹⁸ Yet it was God who filled their houses with good things;

so I cannot agree at all to follow what the wicked plan.

¹⁹ When righteous people see that God punishes wicked people, they are glad,

and they laugh at those wicked people.

²⁰ They say, ‘Now our enemies have been destroyed,

and fire has burned up anything left of their wealth.’

²¹ So, Job, be reconciled to God and make peace with him;

if you do that, good things will happen to you.

²² Allow him to teach you,

and put his words into your mind.

²³ If you humble yourself and return to God, he will restore you;

if you stop doing all the evil things that you have been doing in your house,

²⁴ and if you throw away your gold,

the fine gold from the dry stream beds in Ophir land,

²⁵ then Almighty God will be to be as precious to you as your gold and your silver have been.

²⁶ Then you will be happy because of God,

and you will be able to approach him confidently.

²⁷ You will pray to him, and he will do what you request him to do;

you will do the things that you promised him that you would do.

²⁸ Everything that you decide to do will be successful;

it will be as though a light were shining on the road in front of you.

²⁹ God humbles those who are proud,

but he saves those who are downcast.

³⁰ God rescues those who are not innocent;

they will be rescued because you do what is right.”

Chapter 23

¹ Then Job replied and said this:

² “Today I am again complaining bitterly to God;

I continue to groan, but I suffer even more.

³ I wish that I knew where I could meet with him

so that I could go to the place where he lives.

⁴ If I could do that, I would tell him why I know that I am innocent;

I would tell him many reasons for that.

⁵ Then I would find out and understand what he would reply to me.

⁶ Would he use his great power to argue with me?

No, he would listen to me carefully.

⁷ I am an honest man, so I would be able to discuss things with him fairly,

and then he would declare that I am innocent, and he would not trouble me again.

⁸ However, I have gone to the east, and he is not there;

I have gone to the west, but I have not found him there.

⁹ I have gone north and I have gone south,

but I have not seen him anywhere for he keeps himself from me.

¹⁰ He knows how I have conducted my life;

when he has finished testing me, he will see that I am as pure as gold whose impurities have all been burned out.

¹¹ I have faithfully walked on the road that he showed me;

I have not turned away from obeying him.

¹² I have always obeyed what he commanded;

I have hidden away in my inner being the words that he has spoken.

¹³ He never changes. There is no one who can stop him from doing what he desires.

Whatever he wants to do, he does.

¹⁴ He will finish doing the things that he has planned for me,

and I am sure that he has thought about doing many things for me.

¹⁵ So I am terrified when I am in front of him;

when I think about what he can do, I am very afraid.

¹⁶ Almighty God has made me very afraid.

¹⁷ The thick darkness in front of me has not make me silent,

even that terrible darkness that covers my face has not kept me from speaking.”

Chapter 24

¹ ”Why does Almighty God not set a time when he will judge evil people?

The people who obey God never seem to see him judge the evil people.

² Some evil people remove the boundary markers of other people’s land, in order to take their land;

they seize other people’s sheep and put them in their own pastures.

³ Some take away the donkeys that belong to orphans,

and they take widows’ oxen to guarantee that the widows will pay back the money that they loaned to those widows.

⁴ Some shove poor people off the road, and they force poor people to find places to hide from them.

⁵ The result is that poor people have to search for food in the desert plain like wild donkeys do.

⁶ The poor people harvest leftover grain in other people’s fields, and gather leftover grapes from vineyards that belong to wicked men.

⁷ During the night they have nothing to cover their bodies, nothing to keep them warm.

⁸ When it rains in the mountains, they become very wet,

so they huddle under the rock ledges to protect themselves from the rain.

⁹ Some evil men snatch poor, fatherless infants away from their mothers;

they say 'I will return your babies to you when you repay the money that I lent to you.'

¹⁰ But the poor people walk around with no clothes on;

they are hungry while they are working to carry other people's bundles of grain to the places where their grain will be threshed.

¹¹ Poor people are hired by these wicked people to make olive oil for them;

they tread on grapes to make juice for wine,

but they are not allowed to drink any of it when they are thirsty.

¹² In the cities, people who are wounded and dying cry out to God for help,

but God ignores their prayers.

¹³ Some wicked people avoid the light because they do evil things in the dark;

they do not walk on roads that are lit.

¹⁴ Murderers steal things during the night,

and then they rise before dawn in order that they may go out again and kill poor and needy people.

¹⁵ Those who want to commit adultery wait for evening to come;

they say, 'I do not want anyone to see me,' so they keep their faces covered.

¹⁶ It is during the night that robbers break into houses to steal things,

but during the day they hide because they want to avoid being seen in the light.

¹⁷ All of those people want to do their evil deeds at night, not in the morning when it is light,

because they are not afraid of the things that happen during the night that terrify others.

¹⁸ However, those wicked people will disappear very quickly,

and God will curse the land that they owned;

no one will go any longer to work in their vineyards.

¹⁹ Just as the snow melts away when it is hot and there is no rain,

those who have sinned will disappear into the place where the dead people are.

²⁰ Not even their mothers will remember them;

wicked people will be destroyed like trees that are cut down,

and maggots will eat their corpses.

²¹ The wicked mistreat women who have been unable to give birth to children who would have grown up to take care of them;

the wicked they never help widows.

²² But God, by his power, gets rid of mighty people.

He causes the wicked people to die.

²³ God allows them to think that they are secure and safe,

but he is watching them all the time.

²⁴ They prosper for a little while,

and then suddenly they are gone;

God will make them die like all the other people;

they will be like stalks of grain that the farmers have cut off.

²⁵ If this is not true, is there anyone who
will show that I am a liar
and prove me wrong?"

Chapter 25

¹ Then Bildad also replied:

² "God is very powerful; everyone
should honor him very much;

he causes everything to be peaceful
high up in heaven, with no confusion at
all.

³ Can anyone count the angels who are
in his army in heaven?

Is there any person on whom his light
does not shine?

⁴ So how can God consider any person
to be righteous?

How can he accept any human being?

⁵ Consider this: God does not even think
that the full moon is bright,

and he does not even accept the stars
in the heavens as worthy of him.

⁶ So what about humans?

They are as insignificant as maggots.

God does not think more highly of
people than he thinks of worms."

Chapter 26

¹ Job replied to Bildad:

² "I am a very weak and helpless man;
you do not really think that you have
helped me at all, do you?

³ You certainly do not think that you
have given me good advice, do you?—me,
who am not wise at all.

⁴ Who helped you to say all those great
things?

Who inspired you to speak like you
did?

⁵ The spirits of dead people tremble with
fear,

those who are under the waters
and everyone who dwells with them.

⁶ God knows all about those who are in
the place of the dead;

there is nothing down there that pre-
vents God from seeing what is there.

⁷ God stretches out heaven
over the empty spaces,

and he places the earth in that huge
empty space, but it is not resting on any-
thing.

⁸ He fills the thick clouds with water
and prevents that water from bursting
the clouds.

⁹ He causes clouds to obscure the moon.

¹⁰ He separates the light from the dark-
ness

and puts the horizon to mark the place
where the night ends and the daytime be-
gins.

¹¹ When he is angry, it is as though he
rebuked the pillars that hold up the sky.

They are shocked, and they tremble.

¹² By his power he calmed the sea;
by his skill he destroyed Rahab, the
huge sea monster.

¹³ By his breath he caused the sky to be
bright;

by his hand he killed the great dragon
in the sea as it was fleeing from him.

¹⁴ But those events show only a small
amount of his power;

it is as though we were hearing only whispers of his powerful voice.

When we hear thunder, we say, 'Who can really understand how great his power is?'"

Chapter 27

¹ Job continued speaking to his three friends:

² "Almighty God has refused to treat me justly.

He has caused me to feel bitter.

But just as surely as he lives,

³ I will say this as long as God's Spirit enables me to breathe!

⁴ I will not lie!

I will not say anything to deceive anyone.

⁵ I will never admit that what you three have said is true;

until the day that I die, I will insist that I have not done things that are wrong.

⁶ I will say that I am innocent, and I will never say anything different;

my inner being will never reproach me as long as I live.

⁷ I want God to punish my enemies like he will punish all wicked people;

I want him to punish those who oppose me like he punishes all unrighteous people.

⁸ When it is time for God to get rid of godless people and to cause them to die,

there is absolutely nothing good that they can confidently expect to happen to them.

⁹ When they experience troubles, God will not hear them call out to him for help, will he?

¹⁰ Will they be happy about what Almighty God does?

Will they begin to pray to him frequently?

Certainly not!

¹¹ I will teach you three something about God's power;

I will reveal to you what he is thinking.

¹² You three have seen for yourselves powerful things that God has done;

so I do not understand why you have been saying such nonsense to me.

¹³ I will tell you what Almighty God does to wicked people,

what he does to people who mistreat others.

¹⁴ Even if they have many children, those children will die in wars,

or they will die because they do not have enough food to eat.

¹⁵ Their children who are still alive after they themselves die will perish from diseases,

and the wives they leave behind will not even mourn for them.

¹⁶ Sometimes wicked people accumulate a huge amount of silver

and pile up clothes as potters pile up clay,

¹⁷ but those wicked people will die, and then righteous people will wear those clothes,

and honest people will get their silver and divide it among themselves.

¹⁸ The houses that they build are as weak as spider webs;

they are like flimsy huts that watchmen live in while they guard people's fields.

¹⁹ The wicked people are rich when they lie down at night,

but when they wake up in the morning, they find out that their money has disappeared.

²⁰ Things that terrify them come to them like a flood that they do not expect;

during the night a whirlwind carries them away.

²¹ It is as though the wind from the east had picked them up and carried them away from their homes,

and they disappear forever.

²² That wind strikes them without pitying them

while they are running away, trying to escape from its force.

²³ That wind is like someone clapping his hands at them to mock them,

howling at them and forcing them to run away."

Chapter 28

¹ "It is true that there are places where men dig to find silver,

and there are places where people refine gold that they have dug.

² People dig iron ore out of the ground, and they also smelt copper.

³ Men use lamps while they work far down under the ground

to search for the ore inside the mines where it is very dark.

⁴ They dig shafts in places that are far from where people live,

where travelers do not go.

They work far away from other people, swinging back and forth on ropes as they descend into the mine shafts.

⁵ Food grows on the surface of the ground,

but down under the ground, where there is no food, the miners make fires to break apart the rocks.

⁶ The stones that are dug from under the ground contain sapphires,

and the dirt contains bits of gold.

⁷ Some birds have very good eyes, but even hawks do not know where the mines are,

and falcons have not seen those places.

⁸ Lions or other proud wild animals have never gone to those places.

⁹ Miners dig very hard rock; it is as though they turned the mountains upside down to get the ore.

¹⁰ They cut tunnels through the rocks, and they find precious things.

¹¹ They dam up small streams to stop the water from flowing,

and they bring up into the light things that are hidden in the ground and in the streams.

¹² But wisdom: Where can people find that?

Where can we find out how to truly understand things?

¹³ Humans do not know what wisdom is truly worth;

no one can find it here on this earth where they are living.

¹⁴ It is as though the water that is under the earth and water that is in the seas said,

‘I do not have it!’

¹⁵ People cannot buy wisdom
by paying for it with silver or gold.

¹⁶ Wisdom is worth much more than fine gold from the land of Ophir,
much more than very valuable stones.

¹⁷ It is worth much more than gold or beautiful quartz;

wisdom is more expensive than the finest jewels, and it is worth more than a vase made with pure gold.

¹⁸ Wisdom is worth more than coral or crystal quartz;

the price of wisdom is higher than the price of rubies.

¹⁹ The prices of topaz from Ethiopia and of pure gold

are lower than the value of wisdom.

²⁰ So from where does wisdom come?

Where can we find out how to truly understand things?

²¹ No living humans can see it;

and birds cannot see it while they are up in the sky.

²² It is as though the places where people go after they die said,

‘We have only heard rumors about where to find wisdom.’

²³ God is the only one who knows how to find wisdom;

he knows where it is

²⁴ because he can see things even in the most remote places on the earth;

he can see everything that is below the sky.

²⁵ He decided how strongly the winds should blow,

and how much rain should be in the clouds.

²⁶ He decided where rain should fall,
and what path lightning should take from the clouds down to the ground.

²⁷ At that time he saw wisdom and decided that it is very valuable.

He examined it and approved it.

²⁸ And then he said to human beings, ‘Listen! If you have much respect for me, you will be able to become wise;

to truly understand everything, you must first turn away from doing what is evil.’”

Chapter 29

¹ Job spoke again and said this:

² “I wish that I could be as I was previously

during the years when God took care of me.

³ During those years, it was as though God’s lamp shone on me

and gave me light while I walked in the darkness.

⁴ At that time I was young and strong,
and because God was my friend, he protected where I lived.

⁵ Almighty God was with me during those years

when all my children were around me.

⁶ My herds provided me with plenty of milk,

and streams of oil flowed from the rock where my servants pressed the olives.

⁷ Whenever I went to the place where the elders gathered at the city gate,

I sat down with them,

⁸ and when the young men saw me, they stepped aside respectfully,

and the old men also stood respectfully.

⁹ The leaders of the people used to stop talking,

¹⁰ and even the most important men became quiet

and stopped talking in order to hear me speak to them.

¹¹ When they all heard what I told them, they said good things about me.

When they saw me, they always praised me

¹² because I had helped those who were poor when they cried out for help,

and because I aided those who had no fathers, those who had no one else to help them.

¹³ Those who were suffering and about to die praised me,

and I caused widows to sing joyfully, because I helped them.

¹⁴ I always acted justly;

my actions were like a robe that I wore and like a turban that was wrapped around my head.

¹⁵ It was as though I myself saw for blind people

and walked for people who were lame.

¹⁶ I was like a father to the poor people,

and in the courts I defended those who were strangers to me.

¹⁷ I made wicked people stop oppressing others; it was like someone who breaks the teeth of wild animals

and forces them to drop their victims from their teeth.

¹⁸ At that time I thought, 'Surely I will live in peace until I am very old,

and I will die at home with my family.

¹⁹ I am like a tree whose roots reach down into the water

and whose branches become wet with dew each night.

²⁰ People always honor me,

and I am always strong like a new bow.'

²¹ When I spoke, people waited to hear what I would say;

they remained silent until I advised them what they should do.

²² After I finished speaking, they did not say anymore;

it was as though my words fell on their ears like drops of rain.

²³ They waited for me to speak as they wait for rain;

they liked what I said as farmers appreciate the final rain in the spring before the dry season.

²⁴ When they were sad, I smiled at them to encourage them;

they became encouraged when they saw my cheerful face.

²⁵ I was their leader, and I decided what things would be good for them to do;

I was among them like a king who is among his troops;

I was like someone who comforts others who are mourning."

Chapter 30

¹ "But now, men who are younger than I am make fun of me—

men whose fathers I greatly despised—

their fathers, whom I would not even have allowed to help my dogs guard my sheep.

² They were men who were old and weak;

what could I gain from having these men work for me, even when they thought they were strong?

³ They were very poor and hungry, so that they chewed on roots at night in dry and desolate places.

⁴ They pulled up plants in the desert and ate them;

they warmed themselves by burning the roots of broom trees.

⁵ Everyone shouted at them, "Stop, thief!"

and drove them from their area.

⁶ They were forced to live in riverbeds, in holes in the ground, and in the sides of cliffs.

⁷ In the bushes they howled like animals because they were hungry,

and they huddled together under thornbushes.

⁸ They were people without good sense, whose names no one knows;

they were driven out from the land where they were born.

⁹ Now their children sing songs to make fun of me.

They tell jokes about me.

¹⁰ They are disgusted with me, and they stay away from me,

but when they see me, they are happy to spit in my face.

¹¹ It seems as though God had cut my bowstring and caused me to be unable to defend myself; he has humbled me,

and my enemies have done to me whatever they wanted.

¹² Gangs of these people attack me and force me to run away;

they prepare to destroy me.

¹³ They prevent me from escaping, and there is no one to keep them from attacking me.

¹⁴ It is as though I were a city wall and they had broken through it,

as though they had come crashing down on me.

¹⁵ I am very terrified; my dignity has been blown away by the wind,

and my prosperity has disappeared as clouds disappear.

¹⁶ Now I am about to die; I suffer every day.

¹⁷ My bones ache during the nights, and the pain that torments me never stops.

¹⁸ It is as though God had grabbed my clothes

and choked me by the collar of my coat.

¹⁹ He has thrown me into the mud; I am not worth anything more than dust and ashes.

²⁰ I cry out to you, God, but you do not answer me;

I stand up and pray, but you do not pay any attention.

²¹ You act very cruelly toward me;

with all of your power you cause me to suffer.

²² You allow the wind to lift me up and blow me away;

and you make a violent storm blow me around.

²³ I know that you will cause me to die, which is what happens to everyone who is alive.

²⁴ When people experience disasters, they sit on a pile of ruins and cry out for help; they certainly cry out for help.

²⁵ I myself wept for people who were experiencing troubles, and I felt sorry for poor people.

²⁶ However, when I expected good things to happen to me, evil things happened;

when I waited for light, I experienced darkness instead.

²⁷ I am very distressed all the time; I suffer every day.

²⁸ I go about very discouraged; I stand up and plead for people to help me.

²⁹ My wailing is as sad as jackals and ostriches in the wilderness.

³⁰ My skin has become dark and is peeling off,

and I have a fever which causes my body to feel as though it were burning up with a fever.

³¹ Previously, I played joyful music on my harp and with my flute,

but now I play only the sad music of those who mourn."

Chapter 31

¹ "I made to myself a solemn promise that I would not look at a young woman and want to sleep with her.

² If I did not do what I promised, what would God who is in heaven give me?

Almighty God would certainly not give me any reward!

³ Previously I thought that surely it was unrighteous people who would experience calamities,

and that it was those who do what is wrong who would experience disasters.

⁴ God certainly sees everything that I do, so why is he causing me to suffer?

It is as though he were counting every step that I take.

⁵ I solemnly declare that I have never acted wickedly and have never tried to deceive people.

⁶ I request only that God judge me fairly; if he does that, he will know that I am innocent.

⁷ If it were true that I had turned away from walking on the right paths, or that I had seen wrong things to do and then did them,

or that my hands were stained because I had sinned,

⁸ then I hope that when I plant seeds, someone else will harvest the crops and eat them,

and that others will uproot the crops
that I have planted.

⁹ If it is true that I have been attracted
by some other man's wife,

or that I have hidden myself and
waited outside the door to her house,

¹⁰ I hope another man will sleep with
my own wife

and that she will sleep with him.

¹¹ For me to do that would be a terrible
sin,

and the judges would decide that I
should be punished.

¹² My adultery would produce in me a
fire like the fire that burns people in hell,

and it would burn up everything that
I own.

¹³ If it is true that I have ever refused
to listen to one of my male or female ser-
vants

when they complained to me about
something,

¹⁴ I hope that God would stand up and
declare that he will punish me;

when he does that, what could I do?

If he asked me about what I have done,
what would I answer?

¹⁵ God, who created me, certainly also
created my servants;

surely he is the one who formed them
and me in our mothers' wombs,

so we all should behave toward each
other in the same way.

¹⁶⁻¹⁸ From the time I was young I have
taken care of orphans; All my life I have
never given the widowed mothers a rea-
son to lose hope.

So if it is true that I ate all my food my-
self and did not share some of it with or-
phans,

or that I refused to give poor people
the things that they wanted,

or that I caused widows to live in
despair, then you do to me whatever you
must do to me.

¹⁹ If I had seen people die from cold
because they had no clothes,

or that I had seen poor people who
did not have clothes to keep them warm,

²⁰ and they were not able to become
warm from clothes made from the wool of
my sheep

and they thanked me for it,

²¹ or if it is true that I threatened to
strike any orphan

because I knew that the elders at the
city gates would approve of me, then do to
me whatever you must do to me.

²² For if those things were true about
me, I hope that my shoulder blade would
be torn out

and my arm be torn from my shoul-
der.

²³ I always feared that God would cause
me to experience a great disaster if I did
any of those evil things,

and I would not have been able to
endure the powerful things that he would
do to punish me.

²⁴ If it is true that I trusted in my gold,

²⁵ or that I rejoiced because I had ac-
quired many things

and had become very rich,

²⁶ or that I looked at the sun when it was
shining,

or that I looked at the beautiful moon,

²⁷ and I had been tempted to worship
them

by kissing my hand to honor them,

²⁸ those things also would be sins for which the judges would say that I must be punished

because I would have been rejecting God by doing those things.

²⁹⁻³⁰ It is not true that I sinned by requesting God to curse people who hated me

and to cause them to die because I was angry with them.

It is not true that I was glad when they were ruined

or that I rejoiced when they experienced disasters. No!

³¹⁻³² No one can truthfully say that I did not welcome travelers to stay in my house,

or that I did not open my doors to them, but that I forced them to sleep in the streets!

All the men who work for me certainly know that I have given food to anyone who needed it!

³³ Some people try to hide their sins,

but I have never done that;

³⁴ and I never remained silent and refused to go outside

because I was afraid of what people would say about me,

and that they would hate me.

³⁵ I wish that there was someone who would hear what I am saying!

I solemnly declare that all that I have said is true.

I wish that those who oppose me would write down on a scroll the evil things that they say that I did.

³⁶ If they did that, I would wear that scroll on my shoulder or on top of my head, in order that everyone could see it.

³⁷ I would tell God everything that I have done,

and I would approach him like a ruler would, without being afraid.

³⁸ If it is true that I have stolen land,

so that its furrows were like someone who shouted out to accuse me;

³⁹ or that I have eaten the crops that grew in someone else's fields

without paying for those crops,

so that the farmers who grew those crops died from hunger;

⁴⁰ then I wish that thorns would grow in my fields instead of wheat,

and that bad weeds would grow instead of barley!"

That is the end of what Job said to his three friends.

Chapter 32

¹ Then those three men stopped replying to Job because they could not convince Job that he had done anything wrong. ² Then Elihu son of Barakel, a descendant of Buz, from the clan of Ram, became very angry at Job. He was angry because Job continued to claim that he was innocent, and that God had been wrong to punish him. ³ He was also angry with Job's three friends because they had declared that Job must have done many things that were wrong, but they could not convince him. ⁴ Now Elihu was younger than the others, so he waited until they had finished speaking before he replied to Job. ⁵ But when Elihu realized that the three men had no more to say to Job, he became angry.

⁶ This is what he said:

"I am young, and you all are much older than I am.

So I was timid, and I was afraid to tell you what I was thinking.

⁷ I said to myself, 'Let those who are much older speak

because older people should be able to say things that are wise.'

⁸ However, the Spirit of Almighty God is within people, and it is he who enables them to be wise.

⁹ Not all people become wise when they are old;

not all old people understand what is right.

¹⁰ That is why I say to you now, 'Listen to me,

and allow me to declare what I know.'

¹¹ I waited for you all to speak;

I wanted to hear the wise things that you would say.

I waited while you thought carefully about what you should say.

¹² I paid attention carefully,

but surprisingly, none of you was able to prove that what Job said was wrong.

¹³ So do not say to yourselves, 'We have discovered what is wise!'

It is God who must refute Job because you three have not been able to do that.

¹⁴ Job was replying to you, not to me,

so I will not reply to him by saying what you three have said.

¹⁵ I tell myself this: These three men are confused because they have nothing more to say to Job;

they have nothing more to say to him.

¹⁶ But because you do not speak, I certainly will not wait any longer;

you merely stand there and do not reply anymore.

¹⁷ So now I also will reply to Job

and tell him what I know.

¹⁸ I have plenty to say,

and my spirit forces me to say it.

¹⁹ My inner being is like a container of wine that is stretching more and more from the fermentation,

and it will soon burst.

²⁰ I must speak in order that I can rest from trying to hold in my words;

I must say something to reply to you all.

²¹ I will speak fairly, not favoring any of you,

and I will not try to flatter anyone.

²² I really do not know how to flatter people;

if I did that, God would soon destroy me."

Chapter 33

¹ "Now, Job, listen carefully to all that I am going to say.

² I am ready to tell you what I think.

³ In my inner being I know that I am speaking honestly

and that I am speaking sincerely.

⁴ Almighty God has created me as well as you,

and with his breath he has caused me to live.

⁵ So answer what I say if you can;

think carefully what you will reply to me.

⁶ God considers that you and I are both the same;

he formed both of us from clay.

⁷ So you do not need to be afraid of me;

I will not speak against you harshly.

⁸ I have heard you speak,
and this is what you have said:

⁹ 'I am innocent, and I have not committed any sins;

I am pure, and I have not done things that are wrong.

¹⁰ But God finds reasons to accuse me,
and he considers that I am his enemy.

¹¹ It is as though he had put my feet in stocks,

and he watches everything that I do.'

¹² However, what you have said is wrong,

and I will tell you what you have said that is wrong.

God is much greater than any human.

¹³ So, why are you arguing against God? He does not have to tell us why he does anything.

¹⁴ God does, indeed, speak to us in various ways,

but we do not pay any attention to what he says.

¹⁵ Sometimes he speaks to us at night in dreams and visions

when we are on our beds, heavily asleep.

¹⁶ He reveals things to us in those times;
he terrifies us by warning us about things.

¹⁷ He tells us those things in order that we may stop doing evil deeds

and to prevent us from becoming proud.

¹⁸ He does not want us to be destroyed;
he wants to prevent us from dying while we are still young.

¹⁹ God also corrects us by forcing us to lie on our beds, suffering much pain
and fever in our bones.

²⁰ The result is that we do not desire any food,
not even very special food.

²¹ Our bodies become very thin so that we look like a skeleton,
and our bones stick out so others can count them.

²² We know that we will soon die
and go to the place where dead people are.

²³ Yet sometimes an angel may come to one of us,

one of the thousands of angels who come to intervene between us and God,

to tell us what are the right things for us to do.

²⁴ The angel is kind to us and says to God,

'Please release that person,
so that he does not descend to the place where dead people are!

Do that because I have found a way for you to keep him from dying!

²⁵ Please let his body be strong again;
please allow him to be strong like he was when he was young!'

²⁶ If that happens, that person will pray to God, and God will accept him;

he will enter God's presence joyfully,
and then he will tell others how God saved him from dying.

²⁷ He will sing as he says to everyone,
'I sinned, and I did things that were not right,

but God did not punish me in the way that I deserved.

²⁸ He has saved me from dying and going to the place where dead people are,

and I will continue to enjoy being alive.'

²⁹ God does all these things for us many times;

³⁰ he preserves us from dying and going to the place where the dead are,

in order that we can continue to enjoy being alive.

³¹ So Job, listen to me;

do not say anything more; just allow me to speak.

³² After I speak, if you have something more that you want to say to me,

say it, because I would like to find a way to declare that you are innocent.

³³ However, if you have nothing more that you want to say, then just listen to me,

and I will teach you how to become wise."

Chapter 34

¹ Then Elihu continued by saying this:

² "You men who think that you are very wise, listen to me;

listen to what I am saying, you men who say that you know so much.

³ When we hear people talk,

we think carefully about what they say to know what is good and what is bad,

as we taste food to know what is good to eat.

⁴ We must decide who is saying what is right,

and we must find out together for ourselves what is good.

⁵ Job has said, 'I am innocent,

but God has refused to judge me fairly.

⁶ Even though I have always done what is right,

he is lying about me.

Even though I have not done what is wrong,

he has caused me to suffer, and I will certainly die because of this.'

⁷ Is there any person like Job, who insults others as easily as people accept a drink of water?

⁸ He habitually associates with people who do what is evil

and spends time with wicked people.

⁹ He certainly does these things, because he has said, 'It is useless for people to try to please God.'

¹⁰ So, you men who claim that you understand everything, listen to me!

Almighty God would never consider doing anything that is wicked or wrong!

¹¹ He pays back people for what they have done;

he gives them what they deserve for the way that they have conducted their lives.

¹² Truly, Almighty God never does what is wicked;

he never calls wrongdoing right.

¹³ No one gave him the authority to rule everything on the earth;

no one put him in control of the whole world.

He has always had that authority.

¹⁴ If he ever thought only about himself and not about us also, and if he ever stopped making us live,

¹⁵ everyone would die immediately,

and their corpses would soon become soil again.

¹⁶ So, Job, if you say that you understand everything,

listen to what I am saying.

¹⁷ God could certainly never hate was is right and still rule the world.

So you really cannot criticize God, who is righteous and powerful, and you cannot say that what he has done is wrong, can you?

¹⁸ He tells some kings that they are worthless,

and he says to some officials that they are wicked.

¹⁹ He does not favor rulers more than he favors others;

he does not favor rich people more than poor people

because he created all of them.

²⁰ They often die suddenly;

he strikes them at midnight and they die;

he gets rid of important people without the help of any humans.

²¹ He sees everything that people do;

when we walk, he watches every step that we take.

²² There is no gloom or darkness

in which wicked people can hide from God.

²³ God does not need to set a time

when we will stand in front of him in order that he may judge us.

He already knows everything about us.

²⁴ He destroys important people without needing to investigate what they have done,

and he appoints others to take their places.

²⁵ Because he already knows what they have done,

he removes them at night and gets rid of them.

²⁶ He strikes them because of the wicked things that they have done;

many people see him do it.

²⁷ He strikes them down because they turned away from doing what he wanted them to do

and did not pay attention to any of his commands.

²⁸ They mistreated poor people;

those poor people cried out to God for help,

and he heard them.

²⁹ Yet even if God decides to do nothing to punish wicked people,

no one can criticize him.

God controls all nations and all people.

³⁰ He does this so that those who rule over us may honor him,

so that our rulers do not oppress us.

³¹ Job, have you or anyone else ever said to God, 'I have certainly committed sin,

but I will not sin anymore;

³² so teach me what sins I have committed;

if I have done anything that is evil,

I will not do it anymore'?

³³ Job, you object to what God has done to you,

but do you think that he will do what you want him to do?

It is you who must choose what you should say to God, not I;

tell me what you are thinking about this.

³⁴ People who have good sense, those who are wise and who listen to what I say, will say to me,

³⁵ 'Job is speaking ignorantly; what he says is nonsense.'

³⁶ To you friends of Job, I say this: I think that a court should thoroughly try Job,

because he answers us, his friends, as wicked men would answer.

³⁷ To add to the other sins that he has committed, he is rebelling against God;

he shows us that he does not honor God;

he makes long speeches saying that God has punished him unjustly."

Chapter 35

¹ Then Elihu also said this:

² "Job, do you really think that you have done nothing wrong?

You say, 'God knows that I am innocent,'

³ and you also say, 'What good have I received for not sinning?

What benefit have I received that I would not have had, even if I had sinned?'

⁴ Well, I will answer you, and I will answer your three friends, too.

⁵ Job, look up at the sky; look at the clouds that are high above you

and realize that God is far above everything, entirely out of your reach.

⁶ If you have sinned, that cannot harm God at all.

Even if you do wrong things many, many times, that certainly does not hurt him.

⁷ In the same way, if you are righteous, does that help God?

No, nothing you do can help him.

⁸ It is other people who can suffer because of the wicked things that you do;

In the same way, you might help others if you do good things for them.

⁹ People cry out because of the many things that others do to make them suffer;

they call for help because of the things that powerful people do to them.

¹⁰ But no one calls out to God and says, 'Why does God, my creator, not help me?

He should enable me to sing joyful songs, instead of very sad songs, during the night.

¹¹ He should be able to teach us more than he teaches the wild animals;

he should enable us to become wiser than all the birds are!'

¹² People cry out for help, but God does not answer them because those who cry out are proud and evil people.

¹³ It is useless for them to cry out because God, the Almighty One, does not pay any attention to what they say.

¹⁴ So when you complain that you cannot see God,

and you tell him that you are waiting for him to decide whether or not you have done wrong,

he will not listen to you, either!

¹⁵ Furthermore, you say that because he does not pay attention when people commit sins,

he does not become angry and punish them.

¹⁶ My friends, you see that Job has said things that are completely useless,

that he says many things without knowing what in the world he is talking about.”

Chapter 36

¹ Elihu finished speaking by saying this:

² ”Job, be patient with me a little longer because I have something else to teach you.

I have something else to say in order to prove that God does no wrong.

³ I will tell you what I have learned from many sources,

in order to show that God, my creator, is just.

⁴ I will not say anything to you that is false;

I, who am standing in front of you, am someone who understands things very well.

⁵ Really, God is very powerful, and he does not despise anyone,

and he understands everything.

⁶ He does not allow wicked people to remain alive—contrary to what you have claimed,

and he always acts justly toward those who are suffering.

⁷ He always watches over those who are righteous;

he makes them prosper, as if they were kings,

and he causes others to honor them forever.

⁸ However, if people who commit crimes are caught,

or if they suffer in prison for having done wrong,

⁹ then God shows them what they have done;

he shows them the sins that they have committed,

and he shows them that they have been arrogant.

¹⁰ He causes them to listen to what he is warning them,

and he commands them to turn away from doing what is evil.

¹¹ If they listen to him and serve him, they will prosper and be happy for all the years that they continue to live.

¹² But if they do not listen to him, they will die violently

because they understand nothing about God and what he wants them to do.

¹³ People who fail to honor God continue being angry,

and they do not cry out for help even when God is punishing them.

¹⁴ They die while they are still young, disgraced because of their immoral behavior.

¹⁵ God actually rescues people by causing them to suffer;

by afflicting them, he causes them to listen to what he is telling them.

¹⁶ Job, I think that God wants to bring you out of your troubles

and allow you to live without distress;

he wants your table to be full of very nice food.

¹⁷ However, now he is punishing you as he would punish the wicked;

God has judged you very rightly.

¹⁸ Do not let your anger give you an excuse to mock other people,

and do not let a large amount of money paid as a bribe

compel you to ruin your life.

¹⁹ If that happens, it certainly will not help you to cry out when you are distressed;

none of your strength will help you in that case.

²⁰ Do not wish that it would be nighttime in order that you might mistreat others without anyone knowing it;

night is the time when even entire people groups are destroyed!

²¹ Be careful not to begin doing evil deeds,

because God has caused you to suffer to prevent you from doing evil.

²² Truly, people praise God because he is so powerful;

there is certainly no teacher who teaches what he teaches.

²³ No one has told him what he should do,

and no one has said to him, 'You have done what is wrong!'

²⁴ People have always sung songs to praise him,

so you also should never forget to praise him for what he has done.

²⁵ All people have seen what he has done,

but we understand those things only a little.

²⁶ How great God is! We are not able to know how great he is,

and we do not understand how old he is.

²⁷ He draws water up from the earth and puts it in clouds

and causes it to become rain;

²⁸ the rain pours down from the sky

and causes abundant showers to fall on everyone.

²⁹ No one can understand how the clouds move across the sky

or how it thunders in the sky where God lives.

³⁰ He causes lightning to flash all around him,

but he causes the oceans to remain dark.

³¹ By providing plenty of rain for everyone,

he gives them abundant food.

³² It is as though he were holding the lightning in his hands,

and then he commands it to strike where he wants it to.

³³ When we hear his thunder, we know that there will be a storm,

and the cattle know it, too.

Chapter 37

¹ "My heart pounds when I think about that.

² Listen, all of you, to the thunder, which is like God's voice.

³ He sends thunder all across the sky,
and he sends lighting to the most
distant places on the earth.

⁴ After the lightning flashes, we hear the
thunder,

which is like God's powerful voice;

when he speaks, he does not keep
back the lightning.

⁵ When God speaks, it causes us to fear
him and admire him, as thunder does;

he does amazing things that we cannot
understand.

⁶ He commands the snow to fall on the
ground,

and often he makes it rain very hard.

⁷ When God does that, it prevents people
from working,

in order that all people may know
that he is the one who does these things.

⁸ When it rains, the animals go into their
hiding places,

and they stay there until the rain stops.

⁹ The storms come from the place in the
south where they start,

and the cold winds come from the
north.

¹⁰ In the winter water freezes when he
commands it,

and the lakes become ice.

¹¹ God fills the clouds with moisture,
and lightning flashes everywhere
from the clouds.

¹² He guides the clouds and causes them
to move back and forth

in order that they may accomplish all
that he commands them to do all over the
world.

¹³ Sometimes God sends rain to pun-
ish us, sometimes to water the land that
he has made,

and sometimes because he wants to
be very kind to us.

¹⁴ Job, listen to this;

stop and think about the wonderful
things that God does.

¹⁵ Do you know how God commands the
lightning to flash down from his clouds?

¹⁶ Do you know how God decides where
to place the clouds in the sky?

Can you understand all the wonderful
things that God does,

and how he knows everything and he
knows them completely?

¹⁷ No, you just sweat there in your hot
clothing

because even the clothes you wear
become very hot.

Your clothing becomes hot because the
heat builds up

when the wind comes from the south.

¹⁸ Can you stretch out the skies like God
does and make them as hard as a metal
mirror?

¹⁹ Job, you know so much! So tell us
what we should say to God;

we do not know anything about how
we should defend ourselves.

²⁰ Should I ask someone to tell God that
I want to speak to him?

No, because if I did that, he might
destroy me.

²¹ You know that people cannot look
directly at the sun

when it shines brightly in the sky after
the wind has blown the clouds away;

likewise we certainly cannot look at the brightness of God.

²² God comes out of the north with a light that shines like gold;

his glory causes us to be afraid.

²³ Almighty God has very great power, and we do not know how to go near to him.

He always acts righteously,

and he will never mistreat us.

²⁴ That is the reason that we have an awesome respect for him;

he does not pay attention to those who proudly, but wrongly, think that they are wise."

Chapter 38

¹ Then Yahweh spoke to Job from inside a powerful storm. He said to him,

² "Who are you to bring confusion to what I plan to do?

You are speaking ignorantly!

³ I want to ask you some questions,

so act like a man and

get ready to answer my questions.

⁴ Where were you when I started to create the earth?

Since you know so much, tell me where you were at that time.

⁵ If it was not I who decided how large the earth would be, then who decided?

Do you know who stretched a line around the earth to measure it?

Since you think that you know so much, you should surely know that!

⁶⁻⁷ What supports the pillars on which the earth rests?

When the stars that shine early in the morning sang together,

and someone put in place the stone that causes the earth to stay in its place,

and all the angels shouted joyfully when they saw that happen,

who laid that cornerstone?

⁸ When the seas poured out from under the earth,

who prevented the water from flooding over the land?

⁹ It was I, not you, who caused clouds to come over the seas

and caused it to become very dark under those clouds.

¹⁰ I set limits for the seas,

and I put barriers so that the water would not come over the land.

¹¹ I pointed to the shore and said to the water,

'I permit you to come up to here, but I do not permit you to come any farther.

Your powerful waves must stop here!'

¹² Job, have you ever commanded the morning to begin?

Have you ever told the sun to start rising and begin a new day?

¹³ Have you ever told the dawn to spread out over the whole earth

with the result that wicked people run away from the light?

¹⁴ When it becomes light after the dawn, the hills and the valleys become clear like a seal gives an image to the clay under it, or like the folds in a cloth.

¹⁵ When it becomes daylight, the wicked do not have the darkness that they like;

in the daylight they no longer are able to hurt anyone.

¹⁶ Job, have you traveled to the springs in the bottom of the ocean from which the water in the seas comes?

Have you investigated the very bottom of the oceans?

¹⁷ Has someone shown you the gates to the place where dead people are,

the gates to the place where it is very dark among those who are dead?

¹⁸ Do you know how big the earth is?

Tell me, if you know all these things!

¹⁹ Where is the road to the place where light comes from?

Can you tell me where darkness lives?

²⁰ Can you take the light and the darkness to the places where they must do their work every day?

Do you know where the road is that goes back to their homes?

²¹ I am sure that you know these things because you were born before the time when all things were created;

you must be very old!

²² Have you entered the place where I store the snow

and the place where I keep the hail?

²³ I store the snow and the hail in order that I can use them when people are fighting on earth,

in times when they are fighting wars.

²⁴ Where is the road to the place from which I cause the lightning to flash?

Where is the place from where the east wind begins to blow over all the earth?

²⁵ Who created the channels in which the rain comes down from the sky?

Who makes the roads for the thunder in the air?

²⁶ Who causes rain to fall in the desert, in places where no one lives?

²⁷ Who sends the rain that gives moisture to barren areas, areas where nothing has grown,

so that grass begins to grow again?

²⁸ Does the rain have a father?

Does the dew also have a father?

²⁹ From whose womb does ice come in the winter?

Who gives birth to the frost that comes down from the sky?

³⁰ In the winter, the water freezes and becomes as hard as a rock,

and the surface of lakes becomes frozen.

³¹ Job, can you fasten the chains that hold the stars together in the cluster of the Pleiades stars?

Can you unfasten the cords of the stars in Orion? ³² Can you tell the stars and planets when they should shine?

Can you guide the stars in the groups of the Big Bear and the Little Bear?

³³ Do you know the laws that the stars must obey?

Can you cause those same laws to rule everything here on the earth?

³⁴ Can you shout commands up to the clouds and make rain pour down on you?

³⁵ Can you cause flashes of lightning to come down and strike where you want them to strike?

Do those flashes say to you, 'Where do you want us to strike?'

³⁶ Who enables the clouds to know when they should cause rain to fall?

³⁷ Who is skilled enough to be able to count the clouds?

Who can tilt the containers of water
in the sky to cause the rain to fall

³⁸ so that the dry ground becomes hard
as the dry clods become wet and stick
together?

³⁹⁻⁴⁰ When a lioness and her cubs crouch
in their dens or hide in a thicket, waiting
for some animal to pass by that they can
kill,

can you find animals for the lioness to
kill

so that she and her cubs can eat the
meat and not be hungry anymore?

⁴¹ Who provides dead animals for the
raven,

when its young are calling out to me
for food,

when they are so weak because of
their lack of food that they stagger around
in their nests?

Chapter 39

¹ "Job, do you know at what time of
the year the female mountain goats give
birth?

Have you watched the wild deer while
their calves were being born?

² Do you know how many months pass
from the time they become pregnant until
their calves are born?

³ When they give birth, they crouch
down,

and then their labor pangs are done.

⁴ The young calves grow up in the open
fields,

and then they leave their mothers and
do not return to them again.

⁵ Who allows the wild donkeys to go
wherever they want away from the cities?

⁶ I am the one who has freed them and
put them in the desert plain,

in places where grass does not grow.

⁷ They do not like the noise in the cities;
in the desert they do not have to listen
to the shouts of those who forced them to
work.

⁸ They go over the hills to find food;
there they search for grass to eat.

⁹ Will a wild ox agree to work for you?

Will it allow you to keep it penned up
at night in the place where you put feed
for your animals?

¹⁰ Can you fasten a rope on it

so that it will plow furrows in your
fields, your fields in the valley?

¹¹ Since it is very strong, can you for that
reason trust it to work for you?

Can you go away after you tell it what
work it should do and assume that it will
do that work?

¹² Can you rely on it to come back from
the field

bringing your grain to the place where
you thresh it?

¹³ Think also about the ostriches. They
joyfully flap their wings,

but they have no love for their own
young.

¹⁴ Ostriches lay their eggs on top of the
ground and then walk away,

leaving the eggs to be warmed in the
sand.

¹⁵ Ostriches never think about the possi-
bility that some wild animal may step on
the eggs and crush them.

¹⁶ Ostriches act cruelly toward their chicks;

they act as though the chicks belonged to some other ostrich.

They are not concerned if their chicks die,

that they may have laid their eggs for nothing.

¹⁷ That is because I did not allow ostriches to be wise.

I did not enable them to be intelligent.

¹⁸ However, when they get up and begin to run,

they scornfully laugh at horses with their riders

because the horses cannot run as fast as the ostriches!

¹⁹ Also, think about horses. Job, are you the one who made the horses to be strong?

Are you the one who put flowing manes on their necks?

²⁰ Are you the one who enabled them to leap forward like locusts?

When they snort, they cause people to be afraid.

²¹ They paw the ground, rejoicing because they are very strong,

as they prepare to rush into battle.

²² It is as if they were laughing at the thought of being afraid. They are not afraid of anything!

They do not run away when the soldiers in the battle are fighting each other with swords.

²³ The quivers containing the riders' arrows rattle against the horses' sides,

and the spears and javelins flash in the light of the sun.

²⁴ The horses run very quickly, and they speedily cover the ground;

they rush into battle as soon as the trumpet is blown.

²⁵ They neigh joyfully when they hear someone blowing the trumpet.

They can smell a battle even when they are far away,

and they understand what it means when the commanders shout their commands to their soldiers.

²⁶ Think about big birds. Are you the one who enabled hawks to spread their wings and fly to the south for the winter?

²⁷ Do eagles fly high up into the cliffs to make their nests

because you commanded them to do that?

²⁸ They live in holes in those cliffs.

They are safe in those high pointed rocks because no animals can reach them there.

²⁹ As they watch carefully from there, they see animals far away that they can kill.

³⁰ After an eagle kills an animal, the baby eagles drink the blood of that animal;

they gather wherever there are dead people lying on the ground."

Chapter 40

¹ Then Yahweh said to Job,

² "Do you still want to argue with me, the Almighty One?

Since you criticize me, you should be able to answer my questions!"

³ Then Job replied to Yahweh,

⁴ "Now I realize that I am completely worthless. So how could I answer those questions?

I will put my hand over my mouth and not say anything.

⁵ I have already said more than I should have said,

so now I will say nothing more."

⁶ Then Yahweh again spoke to Job from inside a powerful storm. He said,

⁷ "I want to ask you some questions, so act like a man and get ready to answer my questions.

⁸ Are you going to accuse me and say that I am unjust?

Are you going to say that what I have done is wrong, in order that you can say that what you have done is right?

⁹ Do you have the same amount of power as I do?

Can your voice sound as loud as thunder, as mine can?

¹⁰ If you can do that, then put on the robes

that show that you are glorious and are greatly honored!

¹¹ Show that you are very angry;

show that you have the right to humble people who are very proud!

¹² Humble those proud people just by looking at them angrily!

Crush wicked people quickly!

¹³ Bury them in the ground!

Send them to the place where dead people are,

where they will not be able to get out!

¹⁴ If you do that, I will congratulate you

and say that truly you can save yourself by your own ability.

¹⁵ Think also about hippopotamuses.

I made you, and I made them also.

They eat grass, like oxen do.

¹⁶ Their legs are very strong,

and the muscles of their bellies are very powerful.

¹⁷ Their tails are stiff like the branches of a cedar tree.

The muscles of their thighs are close together.

¹⁸ Their thigh bones are like tubes made of bronze,

and the bones of their legs are like bars made of iron.

¹⁹ Hippopotamuses are among the strongest of the animals that I made,

and I, who created them, am the only one who can kill them.

²⁰ On the hills grows food for them to eat

while many other wild animals play nearby.

²¹ They lie down in the water under the lotus plants;

they hide in tall reeds in the swamps.

²² The hippopotamuses find shade under the lotus plants,

and they are surrounded by willow trees growing in the streams.

²³ They are not disturbed by raging, flooding rivers;

they are not even disturbed when rivers like the Jordan River rush over them.

²⁴ No one can catch them with hooks

or by piercing their noses with the teeth of a trap!

Chapter 41

¹ "Think also about crocodiles.

Can you catch them with a fishhook
or fasten their jaws with a rope?

² Can you put ropes through their noses
to control them

or thrust hooks through their jaws?

³ Will they plead with you to act mercifully toward them

or use sweet talk in order that you
will not harm them?

⁴ Will they make an agreement with you
to work for you,

to be your slaves as long as they live?

⁵ Can you make them into pets like you
do birds?

Can you put a leash around their
necks so that your servant girls can play
with them?

⁶ Will men who partner in selling fish
try to sell them in the market?

Will they cut a crocodile up into pieces
and sell the meat?

⁷ Can you pierce crocodiles through
their hides by throwing fishing spears at
them?

Can you pierce their heads with a
harpoon?

⁸ If you grab one of them with your
hands, it will give you a battle that you will
never forget,

and you will never try to do it again!

⁹ It is useless to even hope to subdue
them.

Anyone who tries to subdue one of
them will fall to the ground out of fear.

¹⁰ No one dares to make a crocodile an-
gry.

So, since I am much more power-
ful than they are, who would dare to cause
me to be angry?

¹¹ Also, everything on the earth is mine.

Therefore, no one is able to give any-
thing to me and require me to pay money
for it!

¹² I will tell you about how strong
crocodiles' legs are

and how strong their well formed
bodies are.

¹³ Can anyone strip off their hides?

Can anyone pierce through their dou-
ble layer of armor?

¹⁴ Can anyone pry open their jaws,
which have terrible teeth in them?

¹⁵ They have rows of scales on their back
which are as hard as rock.

¹⁶ The scales are very close together;
not even air can get between them.

¹⁷ The scales are joined very closely to
each other,

and they cannot be separated.

¹⁸ When crocodiles sneeze, the tiny
drops of water that come out of their
noses sparkle in the sunlight.

Their eyes are red like the rising sun.

¹⁹ It is as though sparks of fire poured
out of their mouths.

²⁰ Smoke pours out of their nostrils
as steam comes out of a pot that is put
over a very, very hot fire.

²¹ Their breath can cause coals to blaze
and flames to shoot out from their
mouths.

²² Their necks are very strong;
wherever they go, they make people
very afraid.

²³ The folds in their flesh are very close together

and are very hard.

²⁴ They are fearless

because the inner parts of their bodies are as hard as a rock,

as hard as the lower millstone on which people grind grain.

²⁵ When they rise up, they cause even very strong people to be terrified.

As a result, people fall back.

²⁶ People cannot injure them with swords;

spears, arrows, or or other weapons with sharp points cannot injure them, either.

²⁷ They certainly are not afraid of weapons made of straw or rotten wood,

but they are not even afraid of weapons made of iron or bronze!

²⁸ Shooting arrows at them does not cause them to run away.

Hurling stones at them from a sling is like hurling bits of chaff at them.

²⁹ They are not afraid of clubs anymore than they would be afraid of men throwing bits of straw at them,

and they laugh when they hear a spear coming at them.

³⁰ Their bellies are covered with scales that are as sharp as broken pieces of pottery.

When they drag themselves through the mud,

their bellies tear up the ground like a plow.

³¹ They stir up the water and cause it to foam

as they churn through it.

³² As they go through the water, their wakes glisten.

People who see it would think that the foam had become white hair.

³³ There are no creatures on earth that I have created as fearless as crocodiles.

³⁴ They are the proudest of all the creatures;

they are like kings over all the other wild animals."

Chapter 42

¹ Then Job replied to Yahweh. He said,

² "I know that you can do everything and that no one can stop you from doing what you want to do.

³ You asked me, 'Who are you to bring confusion to what I plan to do? You are speaking ignorantly!'

It is true that I spoke about things that I did not understand,

things that are very amazing, things about which I know nothing.

⁴ You said to me, 'Listen while I talk to you.

I want to ask you some questions, so prepare yourself to answer them.'

⁵ I had heard about you previously by rumor,

but now it is as though I have seen you with my own eyes.

⁶ Therefore I am ashamed of what I said, and I sit in dust and ashes to show that I am sorry for what I said."

⁷ After Yahweh said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz, "I am angry with you and your two friends, Bildad and Zophar, because you did not say true things about

me, as my servant Job did. ⁸ So now you must take to Job seven young bulls and seven rams and kill them and burn them on the altar as a sacrifice for yourselves. Then Job will pray for you, and I will do what he requests me to do. I will forgive you for speaking wrongly about me. I will not punish you, even though you deserve to be punished, because what you said about me was not right.”

⁹ So Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar did what Yahweh commanded them to do, and Yahweh did what Job requested him to do for the three of them.

¹⁰ After Job prayed for his three friends, Yahweh healed him and caused him to become rich again. Yahweh gave him twice as many things as he had before. ¹¹ Then all his brothers and sisters, and all the people who had known him before, came to his house, and they had a feast together. They consoled him because of all the troubles that Yahweh had allowed to happen to him. Each of them gave Job a piece of silver and a gold ring.

¹² Then Yahweh blessed Job in the second half of his life more than he had blessed him in the first half of his life. He now acquired fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand oxen, and one thousand female donkeys. ¹³ And he also had seven more sons and three more daughters. ¹⁴ He named the first daughter Jemimah, he named the second daughter Keziah, and he named the third daughter Keren Happuch. ¹⁵ In all of the land of Uz, there were no young women who were as beautiful as the daughters of Job, and Job declared that they would inherit some of his possessions, just as their brothers would inherit some.

¹⁶ After that, Job lived 140 more years. Before he died, he saw his great-great-grandchildren. ¹⁷ He was very old when he died.

PSALMS

Psalm 1

¹ How fortunate are those who do not do what the wicked people advise them to do,

who do not imitate the behavior of sinful people,

and who do not join with people who ridicule God.

² Instead, those with whom Yahweh is pleased delight in understanding what he teaches us.

They read and think every day and every night about what Yahweh teaches.

³ They constantly do things that please God,

just as fruit trees that have been planted along the banks of a stream produce fruit at the right time every year.

Like trees that never wither,
they succeed in everything that they do.

⁴ But wicked people are not like that!
Wicked people are as worthless as chaff
that is blown away by the wind.

⁵ Therefore, when God judges all mankind, he will condemn the wicked.

Furthermore, the wicked will not be present when Yahweh gathers all the righteous people together.

⁶ For Yahweh guides and protects righteous people,

but the path that the wicked walk on leads them to where God will destroy them forever.

Psalm 2

¹ Why do the leaders of nations rage against Yahweh?

Why do people plan to rebel against him, even though it is in vain?

² The kings of the nations on earth prepare to revolt;

the rulers plot together to fight against Yahweh and against his Anointed One.

³ They shout, "We should free ourselves from their control;

we should not let them rule over us any longer!"

⁴ But the one who sits on his throne in heaven laughs at them;

the Lord ridicules those rulers.

⁵ Then, because he is angry with them, he rebukes them.

He causes them to be terrified when they realize that he will furiously punish them.

⁶ Yahweh says, "I have put my king on a throne on Zion, my sacred hill in Jerusalem."

⁷ His king says, "I will proclaim what Yahweh has decreed.

He said to me, 'You are my son;
today I have become your father.

⁸ Request me to give you the nations
so that they belong to you permanently,

and I will give them to you.

Even the most remote nations will be yours.

⁹ You will strike them down with an iron rod;

like the potter crashes his pot into pieces when he throws it on the ground,

that is how you will break them up into small pieces.

¹⁰ So then, you kings and other rulers on the earth, act wisely!

Listen to what Yahweh is warning you!

¹¹ Worship Yahweh; fervently honor him.

Rejoice about the things he has done, but tremble before him!

¹² Bow down humbly before his son!

If you do not do that, he will be angry, and he will suddenly kill you.

Do not forget that he can, in one moment, show that he is very angry!

But how fortunate are all those who request him to protect them.

Psalm 3

¹ Yahweh, I have many enemies!

There are many people who oppose me.

² Many people are saying about me,
“God will certainly not help him.”

³ But Yahweh, you are like a shield that protects me.

You greatly honor me, and you encourage me.

⁴ I cry out to you, Yahweh,

and you answer me from Zion, your sacred hill.

⁵ At night I lay down and slept, and I woke up in the morning

because you, Yahweh, took care of me all during the night.

⁶ There may be thousands of enemy soldiers who surround me,

but I am not afraid.

⁷ Yahweh, arise!

My God, come and rescue me again!

You will insult my enemies by slapping them on their cheeks;

when you strike them, you will destroy their power,

with the result that they cannot hurt anyone.

⁸ Yahweh, you are the one who saves your people from their enemies.

Yahweh, bless your people!

Psalm 4

¹ God, answer me when I pray to you.

You are the one who shows people that I am right to trust in you.

You rescued me when I was in great trouble.

Act mercifully toward me and listen to me while I pray.

² How long will you people shame me instead of honoring me?

You people love to falsely accuse me.

³ All those who honor Yahweh—

he has chosen them to belong to him.

Yahweh will listen to me when I pray to him.

⁴ You should be afraid of Yahweh, but do not allow your fear to cause you to sin.

While you lie on your bed,

silently examine what you are thinking in your inner being.

⁵ Also, offer to Yahweh the proper sacrifices

and continue trusting in him.

⁶ Some people ask, “Will someone please bring good things to us?”

But I say, “Yahweh, continue to act kindly toward us.

⁷ You have caused me to be very happy;

I am happier than people who have harvested a great amount of grain and grapes.

⁸ It is in peace and security that I will lie down at night and sleep soundly

because I know that it is only you, Yahweh, who will keep me safe.”

Psalm 5

¹ Yahweh, listen to me while I pray!

Pay attention to me when I am groaning because I am suffering very much.

² You are my king and my God.

When I call to you to request you to help me, listen to me

because you are the one to whom I pray.

³ You listen to me when I pray to you each morning,

and I wait for you to reply.

⁴ You are not a god who is pleased with wicked people;

you will never welcome those who do what is evil.

⁵ You do not allow those who are proud to come to you to worship you.

You hate all those who do evil things.

⁶ You get rid of liars,

and you despise those who murder others and those who deceive others.

⁷ Yahweh, because you greatly and faithfully love me,

I come into your temple.

I have an awesome respect for you

and I will bow down to worship you at your sacred temple.

⁸ Yahweh, because you act righteously toward me,

show me what is right for me to do.

Because I have many enemies,

show me clearly how to live in the right way.

⁹ My enemies never say what is true;

in their inner beings they want to destroy others.

They speak threats of violence and death.

They use their tongues to say good things to please people.

¹⁰ O God, declare that they are guilty and punish them.

Cause them to experience the same disasters that they plan to cause to happen to others.

Get rid of them because they have committed many sins,

and they have rebelled against you.

¹¹ But cause that all those who go to you to be protected will rejoice;

cause them to sing joyfully to you forever.

Protect those who love you;

they are truly happy because of what you do for them.

¹² Yahweh, you always bless those who act righteously;

you protect them as a soldier protects himself with his shield.

Psalm 6

¹ Yahweh, do not correct me when you are angry with me;

do not punish me when you are upset.

² Yahweh, act kindly toward me and heal me because I have become weak.

My body shakes because I am experiencing so much sorrow.

³ Yahweh, I am greatly troubled in my inner being.

How long must I endure this?

⁴ Yahweh, please come and rescue me.

Save me because you always keep the promises of your covenant.

⁵ I will not be able to praise you after I die;

no one in the place where the dead are praise you.

⁶ I am exhausted because of my pain.

I cry all night long so that my bed and my pillow are drenched by my tears.

⁷ Because I cry so much, I cannot see well.

My eyes have become weak because I constantly cry in fear of my enemies.

⁸ You people who do evil things, get away from me,

because Yahweh heard me when I was crying!

⁹ Yahweh heard me when I called out for him to help me,

and he will answer my prayer.

¹⁰ When that happens, all my enemies will be ashamed;

they will be the ones who are terrified.

They will turn away from me and suddenly leave me

because they will be disgraced.

Psalm 7

¹ Yahweh my God, I come to you to protect me.

Rescue me, save me from all those who are pursuing me in order to harm me.

² If you do not do that, they will tear me into pieces

like a lion does when it attacks the animals it wants to kill;

no one will save me from them.

³ Yahweh my God, suppose that I have done anything that is wrong,

⁴ or that I have done evil to some friend,

or that, for no good reason, I have harmed my enemies.

⁵ Then allow my enemies to pursue me and capture me.

Allow them to trample me into the ground

and leave me lying dead in the dirt.

⁶ Yahweh, because you are very angry with those who pursue me,

arise and attack the ones attacking me!

Do to them what you have said is just!

⁷ The people of all nations gather around you to attack you,

but you will rule them from where you are in heaven.

⁸ Yahweh, judge the people of all nations!

Yahweh, show that I have done nothing wrong.

⁹ God, you know what every person is thinking in his inner being

and because you are righteous, you always do what is just.

So now stop evil people from doing wicked deeds,

and defend all of us who are righteous!

¹⁰ God, you protect me as a shield protects soldiers;

you rescue all those who are righteous in their inner being.

¹¹ You judge everyone correctly,

and every day you punish wicked people who insult your law.

¹² Whenever your enemies do not repent,

it is as though you sharpen your sword and put a string on your bow to get ready to kill them.

¹³ You are preparing your weapons to kill those whom you strike;

the arrows that you will shoot have flaming tips.

¹⁴ Wicked people plot their lies and evil things,

they plan and take delight in their thoughts like a pregnant woman who is planning to give birth.

¹⁵ But when they dig a deep pit to trap others,

they themselves will fall into it.

¹⁶ They themselves will experience the trouble that they want to cause others to have;

they will hurt themselves by the violent things that they want to do to others.

¹⁷ I praise Yahweh because he always acts righteously;

I sing to praise Yahweh, the one who is much greater than any other god.

Psalm 8

¹ Yahweh our Lord, people all over the world know that you are very great!

We see your greatness every time we look toward the heavens!

² You have taught little children and infants to praise you;

they cause your enemies and those who try to get revenge on you to be silent.

³ I look up at the sky at night

and see the things that you have made—

the moon and the stars that you have set in place.

⁴ It is amazing to me that you think about people,

that you are concerned about us humans!

⁵ You made the angels in heaven to be only a little more important than we are;

you caused us to be like kings!

⁶ You put us in charge of everything that you made;

you gave us authority over all things—

⁷ the sheep and the cattle,

and even the wild animals,

⁸ the birds, the fish,

and everything else that swims in the seas.

⁹ Yahweh our Lord,

people all over the world know that you are very great!

Psalm 9

¹ Yahweh, I will praise you with all of my inner being.

I will tell others about all the wonderful things that you have done.

² I will sing to celebrate what you, who are much greater than all other gods, have done.

³ When my enemies realize that you are very powerful,

they stumble, and then they are killed.

⁴ You sit on your throne to judge people, and you have judged fairly concerning me.

⁵ You rebuked the people of other nations,

and you have gotten rid of the wicked people;

you have erased their names forever.

⁶ Our enemies have disappeared;

you destroyed their cities,

and people do not even remember them anymore.

⁷ But Yahweh rules forever.

He judges people while he sits on his throne.

⁸ He will judge all the people in the world justly;

he will be fair when he judges the people of every nation.

⁹ Yahweh will be a refuge for those who are oppressed;

he will be like a shelter for them when they have trouble.

¹⁰ Those who know Yahweh trust in him;

he never abandons those who come to him for help.

¹¹ Yahweh rules on Mount Zion;

praise him and sing to him.

Tell the people of all the nations the marvelous things that he has done.

¹² He does not forget to punish those who have murdered others;

he will punish them,

and he will not ignore people who are crying because they are suffering.

¹³ Yahweh, act mercifully toward me!

Look at the ways that my enemies have injured me.

Do not allow me to die because of these injuries.

¹⁴ I want to live in order that I can praise you at the gates of Jerusalem

and to rejoice because you rescued me.

¹⁵ It is as though the wicked people of many nations have dug a pit for me to fall into,

but they have fallen into that same pit.

It is as though they have spread out a net to catch me,

but their feet have been caught in that same net.

¹⁶ Because of what you have done, people know that you make justice happen;

you allow wicked people to be trapped by the same evil things that they themselves do.

¹⁷ Wicked people will all die and be buried in their graves;

their spirits will go to be with all those who have forgotten about you.

¹⁸ But you will not forget those who are needy;

what they confidently expect will never be in vain.

¹⁹ Yahweh, do not allow our enemies to conquer us

just because they are strong;

You see what the people do and you bring justice to them all.

²⁰ Yahweh, teach them that they must be afraid of you and honor you.

Cause them to know that they are only human beings.

Psalm 10

¹ Yahweh, why do you keep yourself far away from us?

Why do you not pay attention when we have troubles?

² Proud, wicked people, have a terrible desire within them to make poor people suffer.

God, make them fall into their own traps, so that what they did to others may be done to them!

³ The wicked person boasts about the evil things he wants to do.

He desires to own the things that others have, and he does not want them to own more things than he has.

He boasts about all the things he owns, while he curses you, Yahweh.

⁴ The wicked person is so proud

he never looks for God

and if he did look for God, he would not find him.

He is too proud to even think about God.

⁵ But, looking at the life of the wicked man,

it seems that everything he does is successful.

He cannot even understand your commands, God,

and then he mocks his enemies.

⁶ In his mind he thinks, "Nothing bad can happen to me!

As long as I live, I will never have troubles."

⁷ When he speaks he always curses and tells lies,

and he makes threats against others.

When he talks, he only speaks about hurting or destroying other people.

⁸ He makes plans to attack the people living in the villages, people who have done nothing wrong.

He waits in places where he can hide

while he keeps looking for more people he can attack,

people who cannot defend themselves.

⁹ He waits for his victims like a lion who crouches down,

and just like the lion, he hides in the bushes.

He is like the hunter who spreads out the net

so he can catch helpless people and drag them away.

¹⁰ The helpless people are crushed by the wicked person's plans

and all the things he does.

He is powerful, and when he opposes the helpless people,

he always takes away from them whatever he wants.

¹¹ The wicked person says, "God cannot remember what I did.

His eyes are covered, and he cannot see anything that I have done.”

¹² Yahweh, arise! God, strike him down!

Do not forget those who are suffering!

¹³ Why does the most wicked person curse you, God, and turn away from you?

Does he think, “God can never punish me”?

¹⁴ God, you do see the trouble and the distress that the wicked person causes.

And you will strike the wicked man and punish him for all that he does.

¹⁵ God, destroy the power of the person who is wicked and evil!

Make him pay for those evil things he did,

those things that he thought God would not find out about him.

¹⁶ Yahweh is king forever!

He will drive out foreign people from his land.

¹⁷ Yahweh, when the people who suffer cry out to you, you listen.

You hear them when they pray and you encourage them.

¹⁸ You defend the orphans and oppressed people

when the strong and the wicked work to do them harm.

And so, no one has to worry or be terrified anymore.

Psalm 11

¹ I trust that Yahweh will protect me.

So I do not fly off to the mountains like birds do.

² It is true that wicked people have hidden in the darkness,

that they have pulled back their bowstrings and aimed their arrows

to shoot them at people who honor Yahweh.

³ When wicked people do not suffer for disobeying the laws,

what can righteous people do?

⁴ But Yahweh is sitting on his throne in his sacred temple in heaven,

and he sees everything that people do.

⁵ Yahweh examines what righteous people do and what wicked people do,

and he hates those who love to injure others.

⁶ He will send down from the sky flaming coals and burning sulfur on the wicked;

he will send scorching hot winds to punish them.

⁷ Yahweh does everything that is right, and he loves those who do what is right;

such people will come into his presence.

Psalm 12

¹ Yahweh, help us! It seems like people who honor you are no more,

that those who are loyal to you have all vanished.

² Everyone tells lies to other people;

they deceive others by flattering them, but they tell lies.

³ Yahweh, we wish that you would cut off their tongues

so that they cannot continue to boast.

⁴ They say, "By telling lies we will get what we want;

we control what we say, so no one can tell us what we should do!"

⁵ But Yahweh replies, "I have seen the violent things that they have done to helpless people;

I have heard those people groaning,
so I will arise and rescue the people who are wanting me to help them."

⁶ Yahweh, you always do what you have promised to do;

what you have promised is as precious and pure as silver

that has been heated seven times in a furnace to get rid of all the impure material.

⁷ Yahweh, we know that you will protect us who honor you

from those wicked people,

⁸ those who strut around proudly,
while people praise them for doing evil deeds.

Psalm 13

¹ Yahweh, how long will you continue to forget about me?

Will you hide yourself from me forever?

² How long must I endure anguish within myself?

Must I be miserable every day?

How long will my enemies continue to defeat me?

³ Yahweh my God, look at me and answer me.

Restore my strength, or I will die.

⁴ Do not allow my enemies to boast and to say, "We have defeated him!"

Do not allow them to defeat me,
with the result that they will rejoice about it!

⁵ But I trust that you will faithfully love me;

I will rejoice when you rescue me.

⁶ Yahweh, you have done many good things for me,

so I will sing to you.

Psalm 14

¹ Only foolish people say to themselves, "There is no God!"

People who say those things only do corrupt deeds;

there is not one of them who does what is good.

² From heaven Yahweh looks down at everyone;

he looks to see if anyone is very wise,

wise enough to desire to know him.

³ Everyone turns away from Yahweh. They are depraved and do disgusting, filthy things.

No one does what is good.

⁴ Will those evil people never learn what God will do to punish them?

They act violently toward Yahweh's people and want to consume them like one who eats food consumes it,

and they never pray to Yahweh.

⁵ But some day they will become very terrified

because God helps those who act righteously and will punish those who reject him.

⁶ Those who do evil may prevent helpless people from doing what they plan to do,

but Yahweh protects them.

⁷ Out of Zion Yahweh will come and rescue the Israelite people!

He will make his people free again and will bring them back to their home.

On that day all of us Israelite people will rejoice, and we, who are also called the descendants of Jacob, will be happy.

Psalm 15

¹ Yahweh, who are allowed to enter your sacred tent?

Who are allowed to live on your sacred mountain?

² Only those who always do what is right and do not sin may do that,

those who always speak the truth.

³ They do not slander others.

They do not do to others things that are wrong,

and they do not say bad things about anyone.

⁴ People who honor God hate those whom he has rejected,

but they respect those who have a fearful respect for Yahweh.

They do what they have promised to do even if it causes them trouble to do that.

⁵ They lend money to others without charging interest,

and they never accept bribes in order to lie about people who have not done anything wrong.

Those who do those things will always live in safety.

Psalm 16

¹ God, protect me

because I go to you to keep me safe!

² I said to Yahweh, "You are my Lord; all the good things that I have come from you."

³ People who try to be holy who live in this land are wonderful;

I delight to be with them.

⁴ Those who choose to worship other gods will have many things that cause them to be sad.

I will not join them when they make sacrifices to their gods;

I will not even join them in speaking the names of their gods.

⁵ Yahweh, you are the one whom I have chosen,

and you give me great blessings.

You protect me and control what happens to me.

⁶ Yahweh has given me a wonderful place in which to live;

I am delighted with all the things that he has given me.

⁷ I will praise Yahweh, the one who teaches me;

even at night he tells my heart what is right for me to do.

⁸ I know that Yahweh is always with me.

Nothing will take me from his side.

⁹ Therefore I am glad; I am honored to praise him,

and I can rest securely

¹⁰ because you, Yahweh, will not allow me to remain in the place where the dead people are,

and you will not allow me, someone who has been faithful to the covenant, to stay there.

¹¹ You will show me the road that leads to where I receive eternal life,

and you will make me joyful when I am with you.

I will have pleasure forever when I am at your right hand.

Psalm 17

¹ Yahweh, listen to me while I plead with you to act justly toward me.

Hear me while I call out to you to help me.

Pay attention to what I say while I pray because I am speaking honestly.

² You are the one who is able to declare that I am innocent;

please agree to do what is right for me.

³ If you come to me at night to learn what I think,

if you see what I think in my heart,

you will know that I have determined to never tell any lies; you will find that I do not think evil things.

⁴ I have not acted like those who do not honor you;

I have always acted in the power of what you have instructed me;

I have not acted like those who do not know your law.

⁵ I have always done what you told me to do;

I have never failed to do those things.

⁶ O God, I am praying to you because you answer me;

please listen to what I am saying.

⁷ Continue to show me your love as you promised you would do.

By your great power you protect all who trust in you; you keep them safe from their enemies.

⁸ Protect me as carefully as people protect their own eyes;

protect me like birds protect their babies under their wings.

⁹ Do not allow wicked people to attack me,

those enemies of mine who surround, wanting to kill me.

¹⁰ They are proud of their riches and success,

but they have no mercy on anyone.

¹¹ They have hunted for me and found me.

They surround me, watching for an opportunity to throw me to the ground and kill me.

¹² They are like lions that are ready to tear apart the animals that they capture;

They are like young lions that are hiding, waiting to jump on their prey.

¹³ Yahweh, arise, attack my enemies, and defeat them!

With your sword save me from those wicked people!

¹⁴ Yahweh, by your power rescue me from those people who are interested only in things here in this world.

But you provide plenty of food for those whom you love dearly;

their children also have many things that their grandchildren will inherit.

¹⁵ Yahweh, because I act in the right way, I will be with you one day.

When I awake after I die, I will see you face to face, and then I will be happy.

Psalm 18

¹ Yahweh, I love you, the one who enables me to be strong.

² Yahweh is like a huge rock; when I am on top of it, my enemies cannot reach me. He is like a strong fortress; I run into it to be safe.

He protects me like a shield protects a soldier; he is the one whom I trust to keep me safe; he defends me by his great power!

³ I called out to Yahweh, who deserves for me to praise him, and he rescued me from my enemies.

⁴ All around me were dangerous situations in which I might die; it was as though there were huge waves that almost crashed on me and killed me.

⁵ It was as though the place where dead people are had ropes that were wrapped around me, or it was as though there was a trap that would seize and kill me.

⁶ But when I was very distressed, I called out to Yahweh, and far off in his temple he heard me.

He listened to me when I cried out for help.

⁷ Then Yahweh became angry, and the earth quaked, and the mountains shook to their very foundations!

⁸ He was so angry that it was as though smoke poured out from his nostrils, as though burning coals came out of his mouth!

⁹ He opened the sky and came down with a black cloud under his feet.

¹⁰ He flew, riding on the back of an angel traveling fast, which the wind was blowing along.

¹¹ Darkness was all around him like a blanket; dark clouds, full of water moisture, covered him.

¹² Hailstones and flashes of lightning were around him; hail and burning coals fell down from the sky.

¹³ Then Yahweh shouted loudly from the sky, and to his enemies, it sounded like thunder. Yahweh, the Supreme God, rained hailstones on them and caused lightning to flash against them.

¹⁴ He shot his arrows at them and caused them to scatter; his flashes of lightning caused them to become very confused.

¹⁵ The bottom of the ocean became visible, and the water uncovered the foundations of the earth when Yahweh rebuked his enemies

with the breath that came in his anger!

¹⁶ It was as though he reached down from heaven and grabbed me and pulled me up out of the deep ocean.

¹⁷ He rescued me from my strong enemies who hated me; they were very strong, and I could not defeat them by myself.

¹⁸ When I was distressed, they attacked me, but Yahweh defended me.

¹⁹ He made me completely safe; he rescued me because he was pleased with me.

²⁰ Yahweh has rewarded me because I do what is right; he has blessed me because I am innocent.

²¹ I have obeyed Yahweh's laws; I have not abandoned him.

²² I have followed his decrees; I have not stopped obeying them.

²³ He knows that I have not done what is wrong and that I have kept myself from sinning.

²⁴ So he rewards me because I do what is right; he knows that I have not committed sins.

²⁵ Yahweh, you are faithful to those who faithfully do your covenant; you always do what is good to those who do not do evil.

²⁶ You are kind to those who are honest toward others, but you act wisely toward those who act dishonestly.

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

²⁸ You keep me alive, and you will continue to do so.

²⁹ You enable me to be strong, so that I can attack and defeat a line of enemy soldiers; with your help I can scale the walls that surround my enemies' cities.

³⁰ Everything that Yahweh my God does is perfect. We can depend on him to do what he promises.

He is like a shield to protect all those who go to him to be safe.

³¹ Yahweh is the only one who is God; only he is like a huge rock on top of which we can be safe.

³² God is the one who enables me to be strong and who keeps me safe on the roads that I walk on.

³³ He enables me to walk swiftly without stumbling as a deer walks in the mountains.

³⁴ He teaches me how to use a strong bow in order that I can use it to fight in

battles.

³⁵ Yahweh, you protect and save me with your shield; you are strong and have therefore kept me safe. I have become strong because you have helped me.

³⁶ You have made a safe path for me, with the result that now I do not slip.

³⁷ I pursued my enemies and caught them; I did not stop until I had defeated them all.

³⁸ When I strike them, they are not able to get up again; they lie on the ground, defeated.

³⁹ You have enabled me to be strong in order that I can fight battles and defeat my enemies.

⁴⁰ You delivered my enemies to me, for me to strike them on their necks. I have gotten rid of all those who hated me.

⁴¹ They shouted for someone to help them, but no one saved them. They shouted out to Yahweh, but he did not help them.

⁴² I crushed them to powder, and they became like the dust that the wind blows away; I threw them out like people throw dirt out into the streets.

⁴³ You enabled me to defeat those who fought against me and appointed me to be the ruler of many nations; people whom I did not know about previously are now slaves in my kingdom.

⁴⁴ When foreigners hear about me, they cringe and they obey me.

⁴⁵ They are no longer courageous, and from their holes where they were hiding they come to me trembling.

⁴⁶ Yahweh is alive! Praise the one who is like a huge rock on top of which I am safe! Exalt the God who saves me!

⁴⁷ He enables me to get revenge on my enemies; he causes me to defeat nations and to rule over them.

⁴⁸ it is Yahweh who rescues me from my enemies. He has lifted me up high so that violent men could not reach me and harm me.

⁴⁹ So I praise him, and I tell the nations the great things that he has done.

⁵⁰ He has enabled me, his king, to powerfully defeat my enemies; he faithfully loves me as he promised in his covenant.

He loves me, David, the one he has chosen to be king, and he will faithfully love my descendants forever.

Psalm 19

¹ When people look at everything that God has placed in the skies, they can see that he is very great;

they can see the great things that he has created.

² Day after day it is as though the sun proclaims the glory of God,

and night after night it is as though the moon and stars say that they know that God made them.

³ They do not really speak;

they do not say any words.

There is no sound from them for anyone to hear.

⁴ But what they declare about God goes throughout the world,

and even people who live in the most distant places on earth can know it.

The sun is in the skies where God placed it;

⁵ it rises each morning like a bridegroom who is happy as he comes out of his bedroom after his wedding.

It is like a strong athlete who is very eager to start running in a race.

⁶ The sun rises at one side of the sky and goes across the sky and sets on the other side;

nothing can hide from its heat.

⁷ The instructions that Yahweh has given us are perfect;

they revive us.

We can be sure that the things that Yahweh has told us will never change,

and by learning them people who have not been previously taught will become wise.

⁸ Yahweh's laws are fair;

when we obey them, we become joyful.

The commands of Yahweh are clear,

and by reading them we start to understand how God wants us to behave.

⁹ It is good for people to revere Yahweh; that is something that they will do forever.

What Yahweh has decreed is fair,

and it is always right.

¹⁰ The things that God has decided are more valuable than gold,

even the finest gold.

They are sweeter than honey

that drips from honeycombs.

¹¹ Furthermore, by reading them I learn what things are good to do and what things are evil,

and they promise a great reward

to us who obey them.

¹² But here is no one who can know all his errors;

so Yahweh, forgive me for these things which I do that I do not realize are wrong.

¹³ Keep me from doing things that I know are wrong;

do not let me keep doing the evil things I want to do.

If you do that, I will no longer be guilty for committing such sins,

and I will not commit the great sin of rebelling terribly against you.

¹⁴ O Yahweh, you are like a huge rock on top of which I can be safe; you are the one who protects me.

I hope that the things that I say and what I think will always please you.

Psalm 20

¹ We desire that Yahweh may help you when you call out to him when you have troubles!

We desire that God, whom our ancestor Jacob honored, may keep you safe from your enemies.

² We desire that he may reach out from his sacred temple and help you

and aid you from where he lives on Mount Zion.

³ We desire that he may accept all the offerings that you give him to be burned on the altar

and all your other offerings.

⁴ We desire that he may give to you what you desire in your heart,

and that you may be able to accomplish all that you desire to do.

⁵ When you defeat your enemies, we will shout joyfully.

We will lift up a banner proclaiming that it is God who has helped you.

May Yahweh do for you all that you request him to do.

⁶ I know now that Yahweh rescues me, the one whom he has chosen to be king.

From his holy place in heaven he will answer me,

and he will save me by his great power.

⁷ Some kings trust that because they have chariots they will be able to defeat their enemies,

and some trust that their horses will enable them to defeat their enemies,

but we will trust in the power of Yahweh our God.

⁸ Some will stumble and fall down,

but we will be strong and not be moved.

⁹ Yahweh, help the king defeat our enemies!

Answer us when we call out to you to help us!

Psalm 21

¹ Yahweh, the man you made king is glad because you have caused him to be strong.

He rejoices because you have enabled him to defeat his enemies.

² You have given him everything he most desired,

and you have not refused to do what he requested you to do.

³ You have done so many wonderful things for him.

You placed a gold crown on his head.

⁴ He asked you to let him live for a long time,

and you have enabled him to live for a long time.

⁵ His power as king is very great because you have allowed him to win victories over his enemies.

⁶ You will bless him forever,

and you have caused him to be joyful in your presence.

⁷ Yahweh, you are God Almighty,

and the king trusts in you.

Because you faithfully love him,

disastrous things will never happen to him.

⁸ You will enable him to kill all his enemies,

all those who hate him.

⁹ When you appear, you will throw them into a fiery furnace.

Because you are angry with them, you will swallow them up;

the fire will burn them up.

¹⁰ You will remove their children from this earth;

their descendants will all disappear.

¹¹ They wanted to harm you,

but what they plan will never succeed.

¹² You will cause them to run away

by shooting arrows at them.

¹³ Yahweh, show us that you are very strong!

When you do that, we will sing and praise you because you are very powerful.

Psalm 22

¹ My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

Why do you stay so far from me,

and why do you not listen to me?

Why do you not hear me when I am suffering and groaning?

² My God, every day I call to you during the daytime, but you do not answer me.

I call to you during the night; I am not silent at all.

³ But you are holy.

You sit on your throne as king, and we the people of Israel praise you.

⁴ Our ancestors trusted in you.

Because they trusted in you, you rescued them.

⁵ When they called out to you for help, you saved them.

They trusted in you, and they were not disappointed.

⁶ But you have not rescued me!

People despise me and consider that I am not a man;

they think that I am a worm!

Everyone scorns me and despises me.

⁷ Everyone who sees me makes fun of me.

They sneer at me and insult me by shaking their heads at me as though I were an evil man.

They say,

⁸ "He trusts in Yahweh,

so Yahweh should save him!

He says that Yahweh is very pleased with him;

if that is so, Yahweh should rescue him!"

⁹ You, God, have been with me since I was in my mother's womb,

and you taught me to trust you when I was at my mother's breasts.

¹⁰ It was as though you had adopted me right when I was born.

You have been my God ever since I was born.

¹¹ So do not stay far from me now

because enemies who will cause me much trouble are near me,

and there is no one else who can help me.

¹² My enemies surround me like a herd of wild bulls.

Fierce people, like those strong bulls that graze on the hills in the region of Bashan, surround me.

¹³ They are like roaring lions that are attacking the animals that they want to eat;

they rush toward me to kill me;

they are like lions that have their mouths open, ready to chew their victims to pieces.

¹⁴ I am completely exhausted,

and all my bones are out of their joints.

I no longer expect that God will save me;

I am completely discouraged.

¹⁵ My strength is all dried up

like a broken piece of a clay jar that has dried in the sun.

I am so thirsty that my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth.

God, I think that you are about to let my body die and become dust!

¹⁶ My enemies are like wild dogs that surround me.

A group of evil men has encircled me, ready to attack me.

They have pierced through my hands and my feet.

¹⁷ I am so weak and thin that I can count all my bones.

My enemies stare at me and gloat about what has happened to me.

¹⁸ They looked at the clothes that I was wearing

and gambled to determine which piece each of them would get.

¹⁹ Yahweh, be concerned for me!

You who are my source of strength, come quickly and help me!

²⁰ Rescue me from those who want to kill me with their swords.

Save my life from the power of those who are like wild dogs.

²¹ Snatch me away from my enemies who are like lions with jaws open and ready to chew me up!

Grab me away from those men who are like wild oxen that attack other animals with their horns!

²² If you save me from them, I will declare to my fellow Israelites how great you are.

I will praise you among the group of your people gathered together to worship you.

²³ You people who have an awesome respect for Yahweh, praise him!

All you who are descended from Jacob, honor Yahweh!

All you Israelite people, revere him!

²⁴ He does not despise or ignore those who are suffering;

he does not hide his face from them.

He has listened to them when they cried out to him for help.

²⁵ Yahweh, in the great gathering of your people, I will praise you for what you have done.

In the presence of those who have an awesome respect for you, I will offer the sacrifices that I promised.

²⁶ The poor people whom I have invited to the meal will eat as much as they want.

All who come to worship Yahweh will praise him.

I pray that God will enable you all to live a long and happy life!

²⁷ I pray that people in all nations, even in the remote areas, will think about Yahweh and turn to him,

and that people from all the clans in the world will bow down before him.

²⁸ For Yahweh is the king!

He rules all the nations.

²⁹ All the rich people on the earth will celebrate and bow before him.

Some day they will die, for they cannot avoid it,

but they will prostrate themselves on the ground in his presence.

³⁰ People in the future generations will also serve Yahweh.

They will tell their children about what Yahweh has done.

³¹ People who are not yet born, who will live in future years, will learn how Yahweh rescued his people.

People will tell them, "Yahweh did it!"

Psalm 23

¹ Yahweh, you care for me like a shepherd cares for his sheep,

so I have everything that I need.

² You enable me to rest in peace

as when a shepherd leads his sheep to places where there is plenty of green grass for them to eat,

as when he lets them lie down beside streams where the water is flowing slowly.

³ You renew my strength.

You show me how to live in the right way,

in order that I can honor you.

⁴ Even when I am walking in very dangerous places

where I might die,

I will not be afraid of anything

because you are with me.

You protect me like a shepherd protects his sheep.

⁵ You prepare a great feast for me

in a place where my enemies can see me.

You welcome me

as a guest whom you honor.

You have given me very many blessings!

⁶ I am certain that you will be good to me

and act mercifully toward me

as long as I live;

then, O Yahweh, I will live in your home forever.

Psalm 24

¹ The earth and everything in it belongs to Yahweh;

all the people in the world belong to him, too;

² he built the land on the water,
above the water that is deep below.

³ Who will be allowed to go up onto Mount Zion in Jerusalem,

in order to stand and worship in Yahweh's holy temple?

⁴ Only those whose actions and thoughts are pure,

who have not worshiped idols,

and who do not tell lies when they have solemnly promised to tell the truth.

⁵ Yahweh will bless them.

When God judges them, he will rescue them and say that they have done nothing wrong.

⁶ They are the people who come to God,
they are the ones who desire to worship God,

and serve the God of Jacob.

⁷ Open up the temple gates

in order that our glorious king may enter!

⁸ Do you know who the glorious king is?

It is Yahweh, the one who is very strong;

It is Yahweh, who conquers all his enemies in battles!

⁹ Open up the temple gates

in order that our glorious king may enter!

¹⁰ Do you know who the glorious king is?

It is Yahweh, commander of the angel armies;

he is our glorious king!

Psalm 25

¹ Yahweh, I give myself to you.

² My God, I trust in you.

Do not allow my enemies to defeat me
and shame me.

Do not allow my enemies to defeat me
and rejoice over me.

³ Do not allow any of those who trust in you to be ashamed.

Cause those who act treacherously toward others to be disgraced.

⁴ Yahweh, show me the way that I should conduct my life,

teach me how to act in the manner that you want me to act.

⁵ Teach me to conduct my life by obeying your truth

because you are my God, the one who saves me.

All during the day I trust in you.

⁶ Yahweh, do not forget how you have acted mercifully to me and have faithfully loved me because of your covenant with me;

that is the way that you have acted toward me from long ago.

⁷ Forgive me for all the sinful things I did and the ways that I rebelled against you when I was young;

I request this because you faithfully love your people and do good things for them, as you promised in your covenant.

Yahweh, do not forget me!

⁸ Yahweh is good and fair,
so he shows sinners how they should
conduct their lives.

⁹ He shows humble people what is right
for them to do
and teaches them what he wants them
to do.

¹⁰ He always faithfully loves us and does
what he has promised
for those who obey his covenant and
who do what he requires.

¹¹ Yahweh, forgive me for all my sins,
which are many,
in order that I may honor you.

¹² To all those who have an awesome
respect for you,
you show them the right way to con-
duct their lives.

¹³ They will always be prosperous,
and their descendants will continue
to live in this land.

¹⁴ Yahweh is a friend of those who have
an awesome respect for him,
and he teaches them the covenant
that he made with them.

¹⁵ I always request Yahweh to help me,
and he rescues me from danger.

¹⁶ Yahweh, pay attention to me and be
merciful to me because I am alone,
and I am greatly distressed because I
am suffering.

¹⁷ I have many troubles that make me
afraid;
rescue me from them.

¹⁸ Note that I am distressed and trou-
bled,
and forgive me for all my sins.

¹⁹ Note that I have many enemies;

you see that they hate me very much.

²⁰ Protect me and rescue me from them;
do not allow them to defeat me
with the result that I would be
ashamed;

I have gone to you to get refuge.

²¹ Protect me because I do what is good
and honest
and because I trust in you.

²² God, rescue us Israelite people from
all of our troubles!

Psalm 26

¹ Yahweh, show that I am innocent.

I always do what is right;

I have trusted in you and never
doubted that you would help me.

² Yahweh, examine what I have done
and test me;

thoroughly evaluate what I think in
my inner being.

³ I never forget that you are true to your
covenant and faithfully love me;

I conduct my life according to your
faithfulness.

⁴ I do not spend my time with liars,
and I stay away from hypocrites.

⁵ I do not like to be with evil people,
and I avoid wicked people.

⁶ Yahweh, I wash my hands to show that
I am innocent.

As I join with others marching around
your altar,

⁷ we sing songs to thank you,

and we tell others the wonderful
things that you have done.

⁸ Yahweh, I love to be in the house where you live,

in the place where your glory appears.

⁹ Do not get rid of me like you get rid of sinners;

do not cause me to die like you cause those who murder people to die,

¹⁰ people who are ready to do wicked things

and those who are always taking bribes.

¹¹ But as for me, I always try to do what is right.

So act kindly toward me and rescue me.

¹² I stand in places where I am safe,

and when all your people gather together, I praise you.

Psalm 27

¹ Yahweh is the one who gives me life and the one who saves me,

so I do not need to be afraid of anyone.

Yahweh is the one to whom I go for refuge,

so I will never be afraid.

² When those who do evil come near me to destroy me,

they stumble and fall down.

³ Even if an army surrounds me,

I will not be afraid.

Even if they attack me,

I will trust in God.

⁴ There is one thing that I have requested from Yahweh;

this is the one thing that I desire:

that I may worship in Yahweh's house every day during my life,

that I may see how wonderful Yahweh is,

and that I may ask him what he wants me to do.

⁵ He will protect me when I have troubles;

he will keep me safe in his sacred tent.

He will set me safely on a high rock.

⁶ Then I will triumph over my enemies.

I will shout joyfully as I offer sacrifices in his sacred tent,

and I will praise Yahweh as I sing.

⁷ Yahweh, listen to me while I call to you.

Act kindly toward me and answer my prayer.

⁸ Within my inner being I desire to worship you,

so, Yahweh, I will come to your temple to pray to you.

⁹ I am your servant;

do not be angry with me, or turn away from me.

You have always helped me.

You are the one who has saved me,

so do not abandon me now.

¹⁰ Even if my father and mother desert me,

Yahweh always takes care of me.

¹¹ Yahweh, teach me to do what you want me to do,

and lead me on a safe path

because I have many enemies.

¹² Do not allow my enemies to do to me what they want;

they say many false things about me
and threaten to do violent things to me.

¹³ I would have died if I had not trusted
you

to be good to me as long as I live.

¹⁴ So trust in Yahweh!

Be strong and courageous,
and wait expectantly for him to help
you!

Psalm 28

¹ Yahweh, I call out to you;

You are like a huge rock on top of which
I am safe.

Do not refuse to answer me

because if you are silent, I will soon
be with those who are in their graves.

² Listen to me when I call out for you to
help me,

when I lift up my hands as I face your
very holy place in your sacred tent.

³ Do not drag me away with wicked peo-
ple,

with those who do wicked deeds,

with those who pretend to act peacefully
toward others

while in their inner beings, they hate
them.

⁴ Punish those people in the way that
they deserve for what they have done;

punish them for their evil deeds.

⁵ Yahweh, they do not pay attention to
the wonderful things that you have done
and that you have created;

so get rid of them permanently and
do not let them appear again!

⁶ Praise Yahweh

because he has heard me when I called
out for him to help me!

⁷ Yahweh makes me strong and protects
me like a shield;

I trust in him, and he helps me.

So I was glad in my inner being,

and from my inner being I praise him
as I sing to him.

⁸ Yahweh causes us to be strong and
protects us;

he saves me, the one he appointed to
be king.

⁹ Yahweh, save your people;

bless those who belong to you.

Take care of them like a shepherd takes
care of his sheep;

take care of them forever.

Psalm 29

¹ Mighty people, praise Yahweh!

Praise him because he is very glorious
and powerful.

² Praise Yahweh with the glory his
names deserves.

Bow down and worship Yahweh be-
cause he is holy and his holiness shines
out from him with wonderful beauty.

³ Yahweh's voice is heard above the
oceans;

the glorious God thunders.

He appears over the huge oceans.

⁴ His voice is powerful and majestic.

⁵ Yahweh's voice breaks great cedar
trees,

the cedars that grow in Lebanon.

⁶ He causes earthquakes to shake the region of Lebanon as a young cow jumps;

he causes Mount Hermon to shake as a young bull jumps.

⁷ Yahweh's voice tells the lightning to flash.

⁸ His voice causes the desert to shake;
he shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

⁹ Yahweh's voice makes the large trees shake,

and strips the leaves from the trees
while the people in the temple shout,
"Praise God!"

¹⁰ Yahweh rules over the flood that covered the earth;

he is our king who will rule forever.

¹¹ Yahweh enables his people to be strong,

and he blesses them by causing things to go well for them.

Psalm 30

¹ Yahweh, I praise you because you rescued me. You did not allow me to die or my enemies to gloat over me.

² Yahweh, my God, I called out for you to help me when I was wounded, and you healed me.

³ You saved me from death. I was nearly dead, but you caused me to become healthy again.

⁴ All you who are faithful to the covenant with Yahweh, sing to praise him! Remember what God, the holy one, has done and thank him!

⁵ When he becomes angry, he is angry for only a very short time, but he is good to us all of our lives.

We may cry during the night, but the next morning we will be joyful.

⁶ As for me, I was calm when I said to myself, "No one will defeat me!"

⁷ Yahweh, because you were good to me, at first you caused me to be secure as though I were a high mountain.

But then I thought that you had turned away from me, and I became afraid.

⁸ So I called out to you, and I pleaded for you to help me.

⁹ I said, "Yahweh, what will you gain if I die?"

In what way will it benefit you if I go to the place where the dead people are?

When I am dead I will certainly not be able to praise you, and I will not be able to tell others that you are trustworthy!

¹⁰ Yahweh, listen to me, and act mercifully to me! Yahweh, help me!"

¹¹ But now you have healed me, and you have changed me from being sad to dancing joyfully.

You have taken away the clothes that showed that I was very sad and given me clothes that showed that I was very joyful.

¹² So I will not be silent; I will sing out and praise you.

Yahweh, you are my God, and I will thank you forever.

Psalm 31

¹ Yahweh, I have come to you to be protected;

do not allow me to be defeated and disgraced.

Since you always do what is fair,
rescue me!

² Listen to me, and save me right now!
Be like a huge rock on which I can be safe

and like a strong fort in which I will be secure.

³ Yes, you are like my huge rock and my fort;

guide me and lead me because I worship you.

⁴ You are the one who protects me,
so keep me from falling into the hidden traps that my enemies have set for me.

⁵ Yahweh, you are a God whom I can trust,

so I put myself into your care

because you will rescue me.

⁶ Yahweh, I hate those who worship useless idols,

but I trust in you.

⁷ I will be very glad because you faithfully love me.

You see me when I have been afflicted,
and you know when I have had troubles.

⁸ You have not allowed my enemies to capture me;

instead, you have rescued me from danger.

⁹ But now, Yahweh, act kindly toward me

because I am distressed.

Because I cry so much, I cannot see well,
and I am completely exhausted.

¹⁰ I have become very weak because I am so miserable;

my life is getting shorter.

I have become weak because of all my troubles;

even my bones are becoming weaker.

¹¹ All of my enemies make fun of me,
and even my neighbors despise me.

Even my friends are afraid of me because they think that you are punishing me.

When they see me on the streets, they run away.

¹² People have forgotten me like they forget people who are dead.

They think I am as useless as a broken pot.

¹³ I have heard people slandering me,
and they have terrified me.

My enemies are making plans
to kill me.

¹⁴ But Yahweh, I trust in you.

I say confidently that you are the God I worship.

¹⁵ My whole life is in your hands;
save me from my enemies,
from those who pursue me.

¹⁶ Act kindly toward me
and rescue me because you always faithfully love me.

¹⁷ Yahweh, I call out to you,
so do not allow others to disgrace me.

I wish that wicked people may be disgraced;

I wish that they may go down to the place where the people are silent and dead.

¹⁸ I wish that you may cause people who tell lies to be unable to speak.

Do that to people who are proud and to those who arrogantly accuse others.

¹⁹ You have stored up many great and good things to do for those who have great respect for you.

You do good things for those who go to you to be protected;

everyone sees you doing that.

²⁰ You hide people in your presence where it is safe,

and you protect them from others who plot to kill them.

You hide them in safe places where their enemies cannot speak evil at them.

²¹ Praise Yahweh!

When my enemies surrounded the city in which I was living,

he showed me wonderfully that he faithfully loves me.

²² I was afraid and cried out in a hurry, "I have been separated from Yahweh!"

but you heard me and answered my cry for help.

²³ You people who belong to Yahweh, love him!

He protects those who are loyal to him,

but he punishes the proud; he punishes them severely as they deserve.

²⁴ You who confidently expect Yahweh to do great things for you,

be strong and be courageous!

Psalm 32

¹ Those whom God has forgiven for rebelling against him

and those whose sin God does not look at,

these are the ones who are truly fortunate!

² Those whose record of sins Yahweh has erased

and those who no longer do deceitful things,

these are the ones who are truly fortunate!

³ When I did not confess my sins,
my body was very weak and sick,
and I groaned all day long.

⁴ Day and night, Yahweh, you punished me severely.

My strength disappeared like water that evaporates on a hot summer day.

⁵ Then I confessed my sins to you;
I stopped trying to hide them.

I said to myself,

"I will tell Yahweh the wrong things that I have done."

When I confessed them, you forgave me,

so now I am no longer guilty for my sins.

⁶ Therefore the people who honor you should pray to you

when they are in great trouble.

If they do that, difficulties will not come on them like a great flood.

⁷ You are like a place where I can hide from my enemies;

you protect me from troubles

and enable me to shout, praising you for saving me from my enemies.

⁸ Yahweh says to me, "I will instruct you about how you should conduct your life.

I will teach you and watch over you.

⁹ Do not be stupid like horses and mules
that do not understand anything;

they need bits

so they will go in the direction you
want them to go.”

¹⁰ Wicked people will have many troubles
that will make them sad,

but those who trust in Yahweh will
experience him faithfully loving them all
the time.

¹¹ So, all you righteous people, rejoice
about what Yahweh has done for you;

you whose heart are pure, be glad
and shout joyfully!

Psalm 33

¹ You righteous people should shout joy-
fully to Yahweh

because that is what he deserves.

² Praise Yahweh as you play songs on
the harp.

Praise him as you play harps that have
ten strings.

³ Sing a new song to him;

play those instruments well, and shout
joyfully as you play them.

⁴ Yahweh always does what he says that
he will do;

we can trust that everything that he
does is right.

⁵ He loves everything that we do that is
just and right.

Yahweh helps people all over the earth
because he always loves them.

⁶ Yahweh created everything in the sky
by commanding it.

By what he commanded, he created
all the stars.

⁷ He gathered all the water into one
huge mass

like someone scoops liquid into a con-
tainer.

⁸ Everyone on the earth should honor
Yahweh;

everyone on the earth should honor
him.

⁹ When he spoke, he created the world.

Everything started to exist when he
commanded it to be.

¹⁰ Yahweh stops the other nations from
doing the things they want to do.

He prevents them from doing the evil
things that they plan to do.

¹¹ But what Yahweh decides to do will
last forever.

What he plans to do will never change.

¹² Yahweh blesses our nation, we who
worship him;

How fortunate are we, the nation that
belongs to him forever!

¹³ Yahweh looks down from heaven and
sees all people.

¹⁴ From where he rules, he looks down
on all the people who live on the earth.

¹⁵ He forms our inner beings,

and he sees everything that we do.

¹⁶ It is not because a king has a great
army that he is able to win battles,

and it is not because a soldier is very
strong that he is able to defeat his enemy.

¹⁷ It is foolish to think that because
horses are very strong,

they will be able to win a battle and
save their riders.

¹⁸ Do not forget that Yahweh watches over those who honor him,

those who confidently expect him to faithfully love them.

¹⁹ He saves them from dying before they should die;

he preserves them when there is a famine.

²⁰ We trust Yahweh to help us;

he protects us as a shield protects a soldier.

²¹ We rejoice because of what he has done for us;

we trust in him because he is holy.

²² Yahweh, we pray that you will always faithfully love us

while we confidently expect you to do great things for us.

Psalm 34

¹ I will always thank Yahweh;

I will constantly praise him.

² I will praise Yahweh for what he has done.

All those who are oppressed should listen to me and rejoice.

³ Join with me in telling others that Yahweh is great!

You and I should together proclaim how glorious he is!

⁴ I prayed to Yahweh, and he answered my prayer;

he rescued me from all those who caused me to be afraid.

⁵ Those who trust that he will help them will be joyful;

they will never have to look down in disgrace.

⁶ I was miserable, but I called out to Yahweh, and he heard me.

He rescued me from all my troubles.

⁷ An angel from Yahweh guards those who have an awesome respect for him,

and the angel rescues them.

⁸ Try for yourself, and you will experience that Yahweh is good to you!

How fortunate are those who trust him to protect them.

⁹ All you who belong to him, have an awesome respect for him!

Those who do that will always have the things that they need.

¹⁰ Lions are usually very strong, but sometimes even young lions are hungry and become weak.

However, those who trust in Yahweh will have everything that they need.

¹¹ You who are my students, come and listen to me,

and I will teach you how to have an awesome respect for Yahweh.

¹² If any of you wants to enjoy life

and have a good long life,

¹³ do not speak what is evil!

Do not tell lies!

¹⁴ Refuse to do evil; instead, do what is good!

Always try hard to enable people to live peacefully with each other!

¹⁵ Yahweh carefully watches over those who act righteously;

he always responds to them when they call to him for help.

¹⁶ But Yahweh works against those who do what is evil.

After they die, people here on earth will forget them completely.

¹⁷ Yahweh hears righteous people when they call out to him;

he rescues them from all their troubles.

¹⁸ Yahweh is always ready to help those who are discouraged;

he rescues those who have no hope for anything good.

¹⁹ Righteous people may have many troubles,

but Yahweh rescues them from all those troubles.

²⁰ Yahweh protects them from being harmed;

when their enemies attack them,

they will not break any bones of those righteous people.

²¹ Disasters will kill the wicked people,

and Yahweh will punish those who oppose righteous people.

²² Yahweh will save those who serve him.

He will not condemn those who trust in him.

Psalm 35

¹ Yahweh, fight against those who fight against me!

Fight with my enemies when they fight me!

² Be like a shield to protect me

and come to help me!

³ Lift up your spear and throw it at those who pursue me!

Promise me that you will enable me to defeat my enemies.

⁴ Those who are trying to kill me—make others disgrace and dishonor them.

Push back and confuse those who are planning to do evil things to me.

⁵ Send your angel to pursue them

and to make them disappear like chaff that the wind blows away.

⁶ Cause the path on which they run to be dark and slippery

as your angel pursues them!

⁷ Although I did not do anything wrong to them,

they dug a deep pit for me to fall into;

they hid a net in which they would catch me.

⁸ Cause them to suddenly experience disaster!

Cause their own nets to trap them.

Cause them to fall into the pits that they have dug for me, and make them die in them!

⁹ Then I will rejoice in what you, Yahweh, have done for me;

I will be glad that you have rescued me.

¹⁰ With my whole inner being I will say,

"There is no one like Yahweh!

No one else can rescue helpless people from powerful people.

No one else can rescue weak and needy people from those who want to rob them."

¹¹ People who tell lies stand in court

and accuse me of doing things that I do not know anything about.

¹² In return for my doing good things for them, they do evil things to me,

with the result that I feel that I am alone.

¹³ When they were ill, I showed that I was sad.

I did not eat any food, and I bowed my head as I prayed for them.

¹⁴ I mourned and bowed my head as I prayed

as though it were a friend or my mother for whom I was grieving.

¹⁵ But when I had troubles, they were all happy about it.

They unexpectedly gathered around to make fun of me.

Strangers kept striking me;

they would not stop.

¹⁶ People who respect no one ridiculed me

and snarled at me.

¹⁷ Lord, how long will you only watch them doing this?

Rescue me from their attacks;

Save me from being killed by these men who are attacking me

as lions attack other animals!

¹⁸ Then, when many of your people gather,

I will praise you,

and I will thank you in front of all of them.

¹⁹ Do not allow my enemies, who tell lies about me, defeat me

and then rejoice about it!

Do not allow those who hate me when there is no reason to hate me

to laugh about how I suffer!

²⁰ They do not speak peacefully to people;

instead, they look for ways to tell lies about people in our land who do no harm to anyone.

²¹ They shout at me in order to accuse me;

they say, "We saw the wrong things that you did!"

²² Yahweh, you have seen these things, so do not be silent!

Do not stay far from me!

²³ Arise, my God, plead my case in court, and successfully defend me!

²⁴ Yahweh, my God, because you are righteous, prove that I am innocent

so that my enemies will not be able to gloat that I was judged to be guilty.

²⁵ Do not allow them to be able to say to themselves,

"Yes, we have gotten rid of him just like we desired!"

²⁶ Cause those who rejoice about my misfortunes

to be completely confused and disgraced;

cause those who boast that they are much greater than I am

to be disgraced and dishonored!

²⁷ But cause those who desire that you declare me innocent

to be happy and shout joyfully;

cause them to always say, "Yahweh is great!"

He is delighted to cause things to go well for those who serve him.”

²⁸ Then I will proclaim that you act in the right way,

and I will praise you all the time.

Psalm 36

¹ A continual desire to sin is in the inner beings of wicked people.

They consider that they do not need to have an awesome respect for God.

² Because they want to believe good things about themselves,

they do not think that God knows and hates their sins.

³ Everything that they say is deceitful and full of lies;

they no longer do what is good

and are no longer wise.

⁴ While they are lying on their beds, they plan to do things to harm others;

they are determined to do things that are not good,

and they never refuse to do what is evil.

⁵ Yahweh, your faithful love for us reaches as high as the heavens;

your faithfulness in doing what you have promised extends up to the clouds.

⁶ Your righteous behavior is as permanent as the highest mountains;

your acting justly will continue as long as the deepest oceans will continue.

You take care of people and you take care of animals.

⁷ God, your faithful love for us is very precious.

You protect us like birds protect their baby birds under their wings .

⁸ You provide for us plenty of food from the abundant supply that you have;

your great gifts flow to us like a river.

⁹ You are the one who causes everything to live;

your light is what enables us to know the truth about you.

¹⁰ Continue to faithfully love those who are faithful to you,

and protect those who act righteously.

¹¹ Do not allow proud people to attack me,

or allow wicked people to chase me away.

¹² Look where evil people have fallen on the ground, defeated;

they were thrown down, and they will never rise again.

Psalm 37

¹ Do not be bothered by what wicked people do.

Do not desire to have the things that people who do wrong have

² because they will soon disappear like grass withers in the hot sun and dries up.

Just like some green plants come up but die during the hot summer,

evil people will soon die also.

³ Trust in Yahweh and do what is good.

If you do that, then you will live safely in the land he has given you,

and that land will be a place where you can be faithful to God as you live your lives.

⁴ Be delighted with all that Yahweh does for you;

if you do that, he will give you the things that you desire most.

⁵ Commit to Yahweh all the things that you plan to do;

trust in him,

and he will do whatever is needed to help you.

⁶ He will show as clearly as the sunlight that you are innocent;

he will show as clearly as the sun at noontime

that all the things that you have decided are just.

⁷ Be quiet in Yahweh's presence and wait patiently for him to do what you want him to do.

Do not be bothered when what evil men do is successful,

when they are able to do the wicked things that they plan.

⁸ Do not be angry about what wicked people do.

Do not want to punish them yourself.

Do not be envious of such people

because you will only harm yourself if you try to do that.

⁹ Someday Yahweh will get rid of wicked people,

but those who trust in him will live safely in the land that he has given to them.

¹⁰ Soon the wicked will disappear.

You will look for them, but they will be gone.

¹¹ But those who are humble will live safely in their land.

They will happily enjoy living peacefully and having the other good things that Yahweh gives them.

¹² Wicked people plan to harm righteous people;

they snarl at them like wild animals.

¹³ But Yahweh laughs at them

because he knows that someday he will judge and punish the wicked people.

¹⁴ Wicked people pull out their swords and they put strings on their bows,

ready to kill people who are poor

and to slaughter those who live righteously.

¹⁵ But they will be killed by their own swords,

and their bows will be broken.

¹⁶ It is good to be righteous even if you do not have many possessions,

but it is bad to be wicked even if you are very wealthy

¹⁷ because Yahweh will completely remove the strength of wicked people,

but he will sustain people who live righteously.

¹⁸ Day by day Yahweh protects those who have not done any evil things;

the things that Yahweh gives them will last forever.

¹⁹ They will survive when calamities occur;

when there are famines, they will still have plenty to eat.

²⁰ But wicked people will die;

just as the beautiful wild flowers in the fields die under the hot sun and disappear like smoke,

Yahweh will cause his enemies to suddenly disappear.

²¹ The wicked people borrow money,
but they are not able to repay it;

righteous people, in contrast, have
enough money to give generously to others.

²² Those whom Yahweh has blessed will
live safely in the land that he has given to
them,

but he will get rid of those people
whom he has cursed.

²³ Yahweh protects those who do what
is pleasing to him,

and he will enable them to walk confidently
wherever they go;

²⁴ even if they stumble, they will not fall
down

because Yahweh holds them by his
hand.

²⁵ I was young previously, and now I am
an old man,

but in all those years, I have never seen
that righteous people have been abandoned
by Yahweh,

nor have I seen that their children
needed to beg for food.

²⁶ Righteous people are generous and
happily lend money to others,

and their children are a blessing to
them.

²⁷ Turn away from doing evil, and do
what is good.

If you do that, you and your descendants
will live in your land forever.

²⁸ This will happen because Yahweh
likes to see people doing what is just,

and he will never forsake righteous
people.

He will protect them forever;

but he will get rid of the children of
wicked people.

²⁹ Righteous people will own the land
that Yahweh promised to give to them,

and they will live there forever.

³⁰ Righteous people give wise advice to
others,

and they encourage other people to
live rightly.

³¹ They fill their minds with God's laws;
they do not stray from walking on
God's path.

³² Those who are evil wait in ambush
for righteous people

in order to kill them as they walk by.

³³ But Yahweh will not abandon righteous
people

and let them fall into their enemies'
hands.

He will not allow righteous people to be
condemned

when someone takes them to a judge
to be put on trial.

³⁴ Be patient and trust that Yahweh will
help you,

and walk on his paths.

If you do that, he will honor you by giving
you the land that he promised,

and when he gets rid of the wicked,
you will see it happen.

³⁵ I have seen that wicked people
who act like tyrants sometimes prosper
like trees that grow well in fertile soil,

³⁶ but when I looked later, they were
gone!

I searched for them, but Yahweh had
caused them to disappear.

³⁷ Notice the people who have not done
evil things, those who act righteously;

their descendants will have peace in
their inner beings.

³⁸ But Yahweh will get rid of the wicked;
he will also get rid of their descendants.

³⁹ Yahweh rescues righteous people;
in times of trouble he protects them.

⁴⁰ Yahweh helps them and saves them;
he rescues them from being attacked
by wicked people
because they go to him to be protected.

Psalm 38

¹ Yahweh, when you are angry with me,
do not rebuke me and punish me!

² Now it is as though you have shot your
arrows at me and wounded me;
it is as though you have struck me
and knocked me down.

³ Because you have been angry with me,
I am suffering great pain.
Because of my sin,
my whole body is diseased.

⁴ All my sins are like a flood that covers
my head;
they are like a load that is very heavy;
I cannot carry them.

⁵ Because I have done foolish things,
I have sores that have become worse,
and they stink.

⁶ Sometimes I am bent over, and some-
times I lie prostrate;
I mourn all day.

⁷ My body is burning with fever,
and I am very ill.

⁸ I am completely exhausted, and I have
no strength.

I am very distressed in my inner being,
and I groan with pain.

⁹ Yahweh, you know that I desire you to
heal me;

you hear me while I am groaning.

¹⁰ My heart pounds heavily, and all my
strength is gone.

I am no longer able to see well.

¹¹ My friends and neighbors stay away
from me because of my sores;

even my own family stays far from
me.

¹² Those who want to kill me set traps
to catch me;

those who want to harm me discuss
the ways that they can get rid of me;
they plot against me all day.

¹³ Now I act like a deaf man and do not
listen to what they say.

I act like a man who cannot talk, and
I say nothing to reply to them.

¹⁴ I act like a man who does not answer
when people talk to him

because he cannot hear anything.

¹⁵ But Yahweh, I trust in you.

My Lord God, you will answer me.

¹⁶ I said to you, "Do not cause me to die
so that my enemies will rejoice!"

If troubles overwhelm me, my ene-
mies will do very bad things to me!"

¹⁷ I say that because I am about to fall
down,

and I constantly have pain.

¹⁸ I confess the wrong things that I have
done;

I am very sorry for the sins that I have committed.

¹⁹ My enemies are healthy and strong;
there are many people who hate me
for no reason.

²⁰ Those who do evil things to me in
return for my doing good things to them
oppose me because I try to do what is
right.

²¹ Yahweh, do not abandon me!

My God, do not stay far from me!

²² Lord, you are the one who saves me;
Quickly come and help me!

Psalm 39

¹ I said to myself, "I will be careful not
to sin by the things that I say.

I will not say anything to complain to
you

while wicked people are near to me
and can hear me."

² So I was completely silent, and I did
not even talk about things that were good;

but it was useless because I began to
suffer even more.

³ I became very anxious in my inner
being.

As I thought about my troubles, I
became more worried.

Then finally I said this:

⁴ "Yahweh, show me how long I will live.

Tell me when I will die.

Tell me how many years I will live!

⁵ It seems that you have caused me to
live only a short time;

my lifetime seems nothing to you.

The time that all we humans live is as
short as a puff of air.

⁶ Then we disappear like a shadow does.

It seems that all that we do is for
nothing.

We sometimes get a lot of money, but
we do not even know who will get it after
we die.

⁷ So now, Yahweh, I can expect to re-
ceive nothing from anyone else.

You are the only one from whom I
confidently expect to receive blessings.

⁸ Deliver me from the sins that I have
committed.

Do not allow foolish people to make
fun of me.

⁹ I did not say anything when you pun-
ished me

because I knew that you were the one
who caused me to suffer.

¹⁰ But now, please stop punishing me!

If you do not do that, I am about to
die because of how you make me suffer.

¹¹ When you rebuke someone and pun-
ish him for the sin that he has committed,
you destroy the things he loves like
moths eat away at clothing.

Our lives disappear like a puff of air.

¹² Yahweh, listen to me while I pray;
pay attention to me while I cry out to
you.

Help me while I am crying.

I am here on the earth for only a short
time,
like all my ancestors.

¹³ Now please allow me to be alone and
do not punish me anymore

so that I may smile and be happy for
a while before I die."

Psalm 40

¹ I waited patiently for Yahweh to help me,

and he listened to me when I called out to him.

² When I had many troubles, it was as though I was in a deep pit.

But he lifted me up out of the mud and slime of that pit;

he set my feet on a solid rock

and enabled me to walk safely.

³ He has given me a new song to sing,
a song to praise him who is our God.

Many people will find out what he has done for me,

and they will revere and trust him.

⁴ How fortunate are those who trust Yahweh to protect them,

those who do not trust in idols

or join with those who worship those false gods.

⁵ O Yahweh, my God, you have done many wonderful things!

No one can list all the wonderful things that you have planned for us.

If I tried to tell others about all those wonderful things,

I would not be able to

because there would be too many for me to mention.

⁶ Sacrifices and other offerings are not the things that delight you most.

But you have enabled me to hear your commands.

Animals burned on the altar and other offerings for our sins are not what you require most.

⁷ So I said to you, "Yahweh, here I am,
to obey the laws that have been written in the scroll,

things that you want me to do."

⁸ O my God, I enjoy doing what you desire;

I am always thinking about your laws within my inner being.

⁹ When all your people were gathered together,

I told them about how you do what is right and how you rescue us.

Yahweh, you know that I have not refused to tell that to them.

¹⁰ I have not kept within me the news that you always act justly;

when many of your people have gathered together to worship you,

I have told them that you are faithful to us and save us.

I have not concealed that you faithfully love us and act loyally toward us.

¹¹ Yahweh, do not stop acting mercifully toward me.

Because you faithfully love me and are loyal to me, protect me always.

¹² I have many troubles; I cannot count them.

I am now suffering the things that happened because I sinned.

I can no longer see because of my tears.

The sins that I have committed are more than the hairs on my head.

I am very discouraged.

¹³ O Yahweh, please save me!

Come quickly to help me!

¹⁴ Humble those who are happy about my troubles, and cause them to be disgraced.

Chase away those who are trying to get rid of me.

¹⁵ I hope that those who make fun of me will be dismayed when you defeat them.

¹⁶ But I hope that all those who go to worship you will be very joyful.

I hope that those who love you because you saved them will shout repeatedly,

“Yahweh is great!”

¹⁷ As for me, I am poor and needy, but I know that the Lord has not forgotten me.

O my God, you are the one who saves and helps me,

so please come quickly and help me!

Psalm 41

¹ How fortunate are those who provide for the poor;

Yahweh will rescue those people when they have troubles.

² Yahweh will protect them and allow them to live for a long time.

He will enable them to be happy in the land of Israel

and will rescue them from their enemies.

³ When they are sick, Yahweh will strengthen them

and will heal them.

⁴ When I was sick, I said, “Yahweh, act mercifully toward me and heal me;

I know that I am sick because I have sinned against you.”

⁵ My enemies say cruel things about me;

they say, “How soon will he die, and then everyone will forget about him?”

⁶ When my enemies come to me, they pretend to be concerned about me.

They eagerly listen to all the bad news about me.

Then they go away and tell everyone what is happening to me.

⁷ All those who hate me whisper to others about me,

and they hope that very bad things will happen to me.

⁸ They say, “He will soon die because of his being sick;

he will never get up from his bed before he dies.”

⁹ Even a very close friend, whom I trusted very much,

who often ate with me,

has betrayed me.

¹⁰ But Yahweh, act mercifully to me, and enable me to become healthy again.

When you do that, I will be able to pay back my enemies.

¹¹ If you enable me to do that, with the result that my enemies do not defeat me,

I will know that you are pleased with me.

¹² I will know that it is because I have done what is right that you have helped me,

and I will know that you will enable me to be with you forever.

¹³ Praise Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship;

Praise him forever!
Amen! I desire that it will be so!

Psalm 42

¹ O God, I need you very much as a deer needs to drink water from a cool stream.

² I desire to be with you, the all-powerful God.

I say to myself, "When will I be able to go back to the temple in Israel

and worship in your presence again?"

³ Every day and every night I weep;
the only thing I have to drink is my tears;

and while I do that, my enemies are always asking me,

"Why does your God not help you?"

⁴ I pray earnestly to God as I remember when I used to go with the crowd of people to the temple in Jerusalem.

I used to lead them as we walked along;

we were all shouting joyfully and singing to thank God for what he had done;

we were a large group who were celebrating.

⁵ So now I say to myself, "Why am I in a panic?

I confidently expect God to bless me,

and again I will praise him,

my God, the one who saves me."

⁶ But now, Yahweh, I was panicking,
so I think about you.

You are there in Israel where the Jordan River rushes down from the bottom of the

peaks of Mount Hermon and from Mount Mizar.

⁷ But here, the great sorrow that I feel is like water that you send down;

it is like a waterfall that tumbles down and floods over me.

⁸ I desire that Yahweh will show me each day that he faithfully loves me,

in order that each night I may sing to him

and pray to him, the God who causes me to live.

⁹ I say to God, who is like a huge rock on top of which I am safe,

"Why have you forgotten me? You know the hardships that my enemies bring on me."

¹⁰ They are always making fun of me;
they keep asking, "Why does your God not help you?"

When they insult me like that,
it is like wounds that shatter my bones.

¹¹ But I say to myself,
"Why am I in a panic?
I will confidently expect God to bless me,

and I will praise him again,
my God, the one who saves me."

Psalm 43

¹ God, declare that I am innocent.
Defend me when people say things against me—those people who do not honor you!

Rescue me from people who deceive me and say things about me that are not true.

² You are God, the one who protects me;
why have you abandoned me?

It does not seem right that I should always have to be sad

because of my enemies acting cruelly toward me.

³ Speak true words that help me to live.

Give a command that will allow me to go back to Zion, your sacred hill in Jerusalem,

and to your temple where you live.

⁴ When you do that, I will go to your altar

to worship you, my God, who causes me to be very joyful.

There I will praise you, the God whom I worship, and I will play my harp.

⁵ So why am I sad and discouraged?

I confidently expect God to bless me,

and again I will praise him,

my God, the one who saves me.

³ It was not by using their own swords that they conquered the people that lived in that land,

and it was not by their own power that they were victorious;

it was only by your power that they did those things;

and they were sure that you were with them,

showing that you were pleased with them.

⁴ You are my king and my God;

Make us, your people, able to defeat our enemies.

⁵ It is by your power that we knock our enemies down and tramp on them.

⁶ I do not trust that I can save myself by using my bow and arrows and my sword.

⁷ No, it is you who have rescued us from our enemies;

it is you who have caused those who hate us to become ashamed because they were defeated.

⁸ We have always been proud about what God has done for us,

and we will thank him forever.

⁹ But now you have rejected us and caused us to be disgraced;

when our armies march out to fight a battle, you no longer go with them.

¹⁰ You have caused us to run away from our enemies,

with the result that they captured the things that belonged to us.

¹¹ You have allowed us to become like sheep that were ready to be slaughtered;

you scattered us far away among other nations.

Psalm 44

¹ God, we ourselves have heard

what our parents and grandparents told us.

They told us about the miracles

that you performed long ago.

² They told us how you expelled the ungodly people

and enabled us to live in their land.

They told us that you punished those ungodly people

and enabled your own people to possess the land.

¹² It is as though you sold us, your people, to our enemies for a very small price, although you did not gain any profit from selling us!

¹³ People who live in nations near us make fun of us;

they laugh at us and deride us.

¹⁴ They make jokes using the name of our country,

they shake their heads to indicate that they despise us.

¹⁵ All day I am disgraced;

from seeing my face, people know that I am ashamed.

¹⁶ I hear what those who sneer at me and revile me say;

I am ashamed in front of my enemies and those who want to harm me.

¹⁷ All these things have happened to us even though we have not forgotten you,

and we are not the ones who disobeyed the covenant you made with our ancestors.

¹⁸ We have not stopped being loyal to you,

and we have not stopped doing what you want us to do.

¹⁹ But it is as though you have allowed us to be helpless among wild animals

and you have abandoned us in a deep dark ravine.

²⁰ If we had forgotten to worship our God,

or if we had spread out our hands to worship a foreign god,

²¹ you certainly would have known that because you know even what we secretly think.

²² But it is because we belong to you that our enemies are constantly killing us.

They act toward us as though we were only sheep that they were going to slaughter.

²³ So Yahweh, arise! Why are you asleep?

Get up! Do not reject us forever!

²⁴ Why are you not looking at us?

Why are you forgetting that we are suffering, that our enemies are oppressing us?

²⁵ We are in complete panic;

we cannot do anything; we are as good as dead.

²⁶ Do something! Come and help us!

Rescue us because you love us as you promised to do.

Psalm 45

¹ In my inner being I am aroused by something beautiful to write about, a song that I will sing to the king.

The words of this song will be written by me, a skilled writer.

² O King, you are the most handsome man in the world,

and you always speak eloquently!

So we know that God has always blessed you.

³ You who are a mighty warrior, put on your sword!

You are glorious and majestic.

⁴ Ride on like a great king

to defend the truth that you speak

and the fair decisions that you make!

Because you fight in many battles,
you will learn to do deeds that your
enemies will fear.

⁵ Your arrows are sharp,
and they pierce the hearts of your
enemies.

Soldiers of many nations will fall at
your feet.

⁶ The kingdom that God will give to you
will remain forever.

You rule over people justly.

⁷ You love right actions,
and you hate evil actions.

Therefore God, your God, has chosen
you to be king

and has caused you to be happier than
any other king.

⁸ The perfume of various spices is on
your robes.

Musicians entertain you in ivory
palaces

by playing stringed instruments.

⁹ Among your wives are daughters of
other kings.

At your right hand stands your bride,
the queen, wearing beautiful ornaments
of gold that comes from Ophir.

¹⁰ Now I will say something to your
bride:

"Listen to me carefully!

Forget the people who live in your
home country,

forget your relatives!

¹¹ Because you are very beautiful,
the king will desire to be with you.

He is your master, so you must obey
him.

¹² The people from the city of Tyre will
bring gifts to you;

their rich people will try to persuade
you to do favors for them.

¹³ You, the king's bride, enter the palace
wearing beautiful robes made from
gold thread."

¹⁴ O king, while she is wearing a gown
that has many colors,

her woman servants will lead her to
you.

She will have many other young
women who accompany her.

¹⁵ They will be very joyful as they are
led along

to enter your palace.

¹⁶ Someday, your sons and your grand-
sons will become kings,

just as your ancestors were.

You will enable them to become rulers
in many countries.

¹⁷ As for me, I will enable people in every
generation to remember the great things
that you have done,

and people will praise you forever.

Psalm 46

¹ God is the one who protects us and
causes us to be strong;

he is always ready to help us when
we have troubles.

² So, even if the earth shakes,
we will not be afraid.

Even if the mountains fall into the mid-
dle of the sea,

³ and if the water in the sea roars and
foams,

and if the hills shake violently,
we will not be afraid!

⁴ Blessings that come from God are like
a river that makes everyone in the city joy-
ful, there where we worship him.

It is the city where the temple of God,
who is greater than any other god, exists.

⁵ God is in this city, and it will never be
destroyed;

he will come to help the people in that
city at dawn every day.

⁶ Sometimes the people of many nations
are terrified;

kingdoms are overthrown;

God speaks loudly like thunder,
and the earth melts.

⁷ But Yahweh, commander of the angel
armies, is with us;

the God whom Jacob worshiped is our
refuge.

⁸ Come and see the things that Yahweh
does!

Come and see the things he has de-
stroyed all over the earth.

⁹ He stops wars all over the world;

he breaks bows and arrows;

he destroys spears;

he burns up shields.

¹⁰ God says, "Be quiet and remember
that I am God!

People of all nations will honor me.

People all over the earth will honor
me."

¹¹ So never forget that Yahweh, com-
mander of the angel armies, is with us;

the God whom Jacob worshiped is our
refuge.

Psalm 47

¹ You people all over the world, clap
your hands!

Shout joyfully to praise God!

² Yahweh, who is much greater than any
other god, is awesome;

he is a king who rules over all the
world!

³ He enabled us to defeat the armies of
the people groups that lived in Canaan.

⁴ He chose for us this land where we
now live;

we Israelite people, whom he loves,
are proud that we own this land.

⁵ God has gone up into his temple.

The people shouted joyfully and blew
trumpets as he went up.

⁶ Sing songs to praise our God!

Sing to praise him !

Sing to God, our king!

⁷ God is the one who rules over every-
thing in the world;

sing a psalm to him!

⁸ God sits on his sacred throne

as he rules over the people of all ethnic
groups.

⁹ The rulers of those people groups
gather in front of God's people, the people
descended from Abraham.

God has more power than the weapons
of all the kings on the earth;

he is great, and all people everywhere
will honor him.

Psalm 48

¹ Yahweh is great, and he deserves to be greatly praised in the city where he lives,
which is built on Zion, his sacred hill.

² That city on a high hill is beautiful;
it is the city where the true God, the great king, lives,

and it causes people all over the world to rejoice when they see it.

³ God is in the strong towers there,
and he shows that he protects the people in that city.

⁴ Many kings gathered with their armies to attack our city,

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

⁶ Because they were very afraid, they trembled
like a woman who is about to give birth to a child.

⁷ They shook as ships sailing from Tarshish shake in a strong wind.

⁸ We had heard that this city was glorious,
and now we have seen that it is.

It is the city in which Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, lives.

It is the city that God will preserve forever.

⁹ God, here in your temple we think about how you love us as you promised to do.

¹⁰ People all over the earth will praise you
because you rule powerfully and justly.

¹¹ The people who live at Mount Zion should be happy!

The people in all the cities of Judah should rejoice

because you judge people fairly.

¹² You Israelite people should walk around Mount Zion
and count the towers there;

¹³ notice the walls there and examine their strongest parts

so that you can tell your children about them.

¹⁴ Say to your children, "This is the city of our God, the one who lives forever;

he will guide us during all of our lives."

Psalm 49

¹ You people of all people groups, listen!
You people all over the world,

² important people and unimportant people,

rich people and poor people,
everyone, listen to what I am saying.

³ For what I am thinking is very sensible,
and what I say will enable you to become wise.

⁴ I think about wise words to tell you,
and while I play my harp, I explain what they mean.

⁵ I do not worry when I am in trouble,
when I am surrounded by my enemies.

⁶ These are evil men who trust that things will always go well for them because they are wealthy
and who boast about being very rich.

⁷ They may be rich, but no one can pay
God money

so that he can live forever!

No one can pay God enough so that God
will allow him to continue to live

⁸ because that cost is too much,

and he will never be able to pay
enough.

⁹ No one can pay God enough money so
that he will live forever

and never die and be buried!

¹⁰ We see that foolish and stupid people
die,

but we see that wise people also die;

they all leave their wealth, and others
inherit it.

¹¹ They once had houses on land that
they owned,

but now their graves are their homes
forever,

the place where they will stay for all
time!

¹² Even if people are great, that cannot
prevent them from dying;

people all die, the same as the animals
do.

¹³ That is what happens to those who
foolishly trust in what they have accom-
plished,

to those who are delighted in all that
they possess.

¹⁴ They are certain to die just like sheep
when a shepherd leads them away to
be slaughtered.

In the morning the righteous people will
rule over them,

and then those wealthy people will
die and their bodies will quickly decay in
their graves;

they will be where dead people are,
far from their homes.

¹⁵ But it is certain that God will rescue
me so that I am not held fast in the place
of the dead;

he will take me to himself.

¹⁶ So do not be dismayed when someone
becomes rich

and the houses where they live be-
come more and more luxurious;

¹⁷ for when he dies, he will take nothing
with him;

his wealth will not go with him.

¹⁸ While a rich person is alive, he con-
gratulates himself,

and people praise him for being suc-
cessful,

¹⁹ but he will die and join his ancestors,
who will never see daylight again.

²⁰ Even if someone is great, that cannot
prevent him from dying;

he will die, the same as the animals
do.

Psalm 50

¹ God, the all-powerful one, speaks;

he summons all people,

from the east to the west.

² His glory shines from Mount Zion in
Jerusalem,

an extremely beautiful city.

³ Our God comes to us,

and he is not silent.

A great fire is in front of him,

and a storm is around him.

⁴ He comes to judge his people.

He shouts to the angels in heaven
and to the people on the earth.

⁵ He says, "Summon those who faithfully
worship me,

those who made a covenant with me
by offering sacrifices to me."

⁶ The angels in heaven declare,
"God is righteous,
and he is the supreme judge."

⁷ God says, "My people, listen!
You Israelite people, listen,
as I, your God, say what you have done
that is wrong.

⁸ I am not rebuking you for making sac-
rifices to me,
for the offerings that you always burn
on the altar for me.

⁹ But I do not really need the bulls from
your barns
and the goats from your pens that you
sacrifice,

¹⁰ because all the animals in the forest
belong to me,
and all the cattle on a thousand hills
also belong to me.

¹¹ I know and own all the birds in the
mountains,
and all the creatures that move around
in the fields.

¹² So if I were hungry, I would not tell
you to bring me some food

because everything in the world be-
longs to me!

¹³ I do not eat the flesh of the bulls that
you sacrifice,

and I do not drink the blood of the
goats that you offer to me.

¹⁴ The sacrifice that I really want is that
you thank me

and do all that you have promised to
do.

¹⁵ Pray to me when you have troubles.
If you do that, I will rescue you, and
then you will praise me.

¹⁶ But I say this to the wicked people:
Why do you recite my commandments
or talk about the covenant that I made
with you?

¹⁷ For you have refused to allow me to
discipline you,
and you have rejected what I told you
to do.

¹⁸ Every time that you see a thief, you
become his friend,
and you spend much time with those
who commit adultery.

¹⁹ You are always talking about doing
wicked things,
and you are always trying to deceive
people.

²⁰ You are always accusing members of
your own family
and slandering them.

²¹ You did all those things, and I did not
say anything to you,
so you thought that I was a sinner just
like you.

But now I rebuke you and accuse you,
right in front of you.

²² So, all you who have ignored me, pay
attention to this,

because if you do not, I will tear you to
pieces,

and there will be no one to rescue
you.

²³ The sacrifice that truly honors me is to thank me for what I have done;

and I will save those who always do the things that I want them to.”

Psalm 51

¹ O God, act mercifully toward me
because you love me faithfully;
because you are very merciful,
forget the ways that I disobeyed you!

² Make me acceptable to you again, even though I did wrong things;

forgive the guilt of my sin and accept me.

³ I say that because I know the ways that I have disobeyed you;

I cannot forget them.

⁴ You, you only, are the one I that have really sinned against,

and you have seen the evil things that I have done.

When you say that I am guilty, you are right,

and when you judge me, you justly say that I deserve to be punished.

⁵ I have been a sinner since the day that I was born;

truly, I have been like that since my mother conceived me.

⁶ What you desire is that in my inner being I desire what is true

in order that you can teach me in my inner being how to act wisely.

⁷ Forgive the guilt of my sins, and after that happens, I will be completely acceptable to you;

if you forgive me, then I will be absolutely right with you.

⁸ Allow me to rejoice again;

you have made me immeasurably sad,

but now let me rejoice again.

⁹ Do not continue to remember the sins that I have committed;

forget the evil things that I have done.

¹⁰ O God, make me want to do the things that you approve of.

Make me want to do only what is right.

¹¹ Do not reject me as one of your people,

and do not make your holy Spirit leave me.

¹² Make me happy again by rescuing me from my guilt,

and always help me by making me sincerely want to obey you.

¹³ If you do that, I will teach other sinners what you want them to do;

they will repent and obey you.

¹⁴ O God, you are the one who saves me;

forgive me for being guilty of causing someone who was not my enemy to die.

When you do that, I will sing joyfully about your being very good and righteous.

¹⁵ O Yahweh, help me to speak

in order that I may praise you.

¹⁶ When people only bring sacrifices to you, that does not please you.

If that were enough to please you, I would do the same.

But you are not pleased with burnt offerings alone.

¹⁷ The sacrifice that you really want is for people to be truly humble and sorry for having sinned.

O God, you will not refuse that kind of sacrifice.

¹⁸ O God, be good to the people who live in Jerusalem;

make them able to rebuild the city walls.

¹⁹ When that happens, they will bring you the proper sacrifices:

normal animal sacrifices and sacrifices to be completely burned.

They will burn young bulls on your altar,

and you will be pleased.

Psalm 52

¹ You proud man, you think that you are strong;

you boast about the trouble that you make for others,

but God faithfully protects people from you every day.

² All during the day you plan to get rid of others;

what you say is like a sharp blade,
and you are always deceiving others.

³ You like doing what is evil more than you like doing what is good,

and you like telling lies more than you like telling the truth.

⁴ You, the one who says things to deceive people,

you like to say things that hurt people!

⁵ But God will get rid of you forever;

he will grab you and drag you from your home

and take you away from this world where people are alive.

⁶ When righteous people see that, they will be awestruck,

and they will laugh at what happened to you, and say,

⁷ "Look what happened to the man who would not ask God to protect him;

he trusted that his great wealth would save him;

he grew more powerful by wickedly hurting other people."

⁸ But I am secure because I worship in God's temple;

I am like a strong green olive tree.

I trust in God, who faithfully loves us forever.

⁹ God, I will always thank you for everything you have done.

I will wait patiently because you are so good,

especially when I stand before your faithful people.

Psalm 53

¹ Only foolish people say to themselves, "There is no God!"

People who say that are corrupt; they commit terrible sins;

there is not one of them who does what is good.

² God looks down from heaven and sees humans;

he looks to see if any man is very wise
and seeks to know God.

³ But everyone has turned away from God. They are depraved and do disgusting, filthy things.

No one does what is good.

⁴ Will all these evil people never learn what God will do to them?

They hurt Yahweh's people with terrible violence. They had no guilt in what they did. They had the same expression on their faces as people eating bread at dinner.

And what is worse is that they never prayed to Yahweh.

⁵ But someday those people will become very terrified,

although they have nothing to fear.

For God will cause those who attack you to die,

and he will scatter their bones.

They have rejected God,

so he will cause them to be defeated and completely disgraced.

⁶ I wish that God would come and rescue the Israelite people!

God, when you bless your people again,

all the Israelite people, all the descendants of Jacob, will rejoice.

Psalm 54

¹ God, by your power save me from my enemies,

and show people that I have not done anything that is wrong!

² God, listen to my prayer;

listen to what I say to you

³ because strangers are trying to attack me;

proud men are wanting to kill me,
men who have no respect for you.

⁴ But God is the one who helps me;

Yahweh defends me from my enemies.

⁵ He will cause the evil things that they want to do to me to happen to them instead;

because you faithfully do what you have promised to me, destroy them.

⁶ Yahweh, I will gladly give an offering to you because I want to,

and I will thank you, for you are good to me;

⁷ you have rescued me from all my troubles,

and I have seen that you have defeated my enemies.

Psalm 55

¹ God, listen to my prayer,

and do not turn away from me while I am pleading with you.

² Listen to me and answer me

because I am overwhelmed by all my troubles.

³ My enemies terrify me;

wicked people oppress me.

They cause me to have great troubles;
they are angry with me, and they hate me.

⁴ I am terrified,

and I am very much afraid that I will die.

⁵ I am very fearful and I tremble;

I am completely terrified.

⁶ I said, "I wish that I had wings like a dove!

If I had wings, I would fly away and find a place to rest.

⁷ I would fly far away

and live in the wilderness.

⁸ I would quickly find a safe place

where my enemies could not strike me like a strong wind and rainstorm.”

⁹ Lord, confuse my enemies and cause their plans to fail.

I saw them hurting others by their violence and causing riots throughout the city.

¹⁰ During each day and night they march around on top of its walls,

committing crimes and causing trouble.

¹¹ They destroy things everywhere.

They oppress people and defraud people in the marketplaces.

¹² If it were an enemy who was making fun of me,

I could endure it.

If it were someone who hates me, who despises me,

I could hide from him.

¹³ But it is someone who is just like me, my companion,

someone who was my friend who is doing this to me.

¹⁴ We previously had many good talks together;

we walked around together in God’s temple.

¹⁵ I desire that my enemies will go down alive

to the place where the dead people are.

I want this because they do evil things in their homes.

¹⁶ But I will ask Yahweh, my God, to help me,

and he will save me.

¹⁷ Each morning, noontime, and evening I tell him what I am concerned about, and I moan,

and he hears my voice.

¹⁸ He saves my life and makes me safe

when I am fighting a terrible battle against my enemies.

There are many enemies coming to fight against me!

¹⁹ God is the one who has ruled everything forever,

and he will put those who fought against me in their place.

He will cause my enemies to be defeated and disgraced

because they do not change their evil behavior

and because they do not have any respect for God.

²⁰ My companion, whom I mentioned previously, betrayed his friends

and broke the agreement that he made with them.

²¹ What he said was as easy to listen to as butter is easy to swallow,

but in his inner being he hated people; his words were as soothing as olive oil,

but they hurt people as sharp swords do.

²² Put your troubles in Yahweh’s hands, and he will take care of you;

he will never allow disaster to destroy righteous people.

²³ God, you will cause murderers and liars to die before they have lived half as long as they expect to live;

but as for me, I will trust in you.

Psalm 56

¹ God, act mercifully toward me because men are attacking me!

All day long an enemy presses closer and closer to me because they want to take my life.

² All day long my enemies seek to crush the life from me,

there are many enemies attacking me!

³ But whenever I am afraid,

I trust in you.

⁴ God, I praise you because you do what you have promised;

I trust in you, and then I am not afraid.

Ordinary humans certainly cannot harm me!

⁵ All day long my enemies claim that I said things that I did not say;

they are always thinking of ways to harm me.

⁶ In order to cause trouble for me, they hide

and watch everything that I do,

waiting for an opportunity to kill me.

⁷ So, God, punish them for the wicked things that they are doing;

show that you are angry by defeating those people!

⁸ You have counted all the times that I have been wandering alone;

it is as though you have put all my tears in a bottle

so that you can see how much I have cried.

You have counted my tears and written the number in your book.

⁹ When I call out to you, my God, my enemies will be defeated;

I know that will happen because you are fighting for me.

¹⁰ I praise you that you do what you have promised;

Yahweh, I will always praise you for that.

¹¹ I trust in you, and as a result, I will not be afraid.

I know that humans cannot really harm me!

¹² I will bring to you the offering that I promised;

I will bring an offering to you to thank you

¹³ because you have rescued me from being killed;

you have kept me from stumbling.

And so I will continue to live with God every day

in his light that gives me life.

Psalm 57

¹ God, act mercifully toward me!

Act mercifully toward me because I am coming to you to protect me.

I request you to protect me as little birds are protected under their mother's wings

until the storm is ended.

² God, you who are greater than all other gods,

I cry out to you, the one who enables me to be all that you desire.

³ You will answer me from heaven and rescue me,

but you will cause those who oppress me to be defeated and disgraced!

God will always faithfully love me as he has promised me.

⁴ Sometimes I am surrounded by my enemies, who are as ready to kill me as lions are to kill people;

they are like lions that chew to bits the animals that they kill.

But my enemies are human, and they have spears and arrows, not teeth;

they say false things about me.

⁵ God, show in the heavens that you are very great!

Show your glory to people all over the earth!

⁶ It is as if my enemies have spread a net to seize me,

and I became very distressed.

It is as if they have dug a deep pit along the path where I walk,

but they themselves fell into it!

⁷ God, I am very confident in you.

I will sing to you,

and I will praise you while I sing.

⁸ It is an honor to wake up and praise you.

I will arise before the sun rises

and praise you while I play my big harp or my lyre.

⁹ Lord, I will thank you among all the people;

and I will sing songs of praise about you to many people groups.

¹⁰ For your love for us is as great as the distance from the earth to the sky,

and your faithfulness to us goes up to the clouds.

¹¹ God, show in the heavens that you are very great!

Show your glory to people all over the earth!

Psalm 58

¹ When you rulers speak, you never say what is right;

you people never justly decide disputes.

² No, in your inner beings you think only about doing what is wrong,

and you commit violent crimes everywhere in this land of Israel.

³ Wicked people do wrong things and tell lies from the time that they are born.

⁴ What wicked people say injures people like the venom of a snake.

They refuse to listen to commands; it is as though they were deaf cobras.

⁵ As a result, like a snake that does not respond when a charmer plays a flute or when someone sings magic songs,

they do not pay attention when others rebuke them.

⁶ God, as for these enemies who want to attack me like young lions,

break the teeth in their mouths!

⁷ Cause them to disappear as water disappears in dry ground!

Cause the arrows that they shoot to have no heads!

⁸ Cause them to become like snails that disappear in the slime;

cause them to be like a baby that is born dead!

⁹ I hope that you will get rid of them

as fast as thornbushes are blown away
after they are cut.

¹⁰ People who do what is right will
rejoice when they see God punish the
wicked people;

they will wash their feet in the blood
of wicked people.

¹¹ Then people will say, "It is true that
there is a reward for righteous people;

and there is indeed a God who judges
people justly here on the earth!"

Psalm 59

¹ God, save me from my enemies!

Protect me from those who want to
attack me!

² Keep me safe from men who want to
do what is wicked,
from men who are murderers!

³ Look! They are waiting to kill me!
Fierce men have gathered to assault
me.

Yahweh, they are doing that even
though I have not done what is wrong!

⁴ It is not because I have committed any
sin against them

that they run and get ready to attack
me. Please look at my situation and help
me.

⁵ Yahweh my God, commander of the an-
gel armies, the one we Israelites worship,

arise and punish the people of all the
nations who do not honor you;

do not act mercifully toward those
wicked people who have acted treacher-
ously toward us.

⁶ They return each evening,

snarling like vicious dogs as they
prowl around this city.

⁷ They loudly say terrible things;
they say things that destroy as much
as swords do,

because they are saying, "No one will
hear us!"

⁸ But Yahweh, you laugh at them.

You scoff at the people of the pagan
nations.

⁹ God, I have confidence in you because
you are very strong;

you are my refuge.

¹⁰ Because you love me, you will come
to save me as you have promised;

you will allow me to watch while you
defeat my enemies.

¹¹ But do not kill them immediately;
it is good that my people should not
forget how you punished them!

Instead, Lord, you who are like a shield
that protects us,

scatter them by your power, and then
defeat them.

¹² Because what they say is sinful,
allow them to be trapped for being
proud.

Because they are always cursing and
telling lies,

¹³ because you are angry, get rid of
them;

destroy them completely
so that people will know that you rule
over us, your Israelite people,
and that you rule over all the earth.

¹⁴ They return each evening,
snarling like vicious dogs as they
prowl around this city.

¹⁵ They roam around, searching for food
and if they do not find enough, they
growl like dogs.

¹⁶ But as for me, I will sing about your
power;

every morning I will sing joyfully
about your faithfully loving us.

I will sing about how you protected me
when I was very distressed.

¹⁷ God, you are the one who enables me
to be strong;

you are my refuge;

you faithfully love me, just as you
have promised in your covenant.

Psalm 60

¹ I prayed, "God, you have rejected us
Israelites!

Because you have been angry with us,
you have enabled our enemies to
break through our ranks.

Please enable us to be strong again!

² It was as though you made a big earth-
quake in which the ground split open.

So now, make us strong again,

because it is as though our country is
falling apart.

³ You have caused us, your people, to
suffer very much;

it is as though you had taken away our
strength by making us drink strong wine.

⁴ But you have raised a battle flag for
those who honor you.

They will show your banner when
they face the enemies' arrows.

⁵ Answer our prayers and enable us by
your power to defeat our enemies

so that we, the people you love, will
be saved."

⁶ Then God answered my prayer and
spoke from his temple, saying,

"Because I have conquered your ene-
mies, I will divide the city of Shechem,

and I will distribute among my people
the land in Succoth Valley.

⁷ The region of Gilead is mine;

the people of the tribe of Manasseh are
mine;

the tribe of Ephraim is like my helmet;

and the tribe of Judah is like the scepter
with which I rule.

⁸ The region of Moab is like my wash-
basin;

I throw my sandal into the region of
Edom to show that it belongs to me;

I shout triumphantly because I have
defeated the people of all the region of
Philistia.

⁹ Because I want to defeat the people of
Edom,

who will lead my army to their capital
city that has strong walls around it?"

¹⁰ So, God, it seems that you have truly
abandoned us;

it seems that you do not go with us
when our armies march out to fight our
enemies.

¹¹ We need you to help us when we fight
against our enemies

because the help that humans can
give us is worthless.

¹² But with you helping us, we will win;

you will enable us to defeat our ene-
mies.

Psalm 61

¹ God, listen to me
and answer my prayer.

² While I am discouraged and far from
my home,
I am calling out to you.

Lead me to a place that will be like a
high rock

on top of which I will be safe.

³ You have been my refuge;
you have been like a strong tower
in which my enemies cannot attack
me.

⁴ Allow me to live close to your sacred
tent all during my life!

Allow me to be safe as a little bird is safe
under its mother's wings.

⁵ God, you heard me when I solemnly
promised to give offerings to you;
you have given to me the blessings that
belong to those who have an awesome re-
spect for you.

⁶ I am the king of Israel;
please allow me to live and rule for
many years,
and allow my descendants to rule
also.

⁷ Allow us to rule forever while you ob-
serve us;

watch over us while you faithfully
love us and do for us what you promised.

⁸ If you do that, I will always sing to
praise you

while I offer to you each day the sac-
rifices that I promised to give to you.

Psalm 62

¹ God is the only one who can give me
peace in my inner being,

and he is the one who saves me from
my enemies.

² Only he is like a huge rock on which I
can be safe;

he is like a fortress high up that my
enemies cannot climb.

³ When will you, my enemies, stop at-
tacking me?

I feel that I am as weak against you
as a leaning wall or a broken-down fence.

⁴ My enemies plan to remove me from
my important position so that people no
longer honor me.

They delight in telling lies.

They bless people by what they say,
but in their inner beings they curse
those people.

⁵ God is the only one who gives me peace
in my inner being;

he is the one whom I confidently ex-
pect to help me.

⁶ Only he is like a huge rock on which I
can be safe;

he is like a shelter; my enemies can
never reach me there.

⁷ God is the one who saves me and hon-
ors me.

He is like a huge, strong rock on which
I can find shelter.

⁸ You my people, always trust in him.

Tell him all your troubles

because we go to him for safety.

⁹ People who are considered to be unim-
portant are as unreliable as a breath of
air;

people who are considered to be important also really amount to nothing.

If you put them all on a scale, it would be as if they weighed less than a puff of air.

¹⁰ Do not trust in money gained by extorting it from others;

do not try to gain anything by robbing others.

If you become very wealthy, do not trust in your money.

¹¹ I have heard God say more than once that he is the one who really has power,

¹² and that he is the one who faithfully loves us, as he promised.

He rewards every one of us according to the deeds that we do.

Psalm 63

¹ God, you are the God whom I worship.

I greatly desire to be with you

as a person in a dry hot wilderness greatly desires some water.

² I have been with you in your temple

In order to see that you are loving and powerful.

³ You always love me, as you promised in your covenant; this is worth more than my entire life,

so I will always praise you.

⁴ I will praise you all the time that I live;

I will lift up my hands to you while I pray.

⁵ You fill me up and you meet every need I have.

My response to you is much like when I eat a delicious banquet of rich foods

and the food fills me.

I will have great happiness when I praise you with the words that I speak about you.

⁶ While I lie on my bed, I think about you.

I think about you all during the night.

⁷ For you have always helped me,

and I sing joyfully knowing that you protect me

as a bird protects her young under her wings.

⁸ I follow you closely,

and your hand protects me.

⁹ But those who are trying to kill me

will die and descend into the place of the dead;

¹⁰ they will be killed in battles

and their corpses will be eaten by dogs.

¹¹ But I, the king of Israel, will rejoice in what God has done;

and all those who ask God to confirm their word will praise him,

but he will not allow liars to say anything.

Psalm 64

¹ God, listen to me as I tell you the things about which I am worried.

I am afraid of my enemies; please save me from them.

² Protect me from what wicked men are planning to do to me;

protect me from that group of men who do what is evil.

³ The hostile things they say are like sharp swords;

their cruel words are like arrows.

⁴ They are not afraid of anyone; they lie about people and slander those who have done no wrong.

They are like someone who suddenly jumps up from where he is hiding and shoots arrows at his enemies.

⁵ They encourage each other about doing the evil things that they are planning to do;

they talk with each other about where they can set traps to catch people.

They say, "No one will see what we are doing

⁶ because we have planned very well the things that we are going to do."

What people can think and plan in their inner beings is truly amazing!

⁷ But it will be as though God will shoot his arrows at them,

and suddenly they will be wounded.

⁸ Because what they say proves they are guilty, God will get rid of them.

Everyone who sees what has happened to them will shake their heads to mock them.

⁹ Then everyone will be afraid to sin because of what might happen to them also;

they will tell others what God has done,

and they themselves will think much about it.

¹⁰ Righteous people should rejoice because of what Yahweh has done;

they should go to him to find refuge;
and all those who honor him will praise him.

Psalm 65

¹ God, it is right for us to praise you in Jerusalem

and to do what we have promised you that we would do

² because you answer our prayers.

People everywhere will come to you

³ Our many sins are like a very heavy burden to us,

but you forgive us.

⁴ How fortunate are those whom you have chosen

to always be in your temple courtyards.

We will be satisfied with all the blessings that you will give us because we worship you in your sacred temple.

⁵ God, when we pray to you, you answer us and save us by doing awesome deeds;

you are the one who rescues us;

people who live in very remote places on the earth, on the other side of the oceans, trust in you.

⁶ You are the one who put the mountains in their places,

showing that you are very powerful.

⁷ You are the one who calms the seas when they roar,

and stop the waves from pounding on the shore;

you also calm people when they cause a lot of trouble.

⁸ People who live in very remote places on the earth

are awed by the miracles that you perform;

because of what you do,

people who live far to the west and far to the east shout joyfully.

⁹ You take care of the soil and send rain, causing many good things to grow; you fill the streams with water and cause grain to grow.

This is what you have determined would happen.

¹⁰ You send plenty of rain on the fields that have been plowed, and you fill the furrows with water.

With showers you soften the hard clods of soil,

and you bless the soil by causing young plants to grow.

¹¹ Because you bless the soil, there are very good crops at harvest season;

wherever you have gone, good crops are very abundant.

¹² The pastures in the wilderness are wet with the morning dew,

it is as though the hills are singing joyful songs.

¹³ The meadows are covered with sheep and goats,

and the valleys are full of grain;

it is as though they also sing and shout joyfully.

Psalm 66

¹ Tell everyone on the earth

that they should sing joyfully to praise God!

² They should sing songs that say that God is very great,

and they should tell everyone that he is very glorious!

³ They should say to God, "The things that you do are awesome!

Your power is very great,

with the result that your enemies cringe in front of you."

⁴ Everyone on the earth will worship God,

sing to praise him,

and honor him.

⁵ Come and think about what God has done!

Think about the awesome things that he has done among people.

⁶ He caused the sea to become dry land, with the result that our ancestors were able to walk right through it.

There we rejoiced because of what he had done.

⁷ He rules forever by his power, and he keeps watching all the nations to see what evil things they do.

The nations that want to rebel against him should not be proud.

⁸ You people of all nations, praise our God!

Praise him loudly in order that people will hear you as you praise him.

⁹ He has kept us alive, and he has not allowed us to fall into disaster.

¹⁰ God, you have tested us; you have allowed us to experience great difficulties to make our lives become pure as people put precious metals in a hot fire to burn out what is impure.

¹¹ It is as if you allowed us to fall into traps,

and you forced us to endure difficult things that were like heavy loads to carry on our backs.

¹² You allowed our enemies to trample on us;

we experienced difficulties walking through fires and floods,

but now you have made us safe.

¹³ I will bring to your temple offerings that are to be completely burned on the altar;

I will offer to you what I promised.

¹⁴ When I was experiencing much trouble, I said that I would bring offerings to you if you rescued me;

and you did rescue me, so I will bring to you what I promised.

¹⁵ I will bring sheep to be burned on the altar,

and I will also sacrifice bulls and goats;

when they are burning, you will be pleased as the smoke rises up to you.

¹⁶ All you people who have a reverential respect for God, come and listen,

and I will tell you what he has done for me.

¹⁷ I called out to him to help me,

and I praised him while I was speaking to him.

¹⁸ If I had ignored the sins that I had committed,

the Lord would not have paid any attention to me.

¹⁹ But because I confessed my sins, God has listened to me

and has paid attention to my prayers.

²⁰ I praise God

because he has not ignored my prayers;

he continues to love me as he promised in his covenant to do.

Psalm 67

¹ God, act mercifully toward us and bless us;

act kindly toward us.

² Do this in order that everyone in the world may know what you want them to do,

and the people of all nations may know that you have the power to save them.

³ God, I desire that all people groups may praise you;

I want them all to praise you!

⁴ I desire that the people of all nations will be glad and sing joyfully

because you judge the people groups equally,

and you guide all the nations in the world.

⁵ God, I desire that the people groups may praise you;

I want them all to praise you!

⁶ Good crops have grown on our land; God, our God, has blessed us.

⁷ Because God has blessed us,

I desire that all people everywhere on the earth may have an awesome respect for him.

Psalm 68

¹ God, arise and scatter your enemies, and cause those who hate you to run away from you.

² As wind blows smoke away,

you chase your enemies away.

As wax melts when it is near a fire,

may you cause wicked people to disappear.

³ But may the righteous people be joyful;

may they rejoice when they are in God's presence;

may they be happy and very joyful.

⁴ Sing to God; sing to praise him;

sing a song for him who rides in the desert plains;

his name is Yahweh; be glad when you are in his presence.

⁵ God, who lives in his sacred temple, is like a father to those who are orphans,

and he is the one who protects widows.

⁶ He provides families for those who have no one to live with.

He frees prisoners and enables them to be successful,

but those who rebel against him will be forced to live in a very hot and dry land.

⁷ God, you led your people out of Egypt,

and then you marched with them through the desert.

⁸ After you did that,

the earth shook at Mount Sinai when you appeared to your people,

and rain poured down from the sky, and your people worshiped you.

⁹ You caused plenty of rain to fall there in the wilderness,

and so you enabled good crops to grow again on that land that you gave to us Israelites.

¹⁰ Your people built homes there;

because you were good to them, you provided food for those who were poor.

¹¹ The Lord spoke this message,

and many people took his message to other places.

¹²⁻¹³ They proclaimed, "Many kings and their armies are running away from our army!"

When our army brought back to their homes the things that they captured,

the women who were at home divided up those things among themselves and among their families.

They got statues of pigeons whose wings were covered with silver

and whose feathers were covered with pure yellow gold. But some of the people stayed with the sheep and did not go to fight in the battle. Why did you not go?

¹⁴ When Almighty God scattered the enemy kings and their armies,

it reminded me of a snowstorm on Mount Zalmon!

¹⁵ There is a very high mountain in the Bashan hills,

a mountain that has many peaks.

¹⁶ But the people who live near that mountain should not envy those who live near Mount Zion,

the mountain on which God chose to live!

Yahweh will live there forever!

¹⁷ After we defeated all our enemies,

it was as though the Lord, surrounded by many thousands of strong chariots, descended from Mount Sinai

and came into the sacred temple in Jerusalem.

¹⁸ He ascended the sacred mountain
where his temple is

and took with him many people who
had been captured in battles;

he received gifts from the enemies
whom he had defeated.

He received gifts even from those who
had rebelled against him,

and Yahweh, our God, will live there
in his sacred temple forever.

¹⁹ Praise the Lord, who helps us carry
our heavy loads every day;

he is the one who saves us.

²⁰ Our God is the God who saves us;

He is Yahweh, our Lord, the one who
allows us to escape from dying in battles.

²¹ But God will smash the heads of his
enemies,

the long-haired skulls of those who
continue to behave sinfully.

²² The Lord said, "I will bring back the
corpses of my enemies who were killed in
Bashan,

and I will bring back those who sank
deep in the ocean and drowned.

²³ I will do that so that you may wash
your feet in their blood,

and your dogs can also lap up some
of your enemies' blood."

²⁴ God, many people see you march tri-
umphantly into your sacred temple,

celebrating that you have defeated
your enemies.

You march like a king does, and a
large crowd walks with you.

²⁵ The singers are in front, and the peo-
ple who play stringed instruments are at
the rear,

and young women who are beating
their tambourines are between them.

²⁶ They are all singing, "You Israelite peo-
ple, praise God when you gather together;

praise Yahweh, all you who are de-
scendants of Jacob!"

²⁷ First come the people of the tribe of
Benjamin, the smallest tribe,

and following them come the leaders
of the tribe of Judah and their group,

and following them come the leaders of
the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali.

²⁸ You people of Israel, God made our
tribes very strong.

God, help us with your power as you
helped us in the past.

²⁹ Show us that you are strong,
there where you are in your temple in
Jerusalem;

kings bring gifts to you there.

³⁰ Shout as you defeat your enemies,
such as those in Egypt, who are like wild
animals living in the reeds.

Shout as you defeat the powerful na-
tions, who are like herds of bulls.

Shame them; make them bow down and
give you gifts.

Drive away and scatter the people
groups who love to attack other nations.

³¹ Then the leaders of Egypt will bring
gifts to you.

then the people in Ethiopia will rush
to lift up their hands to praise you.

³² You people who are citizens of king-
doms all over the world, sing to God!

Sing praises to Yahweh!

³³ Sing to the God, the one who rides in
the sky,

the sky that he created long ago.

Listen as he shouts with a very powerful voice.

³⁴ Proclaim that God is very powerful;
he is the king that rules over Israel,
and in the skies he also shows that he is powerful.

³⁵ God is awesome as he comes out of his sacred temple;

he is the God whom we Israelite people worship.

He gives power and strength to his people.

Praise God!

Psalm 69

¹ O God, save me
because I am in great danger.

It is as though the flood water were up to my neck, and I were about to drown.

² I continue to sink in the deep mud,
and there is no solid ground for me to stand on.

I am in deep water,
and the flood is swirling around me.

³ I am exhausted from calling out for help;

my throat is very dry.

Because I have cried so much as I have waited for God to help me,

my eyes are swollen from tears.

⁴ Those who hate me when there is no reason to hate me

are more than the number of hairs on my head!

Those who want to get rid of me are strong,

and they tell lies about me.

They demand that I return to them things that I did not steal!

⁵ O God, you see the sins that I have committed.

You know that I have foolishly disobeyed your laws.

⁶ O Yahweh God, commander of the angel armies,

do not allow the wrong things that I have done

cause those who trust in you to be disappointed.

O God, whom we Israelite people worship,

do not allow me to cause them to be shamed.

⁷ People have insulted me because I am devoted to you.

They have thoroughly humiliated me.

⁸ Even my own older brothers act as if they do not know me;

they treat me like a foreigner.

⁹ Some people have despised your temple;

but because I have tried to keep your temple holy, people have caused trouble for me.

So it is as though those who are insulting you are also insulting me.

¹⁰ When I have humbled myself and fasted

to show my sadness about the disgraceful things that they have done to your temple,

they just insult me.

¹¹ When I put on rough sackcloth to show that I am sad,

they laugh at me.

¹² Even the elders of the city say bad things about me.

The drunkards of the city sing disgusting songs about me.

¹³ But Yahweh, I will continue praying to you.

At the time that you choose, answer me and rescue me

because you faithfully love me, as you have promised to do.

¹⁴ Do not allow me to sink anymore in the mud.

Rescue me from those who hate me!

Lift me up out of these deep waters!

¹⁵ Do not allow the floods to swirl around me;

do not allow the deep mud to swallow me;

keep me from sinking into the pit of death.

¹⁶ O Yahweh, answer my prayer and help me

because you are good

and I can depend on your love for me.

You have not punished me for what I deserve.

I know you will listen to me!

¹⁷ Do not hide yourself from me;

answer me quickly

because I am in great trouble.

¹⁸ Come near to me and save me;

rescue me from my enemies.

¹⁹ You know that I am insulted

and that people shame and dishonor me;

you know who all my enemies are.

²⁰ Their insults have deeply offended me,

and I feel helpless.

I searched for someone who would pity me,

but there was no one.

I wanted someone to encourage me,

but there was no one.

²¹ Instead, they gave me food that tasted like poison,

and when I was thirsty, they gave me sour wine to drink.

²² I hope their own food will kill them;

I hope that this will happen when they think that they are completely safe.

²³ I hope that their eyes become dim so that they cannot see anything

and that their backs will become weaker and weaker.

²⁴ Show them that you are very angry with them!

Because of your great anger, chase them and catch them.

²⁵ Cause their towns to become abandoned;

may there be no one to live in their tents.

²⁶ Do this because they persecute those whom you have punished,

they look at how those whom you have punished suffer, and they tell others about it.

²⁷ Keep making a record of all their sins, do not fail to punish them for the evil things that they have done.

²⁸ Erase their names from the book containing the names of those who have eternal life;

do not include them in the list of righteous people.

²⁹ As for me, I have pain and am suffering.

O God, protect me and rescue me.

³⁰ When God does that, I will sing as I praise God,

and I will honor him by thanking him.

³¹ My doing that will please Yahweh more than sacrificing oxen,

more than offering him full grown bulls.

³² Oppressed people will see that God has rescued me,

and they will be glad.

I desire that all who request God to help them may be encouraged.

³³ Yahweh listens to those who are needy;

he does not ignore those who have suffered for him.

³⁴ I desire that everything will praise God—

everything that is in heaven and on earth and all the creatures that are in the seas.

³⁵ God will rescue the people of Jerusalem from their enemies,

and he will rebuild the towns that are in Judah.

His people will live there and again possess the land.

³⁶ The descendants of his people will inherit it,

and those who love him will live there safely.

Psalm 70

¹ God, please save me!

Yahweh, come quickly to help me!

² Disgrace those who are happy about my troubles, those who are trying to kill me.

Chase them away; make everyone shame them, for they want to see me suffer.

³ I hope that you will cause them to become dismayed and ashamed

because they have been happy about my troubles.

⁴ But I hope that everyone who prays to you will rejoice because of you.

I hope that everyone who waits for you to rescue them will say,

“God is great!”

⁵ As for me, I am poor and needy;

so God, come quickly to help me!

Yahweh, you are the one who saves and helps me,

so please come quickly!

Psalm 71

¹ Yahweh, I have come to you to be safe; never allow me to become ashamed.

² Because you always do what is right, help me and rescue me;

listen to me, and save me!

³ Be like a huge rock on top of which I can be safe;

be like a strong fortress in which I am safe.

You have commanded your angels to rescue me.

⁴ God, rescue me from wicked people,
from the power of unjust and evil men.

⁵ Yahweh, my Lord, you are the one whom I confidently expect to help me;

I have trusted in you ever since I was young.

⁶ I have depended on you all my life;
you have taken care of me since the day that I was born,

so I will always praise you.

⁷ The manner in which you have rescued me has been an example to many people

because they realize that you have been my strong defender.

⁸ I praise you all during the day,
and I proclaim that you are glorious.

⁹ Now when I have become an old man, do not reject me;

do not abandon me now when I am not strong anymore.

¹⁰ My enemies say that they want to kill me;

they talk together and plan how they can do that.

¹¹ They say, "God has abandoned him;
so now we can pursue him and seize him

because there is no one who will rescue him."

¹² God, do not stay far away from me;
hurry to help me!

¹³ Cause those who accuse me to be defeated and destroyed;

cause those who want to harm me to be shamed and disgraced.

¹⁴ But as for me, I will continually and confidently expect you to do great things for me,

and I will praise you more and more.

¹⁵ I will tell people that you do what is right;

all during the day I will tell people how you have saved me,

although what you have done is more than I can fully understand.

¹⁶ Yahweh, my Lord, I will praise you for your mighty deeds;

I will proclaim that only you always act justly.

¹⁷ God, you have taught me many things ever since I was young,

and I still tell people about your wonderful deeds.

¹⁸ Now, God, when I am old and my hair is gray,

do not abandon me.

Stay with me while I continue to proclaim to my children and grandchildren.

¹⁹ God, you do many righteous deeds;
it is as though they extend up to the sky.

You have done great things;
there is no one like you.

²⁰ You have caused us to have many troubles and to suffer much,

but you will cause us to become strong again;

when I am almost dead, you will keep us alive.

²¹ You will cause me to be greatly honored,

and you will encourage me again.

²² I will also praise you while I play my harp;

I will praise you, my God, for faithfully doing what you have promised to do.

I will play hymns to praise you, the holy God whom we Israelites worship.

²³ I will shout joyfully while I sing;
with my entire inner being I will sing
because you have rescued me.

²⁴ All during the day I will tell people that you act righteously

because those who wanted to harm me will have been defeated and disgraced.

Psalm 72

¹ O God, enable the king whom you appointed in Israel to rule justly.

Show him how to judge matters fairly

² so that he may judge your people fairly
and that he may govern your oppressed people justly.

³ I desire that all over the country—even on the hills and mountains —

people will live peacefully and righteously.

⁴ Help your king to defend the poor people

and to rescue needy people and to defeat those who oppress them.

⁵ I desire that your king may live as long as the sun shines,

as long as the moon shines, forever.

⁶ I desire that his rule may be enjoyed by the people

as they enjoy rain on the growing crops,

as they enjoy the showers that fall on the land.

⁷ I hope that people may live righteously during the years that he rules

and that the people may live peacefully and prosperously as long as the moon shines.

⁸ I hope that the king of Israel may rule the people

in all the area from one sea in the east to another in the west

and from the Euphrates River to the most remote places on earth.

⁹ I hope that those who live in the wilderness may bow down before him

and that his enemies may throw themselves on the ground in submission to our king.

¹⁰ I hope that the king of the land of Tarshish and the kings of the islands in the sea may pay taxes to the king of Israel.

I hope that the king of Sheba to the south and the king of Seba to the southwest may bring him gifts.

¹¹ I hope that all the other kings in the world may bow before the king of Israel

and that people of all nations may serve our king.

¹² He rescues poor people when they cry out for help,

and he helps those who are needy and those who have no one to help them.

¹³ He pities those who are weak and needy;

he saves the people's lives.

¹⁴ Our king rescues people from being oppressed and from being treated cruelly

because their lives are precious to our king.

¹⁵ I hope that our king may live a long time!

I hope that he may be given gold from Sheba.

I desire that people may always pray for our king

and praise him all the time, every day.

¹⁶ I hope that the fields may produce plenty of grain everywhere, even on the tops of the hills in the land where he rules,

like the grain that grows on the hills in Lebanon.

I hope that the cities in Israel will be as full of people

as the fields are full of grass.

¹⁷ I desire that the name of the king may never be forgotten.

I hope that people may remember him as long as the sun shines.

I hope that all people will praise Yahweh, the God of Israel,

just as he has blessed the king of Israel.

¹⁸ Praise Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship;

he is the only one who does wonderful things.

¹⁹ Praise him forever!

I desire that his glory may fill the whole world!

Amen! May it be so!

²⁰ This is the end of the prayers written by David, son of Jesse.

Psalm 73

¹ God truly is good to us Israelite people,

to those who, with all their inner being, want to do all that he desires.

² As for me, I almost stopped trusting in God;

I was almost guilty of committing a great sin against him

³ because I saw those who proudly said that they did not need God, and I wanted to be like them.

I saw that they became wealthy even though they were wicked.

⁴ Those people do not suffer from sickness;

they are always strong and healthy.

⁵ They do not have the troubles that other people have;

they do not have problems as others do.

⁶ So they are proud, as proud as a woman with a beautiful necklace.

They are as proud of their violent actions as some people are proud of their beautiful robes.

⁷ From their inner beings pour out evil deeds,

and in their inner beings they are always thinking about more evil things to do.

⁸ They scoff at other people, and they talk about doing evil things to them;

they are proud while they plan to oppress others.

⁹ They say evil things about God, who is in heaven,

and they talk boastfully about things that they have done here on the earth.

¹⁰ The result is that people pay attention to them

and listen to everything they say.

¹¹ Wicked people say to themselves,
"God will certainly not know what we
have done;

people say that he is greater than any
other god, but he cannot find out."

¹² That is what wicked people are like;

they never worry about anything, and
they are always becoming richer.

¹³ So, God, I think it is useless that I have
always done what you want me to

and that I have not committed sins.

¹⁴ During each day I have problems,
and every morning you punish me.

¹⁵ But if I had said these things out loud
in front of others,

I would have been sinning against
your people.

¹⁶ When I tried to think completely
about these things,

it was too hard for me to understand
them.

¹⁷ But when I went to your temple, you
spoke to me,

and I understood what will happen
to the wicked people after they die.

¹⁸ Now I know that you will surely put
them in dangerous places

where they will fall down and die.

¹⁹ They will be destroyed instantly;
they will die in terrible ways.

²⁰ They will disappear as quickly as a
dream disappears when a person awakes
in the morning;

Lord, when you arise, you will cause
them to disappear.

²¹ When I felt sad in my inner being
and my feelings were hurt,

²² I was stupid and ignorant,

and I behaved like an animal toward
you.

²³ But I am always close to you,
and you hold my hand.

²⁴ You guide me by teaching me,
and at the end of my life, you will
receive me and honor me.

²⁵ You are in heaven, and I belong to
you;

there is nothing on this earth that I de-
sire more than that.

²⁶ My body and my mind may become
very weak,

but, God, you continue to enable me
to be strong;

I belong to you forever.

²⁷ Those who remain far from you will
be destroyed;

you will get rid of those who abandon
you.

²⁸ But as for me, it is wonderful to be
near to God

and to have Yahweh protect me

and to proclaim to others all that he
has done for me.

Psalm 74

¹ God, why have you abandoned us?

Will you keep rejecting us forever?

Why are you angry with us

since we are like sheep in your pasture
and you are like our shepherd?

² Do not forget your people whom you
chose long ago,

the people whom you freed from be-
ing slaves in Egypt and caused to become
your tribe.

Do not forget Jerusalem, which is your home on this earth.

³ Walk along and see where everything has been totally ruined;

our enemies have destroyed everything in the sacred temple.

⁴ Your enemies shouted triumphantly in this sacred place;

they erected their banners to show they had defeated us.

⁵ They cut down all the engraved objects in the temple as woodsmen cut down trees.

⁶ Then they smashed all the carved wood with their axes and hammers.

⁷ Then they burned your temple to the ground;

they caused that place where you were worshiped to be unfit for people to worship in.

⁸ They said to themselves, "We will destroy the Israelites completely,"

and they also burned down all the other places where we gathered to worship you.

⁹ All our sacred symbols are gone;

there are no prophets now,

and no one knows how long this situation will continue.

¹⁰ God, how long will our enemies make fun of you?

Will they insult you?

¹¹ Why do you refuse to help us?

Why do you keep your hand inside your cloak instead of using it to destroy our enemies?

¹² God, you have been our king during all the years since we came out of Egypt,

and you have enabled us to defeat our enemies in the land of Israel.

¹³ By your power you caused the sea to divide;

it was as though you had smashed the heads of the rulers of Egypt who were like huge sea dragons.

¹⁴ It was as though you crushed the head of the king of Egypt

and gave his body to the animals in the desert to eat.

¹⁵ You caused springs and streams to flow,

and you also dried up rivers that had never dried up previously.

¹⁶ You created the days and the nights, and you put the sun and the moon in their places.

¹⁷ You determined where the oceans end and the land begins,

and you created the summer season and the winter season.

¹⁸ Yahweh, do not forget that your enemies laugh at you

and that it is foolish people who despise you.

¹⁹ Do not abandon your helpless people into the hands of their cruel enemies;

do not forget your suffering people.

²⁰ Continue thinking about the covenant that you made with us;

remember that there are violent people in every dark place on the earth.

²¹ Do not allow your oppressed people to be disgraced;

help those poor and needy people in order that they will again praise you.

²² God, arise and defend yourself by defending your people!

Do not forget that foolish people laugh at you all during the day!

²³ Do not forget that your enemies shout angrily at you;

the uproar that they make while they oppose you never stops.

Psalm 75

¹ We give thanks to you;

our God, we thank you.

You are close to us,

and we proclaim to others the wonderful things that you have done for us.

² You have said, "I have appointed a time when I will judge people,

and I will judge everyone fairly.

³ When the earth shakes

and all the creatures on the earth tremble,

I am the one who will keep its foundations steady.

⁴ I say to people who boast, 'Stop bragging!'

and I say to wicked people, 'Do not proudly do things to show how great you are!'

⁵ Do not be arrogant,

and do not speak so boastfully!

⁶ The one who judges people does not come from the east or from the west,

and he does not come from the desert.

⁷ God is the one who judges people;

he shames and punishes some, and he honors others.

⁸ It is as though Yahweh held a cup in his hand;

it is filled with wine that has spices mixed in it to cause those who drink it to become more drunk;

and when Yahweh pours it out, he will force all the wicked people to drink it;

they will drink every drop of it; yes, he will punish them fully.

⁹ But as for me, I will never stop saying what the God whom Jacob worshiped has done;

I will never stop singing to praise him.

¹⁰ He promises this: "I will destroy the power of wicked people,

but I will increase the power of righteous people."

Psalm 76

¹ God has made the people in Judah to know him;

the Israelite people honor him.

² In Jerusalem is where he resides;

he lives on Mount Zion.

³ There he broke the flaming arrows that his enemies shot,

and he also broke their shields and swords and other weapons that they used in battles.

⁴ God, you are powerful! You are like a great king

as you return from the mountains where you defeated your enemies.

⁵ Their brave soldiers were killed, and then those who killed them took away everything that those soldiers had.

Those enemies died;

indeed, none of them were able to fight any longer.

⁶ When you, the God whom Jacob worshiped, rebuked your enemies,

their horses and their riders fell down dead.

⁷ Truly, you cause everyone to be afraid.

When you are angry and you punish people, no one can endure it.

⁸ From heaven you proclaimed that you would judge people,

and then everyone on the earth was afraid and did not say anything more

⁹ when you arose to declare that you would punish wicked people

and rescue all those whom they had oppressed.

¹⁰ When you punish those with whom you are angry, your people will praise you,

and your enemies who survive will worship you on your festival days.

¹¹ So give to Yahweh the offerings that you promised to give to him;

all the people of nearby people groups should also bring gifts to him, the one who is awesome.

¹² He humbles the leaders,

and terrifies all the kings.

Psalm 77

¹ I will cry out to God;

I will cry aloud to him, and he will listen to me.

² At the time that I had trouble, I prayed to the Lord;

all during the night I lifted up my hands while I prayed,

but nothing could comfort me.

³ When I thought about God, I despaired; when I meditated about him, I grew discouraged.

⁴ All during the night he prevented me from sleeping;

I was so worried that I did not know what to say.

⁵ I thought about days that had passed; I remembered what had happened in previous years.

⁶ I spent all the night thinking about things;

I meditated, and this is what I asked myself:

⁷ "Will the Lord always reject me?

Will he never again be pleased with me?

⁸ Has he stopped faithfully loving me?

Will he not do for me what he promised to do?

⁹ God promised to act mercifully toward me; has he forgotten that?

Because he is angry with me, has he decided not to be kind to me?"

¹⁰ I said, "What causes me to be sad the most is that

it seems that God, who is greater than any other god, is no longer using his power for us."

¹¹ But then, Yahweh, I recall your great deeds;

I remember the wonderful things that you did in the past.

¹² I meditate on all that you have done, and I think about your mighty acts.

¹³ God, everything that you do is amazing;

there is certainly no god who is great like you are!

¹⁴ You are God, the one who performs miracles;

you showed to the people of many people groups that you are powerful.

¹⁵ By your power you rescued your people from Egypt;

you saved those who were descendants of Jacob and his son Joseph.

¹⁶ It was as though the waters saw you and became very afraid,

and even the deepest part of the water shook.

¹⁷ Rain poured down from the clouds;

it thundered very loudly,

and lightning flashed in all directions.

¹⁸ Thunder crashed in the whirlwind—your voice!

Lightning lit up,

and the earth shook violently.

¹⁹ Then you walked through the sea

in a path that you made through the deep water,

but your footprints could not be seen.

²⁰ You led your people as a shepherd leads his flock of sheep

while Moses and Aaron were the leaders of your people.

Psalm 78

¹ My friends, listen to what I am going to teach you;

pay careful attention to what I will say.

² I am going to give you some sayings that wise people have said.

They will be sayings about things that happened long ago,

things that were difficult to understand.

³ These are things that we have heard and known previously,

things that our parents and grandparents told us.

⁴ We will tell these things to our children,

but we will also tell our grandchildren about Yahweh's power and the glorious things that he has done.

⁵ He gave laws and commandments to the Israelite people,

those who are the descendants of Jacob, and he told our ancestors to teach them to their children.

⁶ He commanded this so that their children would also know them

and so that they would teach them to their own children.

⁷ In that way, they also would trust in God

and would not forget the things that he has done;

instead, they would obey his commandments.

⁸ They would not be like their ancestors, who were very stubborn and kept rebelling against God;

they did not continue firmly trusting in God,

and they did not worship him alone.

⁹ The soldiers of the tribe of Ephraim had bows and arrows,

but they ran away from their enemies on the day that they fought with their enemies.

¹⁰ They did not do what they had agreed with God that they would do;

they refused to obey his laws.

¹¹ They forgot what he had done;

they forgot about the miracles that they had seen him perform.

¹² While our ancestors were watching,

God performed miracles in the area around the city of Zoan in Egypt.

¹³ Then he caused the Sea of Reeds to divide,

causing the water on each side to pile up like a wall,

with the result that our ancestors walked through it on dry ground.

¹⁴ He led them by a bright cloud during the day

and by a fiery light during the night.

¹⁵ He split rocks open in the wilderness

and gave to our ancestors plenty of water from deep inside the earth.

¹⁶ He caused a stream of water to flow from the rock;

the water flowed like a river.

¹⁷ But our ancestors continued to sin against God;

in the wilderness they rebelled against the one who is greater than any other god.

¹⁸ By demanding that God give them the food that they desired,

they tried to find out if he would always do what they requested him to do.

¹⁹ They insulted God by saying, "Can God supply food for us here in this desert?"

²⁰ It is true that he struck the rock,

with the result that water gushed out,

but can he also provide bread and meat for us, his people?"

²¹ So when Yahweh heard that, he became very angry,

and he sent a fire to burn up some of his Israelite people.

²² He did that because they did not trust in him,

and they did not believe that he would rescue them.

²³ But God spoke to the sky above them and commanded it to open like a door,

²⁴ and then food fell down like rain, food that they named "manna."

God gave them grain from heaven.

²⁵ So the people ate the food that angels eat,

and God gave to them all the manna that they wanted.

²⁶ Later, he caused the wind to blow from the east,

and by his power he also sent wind from the south,

²⁷ and the wind brought birds

which were as numerous as the grains of sand on the seashore.

²⁸ God caused those birds to fall in the middle of their camp.

There were birds all around their tents.

²⁹ So the people cooked the birds and ate the meat; their stomachs were full

because God had given them what they wanted.

³⁰ But they had not yet eaten all that they wanted.

³¹ At that point, God was still very angry with them,

and he caused their strongest men to die;

he got rid of many of the finest young Israelite men.

³² In spite of all this, the people continued to sin;

in spite of all the miracles that God had performed,

they still did not trust that he would take care of them.

³³ So he made them terrified all their lives;

he made them die young.

³⁴ Whenever God caused some of the Israelites to die,

the others would repent;

they would be sorry and seriously ask God to save them.

³⁵ They would remember that God was like a huge rock on which they would be safe,

and that he, who was greater than any other god, was the one who protected them.

³⁶ But they tried to deceive God by what they said;

their words were all lies.

³⁷ They were not loyal to him;

they ignored the covenant that he had made with them.

³⁸ But God acted mercifully toward his people.

He forgave them for having sinned

and did not get rid of them.

Many times he refrained from becoming angry with them

and restrained himself from furiously punishing them.

³⁹ He remembered that they were only humans who die,

humans who disappear as quickly as a wind that blows by and then is gone.

⁴⁰ Many times our ancestors rebelled against God in the wilderness

and made him very sad.

⁴¹ Many times they did evil things to find out if they could do those things without God punishing them.

They frequently caused the holy God of Israel to become angry.

⁴² They forgot about his great power,

and they forgot about the time when he rescued them from their enemies.

⁴³ They forgot about when he performed many miracles

in the area near the city of Zoan in Egypt.

⁴⁴ He caused the Nile River to become red like blood

so that the people of Egypt had no water to drink.

⁴⁵ He sent among the people of Egypt swarms of flies that bit them,

and he sent frogs that ate up everything.

⁴⁶ He sent locusts to eat their crops

and the other things that grew in their fields.

⁴⁷ He sent hail that destroyed the grapevines,

and he sent more hail that ruined the figs on the sycamore trees.

⁴⁸ He sent hail that killed their cattle

and lightning that killed their sheep and cows.

⁴⁹ Because God was fiercely angry with the people of Egypt,

he caused them to be very distressed.

The disasters that struck them were like a group of angels that destroyed everything.

⁵⁰ He did not lessen his anger with them,
and he did not spare their lives;
he sent a plague that killed many of
them.

⁵¹ In that plague he caused all the first-
born sons of the people of Egypt to die.

⁵² Then he led his people out of Egypt
as a shepherd leads his sheep,

and he guided them while they walked
through the wilderness.

⁵³ He led them safely, and they were not
afraid,

but their enemies were drowned in the
sea.

⁵⁴ Later he brought them to Canaan, his
sacred land,

to Mount Zion,

and by his power he enabled them to
conquer the people who were living there.

⁵⁵ He expelled the people groups while
his people were advancing;

he assigned part of the land for each
tribe to possess,

and he gave the houses of those people
to the Israelites.

⁵⁶ However, the Israelites rebelled
against God, who is greater than any other
God,

and they did many evil things to see
if they could do those things without God
punishing them;

they did not obey his commandments.

⁵⁷ Instead, as their ancestors did, they
rebelled against God and were not loyal to
him;

they were as unreliable as a bow that
breaks when you try to shoot with it.

⁵⁸ Because they worshiped carved im-
ages of their gods on the tops of hills,

they caused God to become angry.

⁵⁹ He saw what they were doing and
became very angry,

so he rejected the Israelite people.

⁶⁰ He no longer appeared to them at
Shiloh

in the sacred tent where he had lived
among them.

⁶¹ He allowed their enemies to capture
the sacred chest,

which was the symbol of his power
and his glory.

⁶² Because he was angry with his people,
he allowed their enemies to kill them.

⁶³ Young men were killed in battles,
with the result that the young women
had no one to marry.

⁶⁴ Many priests were killed by their en-
emies' swords,

and the people did not allow the
priests' widows to mourn.

⁶⁵ Later, it was as though the Lord awoke
from sleeping;

he was like a strong man who became
angry because he drank a lot of wine.

⁶⁶ He pushed his enemies back
and caused them to be very ashamed
for a long time

because they had been defeated.

⁶⁷ But he did not set up his tent where
the people of the tribe of Ephraim lived;

he did not choose their area to do that.

⁶⁸ Instead he chose the area where the
tribe of Judah lived;

he chose Mount Zion, which he loves.

⁶⁹ He decided to have his temple built
there, high up, like his home in heaven;

he caused it to be firm, like the earth,

and intended that his temple would last forever.

⁷⁰ He chose David, who served him faithfully,

and took him from the pastures

⁷¹ where he was taking care of his father's sheep,

and appointed him to be the leader of the Israelites,

the people who would always belong to God.

⁷² David took care of the Israelite people sincerely and wholeheartedly,

and he guided them skillfully.

Psalm 79

¹ God, other people groups have invaded your own land.

They have desecrated your temple,

and they have destroyed all the buildings in Jerusalem.

² Instead of burying the corpses of your people whom they killed,

they allowed the vultures to eat the flesh of those corpses,

and they also allowed wild animals to eat the corpses of your people.

³ When they killed your people,

your people's blood flowed like water through the streets of Jerusalem,

and there was almost no one left to bury their corpses.

⁴ The people groups that live in countries that surround our land insult us;

they laugh at us and mock us.

⁵ Yahweh, how long will this continue?

Will you be angry with us forever?

Will your anger be like a fire burning within you?

⁶ Instead of being angry with us,

be angry with the people groups that do not know you!

Be angry with kingdoms whose people do not pray to you

⁷ because they have killed Israelite people

and they have ruined your country.

⁸ Do not punish us because of the sins that our ancestors committed!

Act mercifully toward us now

because we are very discouraged.

⁹ God, you have saved us many times,

so help us now;

rescue us and forgive us for having sinned

so that other people will honor you.

¹⁰ It is not right that the other people groups say about us,

"If their God is very powerful, why does he not help them?"

Allow us to see you punishing the people of other nations in return for their shedding our blood

and killing many of us, your people.

¹¹ Listen to your people groaning while they are in prison,

and by your great power, free those whom our enemies say they will certainly execute.

¹² In return for their having often insulted you,

punish them seven times as much!

¹³ After you do that, we, whom you take care of as a shepherd takes care of his sheep, will continue praising you;

we will continue to praise you from generation to generation forever.

Psalm 80

¹ Yahweh, you who lead us as a shepherd leads his flock of sheep,

you who sit on your throne in the Very Holy Place in the temple, above the figures of winged creatures,

come and do powerful things for us Israelite people.

² Show yourself to the people of the tribes of Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh!

Show us that you are powerful
and come and rescue us!

³ God, cause our nation to be strong like it was before;

act kindly toward us so that we may be saved from our enemies!

⁴ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies,

how long will you be angry with us, your people, when we pray to you?

⁵ It is as though the only food and drink that you have given us is a cup full of our tears!

⁶ You have allowed the people groups that surround us to argue with each other to decide which part of our land each of them will take;

they laugh at us.

⁷ God, Commander of the angel armies,
make our nation strong as it was before!

Act kindly toward us so that we may be saved!

⁸ Our ancestors were like a grapevine that you brought out of Egypt;

you drove out the other people groups from this land,

and you put your people in their land.

⁹ As people clear ground to plant a grapevine,

you cleared out the people who were living in this land for us to live in it.

As the roots of a grapevine go deep down into the ground and spread,

you enabled our ancestors to prosper and start living in towns all over this land.

¹⁰ As huge grapevines cover the hills with their shade

and as their branches are taller than big cedar trees,

¹¹ your people ruled all of Canaan, from the Mediterranean Sea in the west to the Euphrates River in the east.

¹² So why have you abandoned us
and allowed our enemies to tear down our walls?

You are like someone who tears down the fences around his vineyard,

so that all the people who pass by can steal the grapes;

¹³ wild pigs can trample the vines,
and wild animals can also eat the grapes.

¹⁴ You who are the commander of the angel armies, turn to us!

Look down from heaven and see what is happening to us!

Come and rescue us who are like your grapevine,

¹⁵ who are like the young vine that you planted and caused to grow!

¹⁶ Our enemies have torn down and burned everything in our land;

look at them angrily and get rid of them!

¹⁷ But strengthen us people whom you have chosen,

us Israelite people, whom you previously caused to be very strong.

¹⁸ When you do that, we will never turn away from you again;

revive us, and then we will praise you.

¹⁹ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, restore us;

act kindly toward us and rescue us from our enemies!

Psalm 81

¹ Sing songs to praise God, who enables us to be strong when we fight our enemies;

shout joyfully to God, whom we descendants of Jacob worship!

² Start playing the music, and beat the tambourines;

play nice music on the harps and lyres.

³ Blow the trumpets during the festival to celebrate each new moon,

each time the moon is full, and during our other festivals.

⁴ Do that because that is a decree for us Israelite people;

it is a command that God made for the descendants of Jacob.

⁵ He made it a law under at the time when God led the descendants of Joseph out of the land of Egypt.

I heard a voice I did not recognize, and it said:

⁶ "After the rulers of Egypt forced you Israelites to work as slaves,

I took those heavy burdens off your backs,

and I enabled you to lay down those heavy baskets of bricks that you were carrying.

⁷ When you were greatly distressed, you called out to me, and I rescued you;

I answered you out of a thundercloud.

Later I tested whether you would trust me to give you water when you were in the desert at Meribah.

⁸ You who are my people, listen while I warn you!

I wish that you Israelite people would pay attention to what I say to you!

⁹ You must not have any idols of other gods among you;

you must never bow to worship any of them!

¹⁰ I am Yahweh, your God;

It was not any of those gods who brought you out of Egypt;

I am the one who did it!

So request what you want me to do for you, and I will do it.

¹¹ But my people would not listen to me; they would not obey me.

¹² So because they were very stubborn,

I allowed them to do whatever they wanted to do.

¹³ I wish that my people would listen to me,

that the Israelite people would behave as I want them to do.

¹⁴ If they did that, I would quickly defeat their enemies;

I would strike dead those who are oppressing them.

¹⁵ Then all those who hate me would cringe before me,

and then I would punish them forever.

¹⁶ But I would give you Israelites very good wheat,

and I would fill your stomachs with wild honey.”

Psalm 82

¹ God stands in heaven in a meeting of all the spirits whom he has placed in charge of what he created.

He tells them that he has decided this:

² “You must stop judging people unfairly;

you must no longer make decisions that favor wicked people!

³ You must defend people who are poor and orphans;

you must act fairly toward those who are needy and those who have no one to help them.

⁴ Rescue them from the power of the wicked people!”

⁵ Those rulers do not know or understand anything!

They are very corrupt,

and as a result of their corrupt behavior,

it is as though the foundation of the world is being shaken!

⁶ I previously said to them, “You think you are gods!

It is as though you are all my sons,

⁷ but you will die as people do;

your lives will end as the lives of all rulers end.”

⁸ God, arise and judge everyone on the earth

because all the people groups belong to you!

Psalm 83

¹ God, do not continue to be silent!

Do not be quiet and say nothing

² because your enemies are rioting against you;

those who hate you are rebelling against you!

³ They are secretly planning to do things to harm us, your people;

they are conspiring together against the people whom you protect.

⁴ They say, “Come, we must destroy their nation

so that no one will remember that Israel ever existed!”

⁵ They have agreed on what they want to do to destroy Israel,

and they have agreed to attack you together.

⁶ Your enemies are the people who live in the tents of Edom—

the Ishmaelites, Moab and the Hagrites, they conspire together with ⁷ the people of Gebal, and the Ammonites, and the Amalekites,

and the Philistines, and the people of the city of Tyre.

⁸ The people of Assyria have joined them;

they are strong allies of the Moab and Ammon people groups, who are descendants of Abraham's nephew Lot.

⁹ God, do to those people things as you did to the Midian people group,

as you did to Sisera and Jabin at the river Kishon.

¹⁰ You destroyed them at the town of Endor,

and their corpses lay on the ground and decayed.

¹¹ Do to them things like you did to kings Oreb and Zeeb;

defeat their leaders like you defeated Zebah and Zalmunna,

¹² who said, "We will take for ourselves the land that the Israelites say belongs to God!"

¹³ My God, cause them to disappear quickly like whirling dust,

like chaff that the wind blows away!

¹⁴ As a fire completely burns a forest and as flames burn in the mountains,

¹⁵ expel them with your storms and cause them to be terrified by your big storms!

¹⁶ Cause them to be very ashamed so that they will admit that you are very powerful.

¹⁷ Cause them to be forever disgraced because of being defeated,

and cause them to die while they are still disgraced.

¹⁸ Cause them to know that you, whose name is Yahweh,

are the supreme ruler over everything on the earth.

Psalm 84

¹ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies,

your temple is very beautiful!

² I would like to be there;

Yahweh, I desire that very much.

With all my inner being I sing joyfully to you, the all-powerful God.

³ Even sparrows and swallows have built nests near your temple;

they take care of their young babies near the altars where people offer sacrifices to you,

Commander of the angel armies, my king and my God.

⁴ How fortunate are those who are always in your temple,

constantly singing to praise you.

⁵ How fortunate are those whom you make strong,

those who desire very much to make the trip up to Mount Zion.

⁶ While they travel through the dry Valley of Tears,

you cause it to become a place where there are springs of water,

where the rains in the autumn fill the valley with water, a blessing from you.

⁷ As a result, those who travel through there become stronger

knowing that they will appear in your presence on Mount Zion.

⁸ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, listen to my prayer;

God, whom we descendants of Jacob worship, hear what I am saying!

⁹ God, act kindly toward our king, the one who protects us,

the one whom you have chosen to rule us.

¹⁰ For me, spending one day in your temple

is better than spending a thousand days somewhere else;

standing at the entrance to your temple, ready to go inside,

is better than living in the tents where wicked people live.

¹¹ Yahweh our God is like the sun that shines on us and like a shield that protects us;

he acts favorably toward us and honors us.

Yahweh does not refuse to give any good thing to those who do what is right.

¹² Yahweh, commander of the angel armies,

how fortunate are those who trust in you!

Psalm 85

¹ Yahweh, you have acted kindly toward us people who live in this land;

you have enabled us Israelite people to become prosperous again.

² You forgave us, your people, for the sins that we had committed;

you pardoned us for all our sins.

³ You stopped being angry with us and turned away from severely punishing us.

⁴ Now, God, the only one who can save us, stop being angry with us

and help us.

⁵ Will you continue to be angry with us forever?

⁶ Please enable us to prosper again so that we, your people, will rejoice about what you have done for us.

⁷ Yahweh, by rescuing us from our troubles,

show us that you faithfully love us.

⁸ I want to listen to what Yahweh our God says

because he promises that he will enable us, his people, to live peacefully

if we do not return to doing foolish things.

⁹ He is surely ready to save those who have an awesome respect for him,

so that his glory will remain in our land.

¹⁰ When that happens, he will both faithfully love us and faithfully do for us what he promised to do;

we will act righteously, and he will give us peace,

which will be like a kiss that he gives us.

¹¹ Here on earth, we will be loyal to God, and from heaven, God will act justly toward us.

¹² Yes, Yahweh will do good things for us,

and there will be great harvests in our land.

¹³ Yahweh always acts righteously;

he acts righteously wherever he goes.

Psalm 86

¹ Yahweh, listen to what I say and answer me

because I am weak and needy.

² Prevent me from dying now because I am loyal to you;

save me because I serve you and I trust in you, my God.

³ Lord, act kindly toward me

because I cry out to you all during each day.

⁴ Lord, cause me to be glad,

because I pray to you.

⁵ Lord, you are good to us, and you forgive us;

you faithfully love very much all those who pray to you.

⁶ Yahweh, listen to my prayer;

hear me when I cry out to you to help me.

⁷ When I have troubles, I call out to you

because you answer me.

⁸ Lord, among all the gods whom the heathen nations worship,

there is no one like you;

not one of them has done the great things that you have done.

⁹ Lord, someday people from all the nations that you have established will come and bow down in front of you,

and they will praise you.

¹⁰ You are great, and you do wonderful things;

only you are God.

¹¹ Yahweh, teach me what you want me to do

so that I may conduct my life according to what you say, all of which is right.

Cause me to have an awesome respect for you with all my inner being.

¹² Lord, my God, I will thank you with all my inner being,

and I will praise you forever.

¹³ You faithfully love me very much as you have promised;

you have prevented me from dying and going to the place where dead people are.

¹⁴ But God, proud men are trying to attack me;

a gang of cruel men are wanting to kill me;

they are men who do not have any respect for you.

¹⁵ But Lord, you always act mercifully and kindly;

you do not become angry quickly;

you faithfully love us very much

and always do for us what you have promised to do.

¹⁶ Look down toward me and act mercifully to me;

cause me to be strong and save me,

the one who serves you faithfully as my mother did.

¹⁷ Yahweh, do something to show me that you are being good to me

so that those who hate me will see that you have encouraged me and helped me;

as a result, they will be ashamed.

Psalm 87

¹ The city is established on his holy mountain.

² Yahweh loves that city, Jerusalem, more than he loves any other place in Israel.

³ All you people in Jerusalem,
other people say wonderful things about your city.

⁴ And Yahweh said, "I will talk of Rahab and Babyon
and the people there who know me.

There are some who know me among the people of Egypt and Babylonia,
and they live in the lands of Philistia and Tyre and Ethiopia,

and they will say, 'Our home is Jerusalem and our land is Zion.'"

⁵ Concerning Zion, people will say,
"All of these people who were born far away,
they call Jerusalem their home,
and Almighty God will cause that city to remain strong."

⁶ Yahweh will write a list of the names of the people of various groups who belong to him,

and he will say that he considers them all to be citizens of Jerusalem.

⁷ They will all dance and sing, saying,
"Jerusalem is the source of all our blessings."

Psalm 88

¹ Yahweh God, you who rescue me, all during each day I call out to you to help me,

and I cry out to you during each night also.

² Listen to my prayer
while I cry out to you for help!

³ I have experienced many troubles,
and I am about to die and go where dead people are.

⁴ Because I have no more strength,
other people believe that I will soon die.

⁵ I am like a corpse that has been abandoned;

I am like dead people who lie in their graves,

people who have been completely forgotten

because you do not take care of them anymore.

⁶ It is as though you have thrown me into a deep, dark pit,
into a place where they throw corpses.

⁷ It seems as though you are very angry with me,

and it is as though you have crushed me as ocean waves crash down on people.

⁸ You have caused my friends to avoid me;

I have become repulsive to them.

It is as though I were in a prison and cannot escape.

⁹ My eyes cannot see well because I cry very much.

Yahweh, every day I call out to you to help me;

I lift up my hands to you while I pray.

¹⁰ You certainly do not perform miracles for dead people!

Their spirits do not arise to praise you!

¹¹ Corpses in the grave certainly do not tell about your faithfully loving us,

and in the place where people are finally destroyed,

no one tells about what you faithfully do for us.

¹² No one in the deep, dark pit ever sees the miracles that you perform,

and no one in the place where people have been completely forgotten tells about your being good to us.

¹³ But as for me, Yahweh, I cry out to you to help me;

each morning I pray to you.

¹⁴ Yahweh, why do you reject me?

Why do you turn away from me?

¹⁵ All the time since I was young, I have suffered and have often almost died;

I am in despair because of enduring the terrible things that you have done to me.

¹⁶ I feel that you have crushed me because of your being angry with me;

the terrible things that you are doing to me are almost destroying me.

¹⁷ It is as though they surround me like a flood;

they are closing in on me from all sides.

¹⁸ You have caused even my friends and others whom I love to avoid me,

and it is as though the only friend that I have is darkness.

Psalm 89

¹ Yahweh, I will sing forever about the ways you faithfully love me;

people not yet born will hear that you faithfully do all that you have promised.

² I will tell people that you will faithfully love us forever,

and that your being faithful to do what you have promised is as permanent as the sky.

³ Yahweh said, "I have made an agreement with David, whom I chose to serve me.

I have made this solemn agreement with him:

⁴ 'I will enable various ones of your descendants to always be kings;

the line of kings descended from you will never end."

⁵ Yahweh, I desire that all those beings who are in heaven will praise you for the wonderful things that you do,

and that all your holy angels will sing about how you faithfully do what you promise.

⁶ There is no one in heaven who can be compared with you, Yahweh.

There are no angels in heaven who are equal to you.

⁷ When your holy angels gather together,

they declare that you must be revered;

they say that you are more awesome than all the angels that surround your throne!

⁸ O Yahweh God, commander of the angel armies, there is no one who is as powerful as you are;

your faithfully doing all that you promise is like a cloak that always surrounds you.

⁹ You rule over the powerful seas;

when their waves rise up, you calm them.

¹⁰ You are the one who crushed and killed the great sea monster named Rahab.

You defeated and scattered your enemies with your great power.

¹¹ The heavens are yours, and the earth is yours;

everything on the earth is yours because you created it all.

¹² You created everything from the north to the south.

Mount Tabor and Mount Hermon joyfully praise you .

¹³ You are very powerful;

you are extremely strong.

¹⁴ You rule over people fairly and justly;

you are always faithfully loving us and doing what you promised.

¹⁵ Yahweh, how fortunate are those who worship you with joyful shouts in their festivals,

who live knowing that you are always watching over them.

¹⁶ Every day, throughout the day, they rejoice in what you have done,

and they praise you for being very good to them.

¹⁷ You give us your glorious strength;

because you act in our favor, we defeat our enemies.

¹⁸ Yahweh, you gave us the one who protects us;

you, the holy God whom we Israelites worship, he gave us our king.

¹⁹ Long ago you spoke in a vision to one of your servants, saying,

"I have crowned a famous soldier;

I chose him from among all the people to be a king.

²⁰ That man is David, the one who will serve me faithfully,

and I anointed him with sacred olive oil to make him king.

²¹ My strength will always be with him;

with my power, I will make him strong.

²² His enemies will never find ways to outwit him,

and wicked people will never defeat him.

²³ I will crush his enemies in front of him

and get rid of those who hate him.

²⁴ I will always be loyal to him and faithfully love him

and enable him to defeat his enemies.

²⁵ I will cause his kingdom to include all the land from the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates River.

²⁶ He will say to me, 'You are my Father,

my God, the one who protects and saves me.'

²⁷ I will give him the rights as my first-born son;

he will be the greatest king on the earth.

²⁸ I will always be loyal to him,

and my agreement to bless him will last forever.

²⁹ I will establish a line of his descendants that will never end,

various ones of his descendants will always be kings.

³⁰ But if some of his descendants disobey my laws

and do not behave as my commands
say that they should,

³¹ if they disregard my requirements
and do not do the right things that I
have told them to do,

³² I will punish them severely
and cause them to suffer for doing
wrong.

³³ But I will not stop faithfully loving
David,

and I will always do what I promised
him.

³⁴ I will not break the agreement that I
made with him;

I will not change even one word that
I spoke to him.

³⁵ Once I made a solemn promise to
David, and that will never change;

because I am God, I will never lie to
David.

³⁶ I promised that the line of kings de-
scended from him will go on forever;

it will last as long as the sun shines.

³⁷ That line will be as permanent as the
moon

that is always watching everything
here on earth."

³⁸ But Yahweh, now you have rejected
him!

You are very angry with the king
whom you appointed.

³⁹ It seems that you have broken the
agreement that you made with your ser-
vant, David;

it seems as though you have thrown
his crown into the dust.

⁴⁰ You have torn down the walls that
protect his city

and allowed all his forts to become
ruins.

⁴¹ All those who pass by plunder his
possessions;

his neighbors laugh at him.

⁴² You have enabled his enemies to de-
feat him;

you have made them all happy.

⁴³ You have caused his sword to become
useless,

and you have not helped him in his
battles.

⁴⁴ You have caused his splendor to end
and knocked his throne to the ground.

⁴⁵ You have caused him to become old
when he is still young

and caused him to be very shamed.

⁴⁶ O Yahweh, how long will this con-
tinue?

Will you hide yourself from us for-
ever?

How long will your anger against us
burn like a fire?

⁴⁷ Do not forget that life is very short;

Do not forget that you have created
all of us to die uselessly.

⁴⁸ No one can keep on living and never
die;

no one can bring himself back from
the place of the dead.

⁴⁹ Yahweh, you promised long ago

that you would faithfully love me;
why are you not doing that?

You solemnly promised this to David!

⁵⁰ Yahweh, do not forget that people in-
sult us!

Heathen people curse me!

⁵¹ Yahweh, your enemies insult your chosen king!

They insult him wherever he goes.

⁵² I hope that Yahweh will be praised forever!

Amen! May it be so!

Psalm 90

¹ Lord, you have always been like a home for us.

² Before you created the mountains,

before you formed the earth and everything that is in it,

you were eternally God,

and you will be God forever.

³ When people die, you cause their corpses to become soil again;

you change their corpses to become dirt like that from which the first man was created.

⁴ When you consider time,

a thousand years are as short as one day that passes;

you consider that they are as short as a few hours in the night.

⁵ You cause people to die suddenly;

they live only a short time as a dream lasts only a short time.

They are like grass that grows up.

⁶ In the morning the grass sprouts and grows well,

but in the evening it dries up and completely withers.

⁷ Similarly, because of the sins that we commit, you become angry with us;

you terrify us and then you destroy us.

⁸ It is as though you place our sins in front of you;

you spread out even our secret sins where you can see them.

⁹ Because you are angry with us, you cause our lives to end;

the years that we live pass as quickly as a sigh does.

¹⁰ People live for only seventy years;

if they are strong, some of them live for eighty years.

But even during good years we have much pain and troubles;

our lives soon end, and we die.

¹¹ No one has really experienced the powerful things you can do to them when you are angry with them,

and people are not afraid that you will punish them because of your being angry with them.

¹² So teach us to realize that we live for only a short time

in order that we may use our time wisely.

¹³ Yahweh, how long will you be angry with us?

Pity us who serve you.

¹⁴ Each morning, show us that it is enough for us if you love us faithfully as you have promised you would do.

Show us this so that we may shout joyfully and be happy all during the years that we live.

¹⁵ Cause us to be now as happy for as many years as you afflicted us and we experienced troubles.

¹⁶ Enable us to see the great things that you do,

and enable our descendants to see your glorious power also.

¹⁷ Lord, our God, give us your blessings
and enable us to be successful;
yes, cause us to be successful in ev-
erything that we do!

Psalm 91

¹ Those who live under the protection
of God Almighty,
will be able to rest safely under his
care.

² I will declare to Yahweh,
"You protect me;
you are like a fort in which I am safe.
You are my God, the one in whom I
trust."

³ He will rescue you from all hidden
traps
and save you from deadly diseases.

⁴ He will shield you as a bird protects
her young under her wings.
You will be safe in his care.

His faithfully doing what he has
promised is like a shield that will protect
you.

⁵ You will not be afraid of things that
happen during the night that could terror-
ize you

or of arrows that your enemies will
shoot at you during the day.

⁶ You will not be afraid of plagues that
demons cause when they attack people at
night

or of other evil forces that kill people
at midday.

⁷ Even if a thousand people fall dead
alongside you,

even if ten thousand people are dying
around you,

you will not be harmed.

⁸ Look and see
that wicked people are being pun-
ished!

⁹ Yahweh protects me;
trust God Almighty to shelter you, too.

¹⁰ If you do, nothing evil will happen to
you;

no plague will come near your house

¹¹ because Yahweh will command his
angels

to protect you in whatever you are
doing.

¹² They will hold you up with their
hands

so that you will not hurt your foot on
a big stone.

¹³ You will be kept safe from being
harmed by your enemies;

it will be as though you were killing
strong lions and poisonous snakes by step-
ping on them!

¹⁴ Yahweh says, "I will rescue those who
love me;

I will protect them because they ac-
knowledge that I am Yahweh.

¹⁵ When they call out to me, I will an-
swer them.

I will help them when they are expe-
riencing trouble;

I will rescue them and honor them.

¹⁶ I will reward them by enabling them
to live a long time,

and I will save them."

Psalm 92

¹ Yahweh, it is good for people to thank you

and to sing praise to you who are greater than any other god.

² It is good to proclaim every morning that you faithfully love us

and to sing songs each night that declare that you always do what you have promised to do,

³ accompanied by musicians playing harps that have ten strings

and by the sounds made by a lyre.

⁴ Yahweh, you have caused me to be glad;

I sing joyfully because of what you have done.

⁵ Yahweh, the things that you do are great!

But it is difficult to understand all that you think.

⁶ There are things that you do that foolish people cannot know about,

things that stupid people cannot understand.

⁷ They do not understand that although the number of wicked people increases as blades of grass do

and that those who do what is evil prosper,

they will be completely destroyed.

⁸ But Yahweh, you will be king forever.

⁹ Yahweh, your enemies will certainly die,

and those who do wicked things will be defeated.

¹⁰ But you have caused me to be as strong as a wild ox;

you have caused me to be very joyful.

¹¹ I have seen you defeat my enemies, and I have heard those evil men wail while they were being slaughtered.

¹² But righteous people will prosper like palm trees that grow well,

like the cedar trees that grow in Lebanon.

¹³ They are like the trees that people plant at the temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem,

the trees that are close to the courtyard of the temple of our God.

¹⁴ Even when righteous people become old, they do many things that please God.

They remain strong and full of energy like trees that remain full of sap.

¹⁵ That shows that Yahweh is just; he is like a huge rock on which I am safe,

and he never does anything that is wicked.

Psalm 93

¹ Yahweh, you have become the King!

The majesty and the power that you have are like robes that a king wears.

You put the world firmly in place, and it will never be moved out of its place.

² You started to rule as king a very long time ago;

you have always existed.

³ Yahweh, when you created the world, you separated the water from the chaotic mass and formed oceans,

and the waves of the waters of those oceans still roar,

⁴ but you are greater than the roar of those oceans,

more powerful than the ocean waves!

You are Yahweh, the one who is greater than any other god!

⁵ Yahweh, your laws never change,

and your temple has always been holy.

That will be true forever.

Psalm 94

¹ Yahweh, you are able to get revenge on your enemies.

So show them that you are going to punish them!

² You are the one who judges all people on the earth;

so arise and give them what they deserve.

³ Yahweh, how long will those wicked people be glad?

It is not right that they continue being glad!

⁴ They do evil things, and they boast about doing them;

how long will they be allowed to continue doing that?

⁵ Yahweh, it is as though those wicked people were crushing us, your people;

they oppress the nation that you have made and that belongs to you alone.

⁶ They murder widows and orphans

and people from other countries who think it is safe to live in our land.

⁷ Those wicked people say, "Yahweh does not see anything;

the God whom those Israelites worship does not see the evil things that we do."

⁸ You evil people who rule Israel, you are foolish and stupid;

when will you become wise?

⁹ God made our ears;

do you think that he cannot hear what you say?

He created our eyes;

do you think that he cannot see the evil things that you do?

¹⁰ He corrects the leaders of other nations;

do you think that he will not punish you?

He is the one who knows everything;

why do you think that he does not know what you do?

¹¹ Yahweh knows everything that people are thinking;

he knows that what they think is evil and useless.

¹² Yahweh, how fortunate are those who allow you to discipline them,

those who want you to teach them your laws.

¹³ When those people have had troubles, you cause those troubles to cease,

and someday it will be as though you will dig pits for the wicked people,

and that they will fall into those pits and die.

¹⁴ Yahweh will not abandon his people;

he will not desert those who belong to him.

¹⁵ Someday judges will decide matters fairly for people,

and all honest people will be pleased about that.

¹⁶ But when wicked people oppressed me,

no one defended me!

No one stood up to testify for me against those evil people.

¹⁷ If Yahweh had not helped me at that time,

I would have been executed;

my life would have gone to the place where dead people say nothing.

¹⁸ I said, "I am falling into disaster,"

but, Yahweh, you held me up by faithfully loving me.

¹⁹ Whenever I am very worried,

you comfort me and cause me to be happy.

²⁰ You have nothing to do with wicked judges,

those who establish laws that allow people to do what is not right.

²¹ They plan to get rid of righteous people,

and they declare that innocent people must be executed.

²² But Yahweh has become like my fortress;

my God is like a huge rock on which I am protected.

²³ He will punish those wicked leaders in return for the things that they have done;

he will get rid of them because of the sins that they have committed;

yes, Yahweh our God will wipe them out.

Psalm 95

¹ Come, sing to Yahweh;

sing joyfully to the one who protects us and saves us!

² We should thank him as we come before him

and sing joyful songs as we praise him.

³ Because Yahweh is a great God,

he is a great king who rules over all other gods.

⁴ He rules over the whole earth

from the deepest places to the highest mountains.

⁵ The seas are his because he made them.

He is the one who made the dry land.

⁶ We should come, worship, and bow down before him.

We should kneel before Yahweh, the one who made us.

⁷ He is our God,

and we are the people whom he protects,

like sheep that a shepherd takes care of.

I desire that today you may hear what Yahweh is saying to you.

⁸ He says, "Do not become stubborn as your ancestors did at Meribah,

and as they did at Massah in the wilderness.

⁹ There your ancestors wanted to see if they could do evil things without my punishing them.

Even though they had seen me perform many miracles, they tested whether I would continue to be patient with them.

¹⁰ For forty years I was angry with those people,

and I said, 'Those people are unreliable.

They refuse to obey my commands.'

¹¹ So because I was very angry; I solemnly said about them,

'They will never enter the land of Canaan where I would have allowed them to rest!'"

Psalm 96

¹ Sing to Yahweh a new song!

You people throughout the earth, sing to Yahweh!

² Sing to Yahweh and praise him!

Every day proclaim to others that he has saved us.

³ Tell about his glory to all people groups;

tell all people groups the marvelous things that he has done.

⁴ Yahweh is great, and he deserves to be praised very much;

he should be revered more than all the gods.

⁵ All the gods the other people groups worship are only idols,

but Yahweh is truly great; he created the skies!

⁶ God shows his splendor and majesty; they shine out from where he rules.

Strength and beauty are in his holy house.

⁷ You people in nations all over the earth, praise Yahweh!

Praise Yahweh for his glorious power!

⁸ Praise Yahweh as he deserves to be praised;

bring an offering and come to his temple.

⁹ Bow down before Yahweh because his holiness shines out from him with wonderful beauty.

Everyone on earth should be very afraid in his presence, because he is good and powerful, completely different than us.

¹⁰ Say to all the people groups, "Yahweh is the king!

He put the world in its place, and nothing will ever be able to move it.

He will judge all the people groups fairly."

¹¹ All the beings that are in the heavens should be glad, and all the people on the earth should rejoice.

The oceans and all the creatures that are in the oceans should roar to praise Yahweh.

¹² The fields and everything that grows in them should rejoice.

When they do that, it will be as though all the trees in the forests are singing joyfully

¹³ in front of Yahweh.

That will happen when he comes to judge everyone on the earth.

He will judge all the people fairly according to what he knows is true.

Psalm 97

¹ Yahweh is the king!

I want everyone on the earth to be glad

and the people who live on the islands
in the oceans to also rejoice about that!

² There are very dark clouds around
him;

he rules completely, justly, and fairly.

³ He sends fire in front of him,
and he completely burns all his ene-
mies in that fire.

⁴ All around the world he sends light-
ning to flash;

people on the earth see it, and it causes
them to be afraid and to tremble.

⁵ The mountains melt like wax in front
of Yahweh,

in front of the one who is the Lord,
who rules over all the earth.

⁶ The angels in heaven proclaim that he
acts righteously,

and all the people groups see his glory.

⁷ Everyone who worships idols should
be ashamed;

all those who are proud of their false
gods should realize that their gods are use-
less.

All those gods will bow down to worship
Yahweh.

⁸ The people of Jerusalem heard that
God is just, and they rejoiced;

people in the other cities in Judah also
rejoiced

because Yahweh judges and punishes
wicked people.

⁹ Yahweh is the supreme King over all
the earth;

he has very great power, and none of
the other gods has any power.

¹⁰ Yahweh loves those who hate what
people do that is evil;

he protects the lives of his people,
and he rescues them when the wicked
people try to harm them.

¹¹ He makes the righteous people truly
live;

he causes those who are righteous in
their inner beings to rejoice.

¹² You righteous people, rejoice about
what Yahweh has done,

and thank him, our holy God!

Psalm 98

¹ Sing to Yahweh a new song
because he has done wonderful things!

By his power he has defeated his ene-
mies.

² Yahweh has declared to people that he
has defeated his enemies;

he has revealed that he has punished
his enemies,

and people in all the world have seen
that he has done it.

³ As he promised to us Israelite people,
he has faithfully loved us and been
loyal to us.

People who live in very remote places
in all the earth

have seen that our God has defeated
his enemies.

⁴ All you people everywhere should sing
joyfully to Yahweh;

praise him while you sing and shout
joyfully!

⁵ Praise Yahweh while you play the
lyres,

playing delightful music.

⁶ Some of you should blow trumpets
and other horns

while others shout joyfully to Yahweh,
our king.

⁷ The oceans and all the creatures that
are in the oceans should roar to praise
Yahweh.

Everyone on the earth should sing!

⁸ It should seem as though the rivers
were clapping their hands to praise Yah-
weh

and that the hills were singing together
joyfully in front of Yahweh

⁹ because he will come to judge every-
one on the earth!

He will judge all the people groups in
the world justly and fairly.

Psalm 99

¹ Yahweh is the supreme king,
so all the people groups should tremble
in his presence!

He sits on his throne in the temple above
the statues of winged creatures,

so the earth should quake!

² Yahweh is a mighty king in Jerusalem;

he is also the supreme ruler of all the
people groups.

³ They should praise him because he
is very great;

he is holy!

⁴ He is a mighty king who loves what is
just;

he has acted justly and fairly in Israel.

⁵ Praise Yahweh, our God!

Worship him in front of his footstool,
the sacred chest in his temple,

where he rules people.

He is holy!

⁶ Moses and Aaron were two of his
priests;

Samuel also was someone who prayed
to him.

Those three cried out to Yahweh to help
them,

and he answered them.

⁷ He spoke to Moses and Aaron from the
cloud that was like a huge pillar;

they obeyed all the laws and com-
mandments that he gave to them.

⁸ Yahweh, our God, you answered your
people

when they cried out to you to help
them;

you are a God who forgave them for the
sins that they had committed,

even though you punished them for the
things that they did that were wrong.

⁹ Praise Yahweh, our God,

and worship him at the temple on his
sacred hill;

it is right to do that because Yahweh,
our God, is holy!

Psalm 100

¹ Everyone in the world should shout
joyfully to Yahweh!

² We should worship Yahweh gladly!

We should come before him singing
joyful songs.

³ We should acknowledge that Yahweh
is God;

it is he who made us, and so we belong
to him.

We are the people that he takes care of;

we are like sheep that their shepherd cares for.

⁴ Enter the gates of his temple thanking him;

enter the courtyard of the temple singing songs to praise him!

Thank him and praise him

⁵ because Yahweh always does good things for us.

He faithfully loves us as he promised us,

and he is faithful.

Psalm 101

¹ Yahweh, I will sing to you!

I will sing about your faithful and just loyalty to us.

² I promise that while I rule people,

I will behave in such a way that no one will be able to criticize me.

Yahweh, when will you come to help me?

I will do things that are right.

³ I will not allow anyone who does what is evil to come to me.

I hate the deeds of those who turn away from you;

I will completely avoid those people.

⁴ I will not be dishonest,

and I will not have anything to do with evil.

⁵ I will get rid of anyone who secretly slanders someone else,

and I will not let anyone near me who is proud and arrogant.

⁶ I will approve of people in this land who are loyal to God,

and I will allow them to live with me.

I will allow to serve me those who behave in such a way that no one can criticize them.

⁷ I will not allow anyone who deceives others to work in my palace,

and no one who tells lies will be allowed to continually come to work for me.

⁸ Every day I will try to get rid of all the wicked people in this land;

I will expel them from this city, which is Yahweh's city.

Psalm 102

¹ Yahweh, listen to what I am praying; hear me while I cry out to you!

² Do not turn away!

Listen to me,

and answer me quickly now when I am calling out to you!

³ My life is ending like smoke that disappears;

I have a big fever which burns my body as a fire burns.

⁴ I feel as though I am drying up like grass that has been mown,

and I do not even think about eating any food.

⁵ I groan loudly,

and my bones can be seen under my skin because I have become very thin.

⁶ I am like a lonely and despised vulture in the desert,

like an owl by itself in the abandoned ruins of a building.

⁷ I lie awake at night;
because there is no one to comfort
me,

I am like a lonely bird sitting on a
housetop.

⁸ All during each day my enemies insult
me;

those who make fun of me mention
my name

and say, "May you be like him" when
they curse people.

⁹⁻¹⁰ Because you are very angry with me,

I sit in ashes while I am suffering
greatly;

those ashes fall on the bread that I
eat,

and what I drink has my tears mixed
with it.

It is as though you have picked me up
and thrown me away!

¹¹ My time to remain alive is short

like an evening shadow that will soon
be gone.

I am withering as grass withers in the
hot sun.

¹² But Yahweh, you are our king who
rules forever;

people who are not yet born will remem-
ber you.

¹³ You will arise and act mercifully to-
ward the people of Jerusalem;

it is now time for you to do that;

this is the time for you to be kind to
them.

¹⁴ Even though the city has been de-
stroyed,

we who serve you still love the stones
that were formerly in the city walls;

because now there is rubble every-
where,

we, your people, are very sad when
we see it.

¹⁵ Yahweh, someday the people of other
nations will have an awesome respect for
you;

all the kings on the earth will see that
you are very glorious.

¹⁶ You will rebuild Jerusalem,

and you will appear there with your
glory.

¹⁷ You will listen to the prayers of your
people who are homeless,

and you will not ignore them
when they plead with you to help
them.

¹⁸ Yahweh, I want to write these words

so that people in future years will
know what you have done,

in order that people who are not born
yet will praise you.

¹⁹ They will know that you looked down
from your own place in heaven

and saw what was happening on the
earth.

²⁰ They will know that you hear prison-
ers groaning

and that you will set free those who
have been told, "You will be executed."

²¹ As a result, people in Jerusalem will
praise you for what you have done.

²² Many people from other people
groups and those who are citizens of other
kingdoms will gather to worship you.

²³ But now you have caused me to be-
come weak while I am still young;

I think that I will not remain alive
very long.

²⁴ I say to you, "My God, do not take me away from the earth now

before I become old!

You, on the other hand, live forever!

²⁵ You created the world long ago,

and you made the heavens with your own hands.

²⁶ The earth and the heavens will disappear, but you will remain.

They will wear out as clothes wear out.

You will get rid of them as people get rid of old clothes,

and they will no longer exist.

²⁷ But you are not like the things that you created

because you are always the same;

you never die.

²⁸ Someday our children will live safely in Jerusalem,

and their descendants will be protected as they live in your presence."

Psalm 103

¹ I tell myself that I should praise Yahweh.

I will praise him because he is holy.

² I tell myself that I should praise Yahweh

and never forget all the kind things he has done for me.

³ He forgives all my sins,

and he heals me from all my diseases;

⁴ he keeps me from dying,

and he blesses me by faithfully loving me and acting mercifully to me as he promised to do.

⁵ He gives me good things during my entire life.

He makes me feel young and strong like eagles.

⁶ Yahweh judges justly all those who have been treated unfairly.

⁷ Long ago he revealed to Moses what he planned to do;

he showed to the ancestors of us Israelites the mighty things that he was able to do.

⁸ Yahweh acts mercifully and kindly;

he does not quickly get angry when we sin;

he is always showing us that he faithfully loves us.

⁹ He will not keep rebuking us,

and he will not remain angry forever.

¹⁰ He has not punished us for our sins as we deserved.

¹¹ The skies are very high above the earth,

and Yahweh's faithful love for all those who revere him is just as great.

¹² He has taken away the guilt for our sins

and put it as far from us as the east is from the west.

¹³ Just as parents act mercifully toward their children,

Yahweh is kind to those who revere him.

¹⁴ He knows what our bodies are like;

he remembers that he created us from dust

and that we therefore quickly fail to do what pleases him .

¹⁵ We humans do not live forever;

we are like grass which withers and dies.

We are like wild flowers that bloom for a short while;

¹⁶ but then the hot wind blows over them, and they disappear;

no one sees them again.

¹⁷ But Yahweh will faithfully keep loving forever

all those who revere him, as he promised.

He will act fairly to our children and to their children;

¹⁸ he will act that way to all those who obey the covenant he made with them to bless them if they did what he told them to do,

to all those who obey what he has commanded.

¹⁹ Yahweh has taken his seat in the heavens where he rules as king;

from there he rules over everything.

²⁰ You angels who belong to Yahweh, praise him!

You are powerful creatures who do what he tells you to do;

you obey what he commands.

²¹ Praise Yahweh, you armies of angels who serve him and do what he desires.

²² All you things that Yahweh has created, praise him;

praise him in every place where he rules, everywhere!

I also will praise Yahweh!

Psalm 104

¹ I tell myself that I should praise Yahweh.

Yahweh, my God, you are very great!

As a king has on his royal robes, you have honor and majesty all around you!

² You created light and you hide behind it.

You spread out the whole sky as someone sets up a tent.

³ You built your palace on the clouds. You made the clouds to be like chariots to carry you.

⁴ You caused the winds to be like your messengers,

and flames of fire to be like your servants.

⁵ You placed the world firmly on its foundation

so that it can never be moved.

⁶ Later, you covered the earth with a flood, like a blanket;

and the water covered the mountains.

⁷ But when you rebuked the water, the oceans receded;

your voice spoke like thunder, and then the waters rushed away.

⁸ Mountains rose up from the water, and the valleys sank down to the levels that you had determined for them.

⁹ Then you set a boundary for the oceans, a boundary that they cannot cross;

their water will never again cover the whole earth.

¹⁰ You make springs to pour water into ravines;

their water flows down between the mountains.

¹¹ Those streams provide water for all the animals to drink;

the wild donkeys drink the water and are no longer thirsty.

¹² Birds make their nests alongside the streams,

and they sing among the branches of the trees.

¹³ From the heavens you send rain down on the mountains,

and you fill the earth with many good things that you create.

¹⁴ You make grass to grow for the cattle to eat,

and you make plants to grow for people.

In that way, animals and people get their food from what grows in the soil.

¹⁵ We get grapes to make wine to drink and to make us cheerful;

we get olives to make our face shine,

and we get grain to make bread to give us strength.

¹⁶ Yahweh, you send plenty of rain to water your trees,

the cedar trees that you planted in Lebanon.

¹⁷ Birds make their nests in those trees, and storks make their nests in pine trees.

¹⁸ High up in the mountains the wild goats live,

and hyraxes live in the rocks.

¹⁹ Yahweh, you made the moon to indicate the times for our festivals,

and you made the sun that knows when to go down.

²⁰ You bring darkness, and it becomes night

when all the animals in the forest prowl around looking for food.

²¹ At night the young lions roar as they seek their prey,

but they depend on you to give them food.

²² At dawn, they go back to their dens and lie down.

²³ During the daytime, people go to their work;

they work until it is evening.

²⁴ Yahweh, you have made so many different kinds of things!

You were very wise as you made them all.

The earth is full of the creatures that you made.

²⁵ We see the ocean which is very vast!

It is full of many kinds of living creatures,

big ones and little ones.

²⁶ We see the ships which sail along!

We see the huge sea monster which you made to splash around in the sea.

²⁷ All of these creatures depend on you to give them the food that they need.

²⁸ When you give them the food that they need,

they gather it.

You give them what you have in your hand,

and they eat it and are satisfied.

²⁹ But if you refuse to give food to them, they become terrified.

When you cause them to stop breathing,
they die;

their bodies decay and become soil
again.

³⁰ When you cause newborn creatures
to begin to breathe,

they start to live;

You give new life to all the living crea-
tures on the earth.

³¹ May the glory of Yahweh last forever.

May he rejoice about all the things
that he has created.

³² He makes the earth shake just by look-
ing at it!

By merely touching the mountains he
makes them pour out fire and smoke!

³³ I will sing to Yahweh as long as I live.

I will praise my God until the day that
I die.

³⁴ May Yahweh be pleased by all these
things that I have thought about him

because I rejoice about knowing him.

³⁵ However, may sinners disappear
from the earth;

may there will be no more wicked
people!

But as for me, I will praise Yahweh!

Praise him!

Psalm 105

¹ Give thanks to Yahweh; worship him
and pray to him.

Tell everyone in the world what he
has done!

² Sing to him; praise him as you sing to
him;

tell others about his wonderful mira-
cles.

³ Be proud of Yahweh, who alone is God.

You people who worship Yahweh,
rejoice!

⁴ Ask Yahweh to help you and give you
his strength,

and always seek to be with him!

⁵⁻⁶ You people who are descendants of
God's servant Abraham,

you descendants of Jacob, the people
whom God has chosen,

think about all the wonderful things
that he has done;

he performed miracles, and he pun-
ished all our enemies.

⁷ He is Yahweh, our God.

He rules and judges people throughout
the earth.

⁸ He never forgets the covenant that he
made;

he made a promise that will last for a
thousand generations.

⁹ That is the covenant that he made with
Abraham,

and he repeated that covenant with
Isaac.

¹⁰ Later he confirmed it again to Jacob
as a covenant for the Israelite people
that would last forever.

¹¹ What he said was, "I will give you the
region of Canaan;

it will belong to you and your descen-
dants forever."

¹² He said that to them when there were
only a few of them,

a tiny group of people who were living
in that land like strangers.

¹³ They continued to wander from one place to another,

from one kingdom to another.

¹⁴ But he did not allow others to oppress them.

He warned those kings by saying to them,

¹⁵ "Do not do harm to the people whom I have chosen!

Do not harm my prophets!"

¹⁶ He sent a famine to Canaan, and as a result all the people had no food to eat.

¹⁷ So his people went to Egypt, but first he sent someone there.

He sent Joseph, who had been sold to be a slave.

¹⁸ Later, while Joseph was in prison in Egypt,

they put his legs in shackles that hurt his feet,

and they put an iron collar around his neck.

¹⁹ Joseph was in prison until the time the events he predicted came to pass.

This was how Yahweh tested Joseph.

²⁰ The king of Egypt sent servants, who set him free;

this ruler released Joseph from prison.

²¹ Then he appointed him to take care of everything in the king's household,

to take care of everything that the king possessed.

²² Joseph was permitted to command the king's important servants

to do anything that Joseph wanted them to do,

and even to tell the king's advisors the things that they should do for the people of Egypt.

²³ Later, Joseph's father Jacob arrived in Egypt.

He lived like a foreigner in the land that belonged to the descendants of Ham.

²⁴ Years later Yahweh caused the descendants of Jacob to become very numerous.

As a result, their enemies, the Egyptians, considered that the Israelites were too strong.

²⁵ So Yahweh caused the rulers of Egypt to turn against the Israelite people,

and they began to oppress his people.

²⁶ But then Yahweh sent his servant Moses

along with Moses' older brother Aaron, whom Yahweh had also chosen to be his servant.

²⁷ Those two performed amazing miracles among the people of Egypt

in that land where the descendants of Ham lived.

²⁸ Yahweh sent darkness so that the people of Egypt could not see anything,

but the rulers of Egypt refused to obey when Moses and Aaron commanded them to let the Israelite people leave Egypt.

²⁹ Yahweh caused all the water in Egypt to become blood,

and his doing that caused all the fish to die.

³⁰ Then he caused the land to become full of frogs;

the king and his officials even had frogs in their bedrooms.

³¹ Then Yahweh commanded that flies come, and swarms of them descended on the people of Egypt,

and gnats also swarmed across the whole country.

³² Yahweh sent rain, rain that became hail that fell upon them,

and he sent wild fires that burned throughout their land.

³³ The hail ruined their grapevines and fig trees

and shattered all the other trees.

³⁴ He commanded locusts to come, and hordes of them came;

so many came that they could not be counted.

³⁵ The locusts ate every green plant in the land,

ruining all the crops.

³⁶ Then Yahweh killed the oldest son in every house of the people of Egypt.

³⁷ Then he brought the Israelite people out from Egypt;

they were carrying heavy loads of jewelry made of silver and gold that the people of Egypt had given to them.

No one was left behind because of being sick.

³⁸ The people of Egypt were glad when the Israelite people left

because they had become very afraid of the Israelites.

³⁹ Then Yahweh spread a cloud to cover the Israelites;

and at night it became a big fire in the sky to give them light.

⁴⁰ Later the Israelites asked for meat to eat,

and Yahweh sent flocks of quail to them,

and he gave them plenty of manna, food from the sky, each morning.

⁴¹ One day he caused a rock to open up, and water poured out for them to drink;

it was like a river flowing in that desert.

⁴² He did that because he kept thinking about the sacred promise that he had given to his servant, Abraham.

⁴³ So his people were joyful as he brought them out from Egypt;

these people whom he had chosen were shouting joyfully as they went.

⁴⁴ He gave to them the land that belonged to the people groups that lived there in Canaan,

and the Israelites took all their wealth.

⁴⁵ Yahweh did all these things

so that his people would do all the things that he had commanded them to do.

Praise Yahweh!

Psalm 106

¹ Praise Yahweh!

Praise Yahweh because he everything he does is good;

he faithfully loves us forever as he promised us!

² Because Yahweh has done many great things,

no one can tell all the great things that Yahweh has done,

and no one can praise him enough.

³ How fortunate are those who act fairly, those who always do what is right.

⁴ Yahweh, be kind to me when you help your people;

help me when you rescue them.

⁵ Allow me to see your people become prosperous again

and to see all the people of your nation,
Israel, become happy again;

allow me to be happy with them!

I want to praise you along with all
those others who belong to you.

⁶ We and our ancestors have sinned;
we have done what is wicked and evil.

⁷ When our ancestors were in Egypt,
they did not pay attention to the won-
derful things that Yahweh did;

they forgot about the many times that
he showed that he faithfully loved them.

Instead, when they were at the Sea of
Reeds,

they rebelled against God, who is
greater than any other god.

⁸ But he rescued them for the sake of
his own reputation

so that he could show that he is very
powerful.

⁹ He rebuked the Sea of Reeds and it
became dry,

and then while he led our ancestors,
they walked through it as though it
were as dry as a desert.

¹⁰ In that way he rescued them from the
power of their enemies.

¹¹ Then their enemies were drowned in
the water of the Sea of Reeds;
not one of them was left.

¹² When that happened, our ancestors
believed that Yahweh had truly done for
them what he had promised to do,
and they sang to praise him.

¹³ But they soon forgot what he had done
for them;

they did things without waiting to
find out what Yahweh wanted them to do.

¹⁴ They intensely wanted food like they
formerly ate in Egypt.

They did evil things to find out
whether God would punish them or not.

¹⁵ So he gave them what they requested,
but he sent a horrible disease upon
them.

¹⁶ Later when some of the men became
jealous of Moses

and his older brother Aaron, who
was dedicated to serve Yahweh by being
a priest,

¹⁷ the ground opened up and swallowed
Dathan

and also buried Abiram and his fam-
ily.

¹⁸ God sent down from heaven a fire
which burned up all the wicked people
who supported them.

¹⁹ Then the Israelite leaders made a gold
statue of a calf at Mount Sinai
and worshiped it.

²⁰ Instead of worshiping our glorious
God,
they started to worship a statue of an
ox that eats grass!

²¹ They forgot about God, who had res-
cued them by the great miracles that he
performed in Egypt.

²² They forgot about the wonderful
things that he did for them in Egypt

and the amazing things that he did
for them at the Sea of Reeds.

²³ Because of that, God said that he
would get rid of the Israelites;

but Moses, whom God had chosen to
serve him, stood up to persuade God not
to do that.

As a result, God did not destroy them.

²⁴ Later, our ancestors refused to enter the beautiful land of Canaan

because they did not believe that God would do as he promised and would enable them to take the land from the people who were living there.

²⁵ They stayed in their tents and grumbled

and would not pay attention to what Yahweh said that they should do.

²⁶ So he solemnly told them

that he would cause them to die there in the wilderness,

²⁷ that he would scatter their descendants among the people of other nations and groups who did not believe in him,

and that he would allow them to die in those lands.

²⁸ Later the Israelite people started to worship the idol of Baal at Mount Peor,

and they ate meat that had been sacrificed to Baal and those other lifeless gods.

²⁹ Yahweh became very angry because of what they had done,

so again he sent a terrible disease to attack them.

³⁰ But Phinehas stood up and punished the ones who had sinned greatly,

and as a result the plague ended.

³¹ People have remembered that righteous deed that Phinehas did,

and in future years people will remember it.

³² Then at the springs of Meribah our ancestors caused Yahweh to become angry again,

and as a result Moses had trouble.

³³ They caused Moses to become very angry,

and he said things that were foolish.

³⁴ Our ancestors did not destroy the other people groups

as he told them to do.

³⁵ Instead, the men took women from those people groups,

and they started to do the evil things that those people did.

³⁶ Our ancestors worshiped the idols of those people,

which resulted in their being destroyed.

³⁷ Some of the Israelites sacrificed their sons and daughters to the demons that those idols represented.

³⁸ They killed children who had done nothing wrong,

and offered them as sacrifices to the idols in Canaan.

As a result, the land of Canaan was polluted by those murders.

³⁹ So by their deeds they made it impossible for God to accept them;

because they did not faithfully worship only God,

they became like women who sleep with other men instead of sleeping only with their husbands.

⁴⁰ So Yahweh became very angry with his people;

he was completely disgusted with them.

⁴¹ As a result, he allowed people groups who did not believe in him to conquer them,

so those who hated our ancestors started to rule over them.

⁴² Their enemies oppressed them and completely controlled them.

⁴³ Many times Yahweh rescued his people,

but they continued to rebel against him,

and they were finally destroyed because of the sins that they committed.

⁴⁴ However, Yahweh always heard them when they cried out to him,

and he listened to them when they were distressed.

⁴⁵ For their sake, he thought about the covenant that he had made to bless them;

because he never stopped loving them very much,

he changed his mind about punishing them more.

⁴⁶ He caused all those who had taken the Israelites to Babylonia to feel sorry for them.

⁴⁷ Yahweh our God, rescue us

and bring us back to Israel from among those people groups

so that we may thank you

and joyfully praise you.

⁴⁸ Praise Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship,

praise him now and forever!

All the people should agree!

Praise Yahweh!

Psalm 107

¹ Give thanks to Yahweh because he always does good things for us!

His faithful love for us lasts forever, as he has promised us!

² Those whom Yahweh has saved should tell others

that he has rescued them from their enemies.

³ He has gathered those of you who were exiled to many lands;

he has gathered you together from the east and the west,

from the north and from the south.

⁴ Some of those who returned from those countries wandered in the desert;

they were lost and had no homes to live in.

⁵ They were hungry and thirsty,

and they even collapsed in exhaustion.

⁶ When they were in trouble, they called out to Yahweh,

and he rescued them from being distressed.

⁷ He led them along a straight road where they walked safely

to cities in Canaan where they could live.

⁸ They should praise Yahweh for loving them faithfully

and for the wonderful things that he does for people.

⁹ He gives thirsty people plenty of water to drink,

and he gives hungry people plenty of good things to eat.

¹⁰ Some of them were in very dark prisons;

they were prisoners, suffering because of chains fastened to their hands and feet.

¹¹ They were in prison because they had rebelled against the message of God;

they were there because they had despised the advice given by God,

who is greater than all other gods.

¹² That is why God made them suffer hardships so that they would no longer be proud;

when they got into trouble, there was no one who would help them.

¹³ When they were in trouble, they called out to Yahweh,

and he rescued them from being distressed.

¹⁴ He broke the chains that were on their hands and feet

and brought them out of those very dark prisons.

¹⁵⁻¹⁶ He broke down the prison gates that were made of bronze;

he cut through the prison bars that were made of iron.

They should praise Yahweh for loving them faithfully

and for the wonderful things that he does for people.

¹⁷ Some of them foolishly rebelled against God,

so they suffered for their sins.

¹⁸ They did not want to eat any food, and they almost died.

¹⁹ When they were in trouble, they called out to Yahweh,

and he rescued them from being distressed.

²⁰ When he commanded that they be healed, they were healed;

he saved them from dying.

²¹ They should praise Yahweh for loving them faithfully

and for the wonderful things that he does for people.

²² They should give offerings to him to show that they are thankful,

and they should sing joyfully about the miracles that he has performed.

²³ Some of them sailed in ships;

they were selling things in cities far away.

²⁴ As they were sailing, they also saw the miracles that Yahweh performed,

the wonderful things that he did when they were on very deep seas.

²⁵ He gave orders to the winds, and they became strong

and stirred up high waves.

²⁶ The ships in which they were sailing were tossed high in the air,

and then they sank into the troughs between the high waves;

then the sailors were terrified at the danger.

²⁷ They stumbled about and staggered like drunken men,

and they did not know what to do.

²⁸ When they were in trouble, they called out to Yahweh,

and he rescued them from being distressed.

²⁹ He calmed the storm

and he stilled the waves.

³⁰ They were very glad when it became calm;

and Yahweh brought them safely into a harbor as they wished.

³¹ They should praise Yahweh for loving them faithfully

and for the wonderful things that he does for people.

³² They should praise him among the Israelite people when they have gathered together,

and they should praise him in front of the leaders of the country.

³³ Sometimes Yahweh causes rivers to become dry,

with the result that the land becomes a wilderness,

and springs of water become dry land.

³⁴ Sometimes he causes land that has produced lots of crops to become salty wastelands,

with the result that they do not produce crops.

He does that because the people who live there are very wicked.

³⁵ But sometimes he causes pools of water to appear in deserts,

and he causes springs to flow in very dry ground.

³⁶ He brings hungry people into that land, to live there and to build cities there.

³⁷ They plant seeds in their fields, and they plant grapevines that produce large crops of grapes.

³⁸ He blesses the people, and the women give birth to many children,

and they have large herds of cattle.

³⁹ When the number of people became smaller and they were humiliated by their enemies

by being oppressed and caused to suffer,

⁴⁰ Yahweh shows contempt for the leaders who oppress them,

and makes them to wander in a wilderness where there are no roads.

⁴¹ But he rescues poor people from being in misery

and causes their families to increase in number like flocks of sheep.

⁴² People who live rightly see God do these things, and they rejoice;

wicked people hear about these things, too,

but they have nothing to say against Yahweh in reply.

⁴³ Those who are wise should think carefully about these things;

they should consider all the things that Yahweh has done to show that he faithfully loves them.

Psalm 108

¹ God, I am very confident in you.

I will sing to praise you.

It is an honor to wake up and praise you.

² I will arise before the sun rises,

and I will praise you while I play my harp and my lyre.

³ I prayed, "Yahweh, I will thank you among all the people groups;

I will sing to praise you among the nations

⁴ because your faithful love for us reaches up to the heavens,

and you are as faithful in keeping your promises as the clouds are high above the earth.

⁵ Yahweh, show in the heavens that you are very great!

Show your glory to people all over the earth!

⁶ Answer our prayers and, by your power, help us to defeat our enemies

so that we, the people whom you love, may be saved."

⁷ Yahweh answered our prayers and spoke from his temple, saying, "Because I have conquered your enemies, I will joyfully divide the city of Shechem,

and I will distribute among my people the land in the Valley of Succoth.

⁸ The region of Gilead is mine;

the people of the tribe of Manasseh are mine;

and the tribe of Judah is like my scepter.

⁹ The region of Moab is like my washbasin;

I throw my sandal over the region of Edom to show that it belongs to me;

I shout triumphantly because I have defeated the people of the region of Philistia."

¹⁰ Because we want to attack the people of Edom,

who will lead my army to their capital city that has strong walls around it?

¹¹ God, we do not want you to abandon us;

we want you to go with us when our army marches out to fight our enemies.

¹² We need you to help us when we fight against our enemies

because the help that humans can give us is worthless.

¹³ But with you helping us, we shall win;

you will enable us to defeat our enemies.

Psalm 109

¹ God, you are the one whom I praise,
so please answer my prayer

² because wicked people slander me

and tell lies about me.

³ They are constantly saying that they hate me,

and they harm me for no reason.

⁴ I show them that I love them

and that I pray for them,

but instead of being kind to me, they say that I have done evil things.

⁵ In return for my doing good things for them and loving them,

they do evil things to me and hate me.

⁶ So appoint a wicked judge who will judge my enemy,

and bring in one of his enemies who will stand up and accuse him.

⁷ When the trial ends,

cause the judge to declare that he is guilty

and cause even his plea for mercy to be considered a sin.

⁸ Then cause him to die soon;

bring someone else to take over his work.

⁹ Cause his children not to have a father anymore,

and cause his wife to become a widow.

¹⁰ Cause his children to leave the ruined homes that they have been living in

and to wander around begging for food.

¹¹ Cause all the people to whom he owed money to seize his property;

cause strangers to take away everything that he worked to acquire.

¹² Make sure that no one acts with any loyalty toward his memory for the sake of your covenant;

make sure that no one pities his children.

¹³ Cause all his children to die,
so that no one will live to carry on his name.

¹⁴ Yahweh, remember and do not forgive his ancestors for the evil things that they did,

and do not even forgive the sins that his mother committed.

¹⁵ Think about his sins continually,
but cause everyone living to completely forget who he was.

¹⁶ I pray these things because that man, my enemy, never acted toward anyone as your covenant says we must;

he persecuted poor and needy people
and even killed helpless people.

¹⁷ He liked to curse people.

So those terrible things that he requested to happen to others—cause them to happen to him!

He did not want to bless others,
so make sure that no one blesses him!

¹⁸ He often cursed other people, also;
cause the terrible things that he wanted to happen to others to happen to him and enter his body as water does,

as olive oil soaks into a person's bones when it is rubbed on his skin.

¹⁹ Cause those terrible things to cling to him like his clothes

and be around him like the belt that he wears every day.

²⁰ Yahweh, I wish that you will punish all my enemies that way,

those who say evil things about me.

²¹ But Yahweh, my God, do good things for me

in order that I may honor you;
rescue me from my enemies
because you faithfully love me as you promised.

²² I request you to do this because I am poor and needy

and my inner being is full of pain.

²³ I think that my time to remain alive is as short

as an evening shadow that will soon disappear.

I will be blown away as a locust is blown by the wind.

²⁴ My knees are weak because I have fasted very often,

and my body has become very thin.

²⁵ The people who accuse me make fun of me;

when they see me, they insult me by shaking their heads at me.

²⁶ Yahweh, my God, help me!

Because you faithfully love me, rescue me!

²⁷ When you save me,
cause my enemies to know that you are the one who has done it!

²⁸ They may curse me, but I ask that you bless me.

Cause those who persecute me to be defeated and disgraced,

but cause me to be glad!

²⁹ Cause those who accuse me to be completely disgraced;

cause other people to see that they are disgraced as easily as they see the clothes that they wear!

³⁰ But I will thank Yahweh very much;

I will praise him when I am among the crowd of people who are worshiping him.

³¹ I will do that because he defends poor people like me

and because he saves us from those who have said that we must die.

Psalm 110

¹ Yahweh said to my lord the king,

"Sit here, close to me, in the place of highest honor

until I completely defeat your enemies and make them like a stool for your feet!"

² Yahweh will extend your power as king

from Jerusalem to other lands;

you will rule over all your enemies.

³ On the day that you lead your armies into battle,

many of your people will volunteer to join your army.

Your youthful strength will act for you like the dew that waters the earth early in the morning."

⁴ Yahweh has made a solemn promise and he will never change his mind;

he has said to the king, "You will be a priest forever

like Melchizedek."

⁵ The Lord stands at your right side;

when he becomes angry, he will defeat many kings.

⁶ He will judge and punish the people of many nations;

many bodies of the killed enemy soldiers will lie on the ground.

He will crush kings all over the earth.

⁷ But the king will drink from the stream alongside the road;

he will be refreshed after defeating his enemies.

Psalm 111

¹ Praise Yahweh!

I will thank Yahweh with my entire inner being

every time that those who do what is right come together.

² The things that Yahweh has done are wonderful!

All those who are delighted with those things

desire to study them.

³ Because he is a great king and does wonderful things,

people greatly honor him and respect him;

the righteous things that he does will endure forever.

⁴ He has done wonderful things that people will always remember;

Yahweh always acts kindly and mercifully.

⁵ He provides food for those who have an awesome respect for him;

he never forgets the covenant that he made with our ancestors.

⁶ By enabling his people to capture the lands that belonged to other people groups,

he has shown to us, his people, that he is very powerful.

⁷ He does everything fairly, as he has promised us,

and we can depend on him to help us when he commands us to do things.

⁸ What he commands must be obeyed forever;

and he acted in a true and righteous manner when he gave us those commands.

⁹ He rescued us, his people, from being slaves in Egypt,

and he made a covenant with us that will last forever.

He is holy and awesome!

¹⁰ Having an awesome respect for Yahweh is the way to become wise.

All those who obey his commands will know what is good for them to decide to do.

We should praise him forever!

Psalm 112

¹ Praise Yahweh!

How fortunate are those who have an awesome respect for him,

those who happily obey his commands.

² Their children will prosper in their land;

God will bless their descendants.

³ Their families will be wealthy,

and their righteous deeds will endure forever.

⁴ For those who honor God, it is as if a light were shining on them in the darkness,

on those who are kind, merciful and righteous.

⁵ Things will go well for those who generously lend money to others

and who conduct their businesses honestly.

⁶ Righteous people will not be overwhelmed because of their troubles;

other people will always treasure their memories of them.

⁷ They are not afraid when they receive bad news;

they confidently trust in Yahweh.

⁸ They are confident and not afraid

because they know that they will see God defeat their enemies.

⁹ They give things generously to poor people;

their kind deeds will endure forever, and they will be exalted and honored.

¹⁰ Wicked people see those things and are angry;

they gnash their teeth angrily,

but they will disappear and die.

The wicked things that they want to do will never happen.

Psalm 113

¹ Praise Yahweh!

You people who serve Yahweh, praise him!

Praise him!

² Everyone should praise Yahweh now and forever!

³ People who live in the east and people who live in the west,

everyone, should praise Yahweh!

⁴ Yahweh rules over all the nations,

and high in the heavens he shows that his glory is very great.

⁵ There is no one who is like Yahweh, our God,

who lives in the highest heaven

⁶ and looks far down through the heavens and sees the people on the earth.

⁷ He lifts poor people up so that they no longer sit in the dirt;

he lifts needy people up so that they no longer sit on heaps of ashes

⁸ and causes them to be honored by sitting next to leaders,

leaders who rule his own people.

⁹ He also enables women who have no children to live in their houses

as happy as mothers with children.

Praise Yahweh!

Psalm 114

¹ When the Israelite people left Egypt,

when the descendants of Jacob left people who spoke a foreign language,

² the land of Judah became the place where people worshiped God;

and Israel became the land that he ruled over.

³ When they came to the Sea of Reeds,

it was as though the water saw them and ran away!

When they came to the Jordan River,

the water in the river stopped flowing so that the Israelites could cross it.

⁴ When they came to Mount Sinai and there was a big earthquake,

it was as though the mountains skipped like goats

and the hills jumped around like lambs.

⁵ If someone asks, "What happened at the Sea of Reeds that caused the water to run away?

What happened that caused the water in the Jordan River to stop flowing?

⁶ What happened that caused the mountains to skip like goats

and caused the hills to jump around like lambs?"

⁷ Indeed, all the earth will tremble before the Lord!

Everyone will tremble in the presence of the God whom Jacob worshiped!

⁸ He is the one who caused pools of water to flow from a rock for the Israelite people to drink,

and he is the one who caused a spring to flow from a solid rock cliff!

Psalm 115

¹ Yahweh, people should praise you alone;

they must praise you, not us,

because you faithfully love us and always do what you have promised to do.

² It is not right that other people groups should say about us,

"They claim that their God is very powerful,

but if that is true, why does he not help them?"

³ Our God is in heaven,
and he does whatever he wants!

⁴ But their idols are only statues made
of silver and gold,
things that humans have made.

⁵ Their idols have mouths, but they cannot
say anything;
they have eyes, but they cannot see
anything.

⁶ They have ears, but they cannot hear
anything;
they have noses, but they cannot smell
anything.

⁷ They have hands, but they cannot feel
anything;
they have feet, but they cannot walk,
and they cannot even make any
sounds in their throats!

⁸ The people who make those idols are
as powerless as those idols,
and those who trust in those idols can
accomplish nothing, just like their idols!

⁹ You, my fellow Israelite people, trust
in Yahweh!

He is the one who helps you and pro-
tects you like a shield.

¹⁰ You priests, descendants of Aaron,
trust in Yahweh!

He is the one who helps you and pro-
tects you like a shield.

¹¹ All you who have a reverential respect
for Yahweh, trust in him!

He is the one who helps you and pro-
tects you like a shield.

¹² Yahweh has not forgotten us;
he will bless us Israelite people!
He will bless the priests,

¹³ and he will bless all those who have
a reverential respect for him;

he will bless important people and
people who are considered to be unimpor-
tant, everyone!

¹⁴ I wish that Yahweh may give many
children
to you, my fellow Israelite people, and
to your descendants.

¹⁵ I wish that Yahweh, the one who made
heaven and the earth, may bless all of you!

¹⁶ The highest heavens belong to Yah-
weh,
but he gave everything that is on the
earth to us people.

¹⁷ Dead people are not able to praise
Yahweh;

when they descend into the place
where dead people are,

they are unable to speak and cannot
praise him.

¹⁸ But we who are alive will thank him,
now and forever.

Praise Yahweh!

Psalm 116

¹ I love Yahweh

because he hears me when I cry to
him for help.

² He listens to me,

so I will call out to him all during my
life.

³ Everything around me caused me to
think that I would die;

I was very afraid that I would die and
go to the place where dead people are.

I was very distressed and afraid.

⁴ But then I called out to Yahweh, saying,
“Yahweh, I plead with you to save me!”

⁵ Yahweh is kind and does what is right;
he is our God, and he acts mercifully to us.

⁶ He protects those who are helpless;
when I thought that I would die, he saved me.

⁷ I must encourage myself
because Yahweh has done very good things for me.

⁸ Yahweh has saved me from dying
and has kept me from troubles that would cause me to cry.

He has kept me from disaster.

⁹ So here on the earth where people are still alive,

I live, knowing that Yahweh is directing me.

¹⁰ I continued to believe in Yahweh,
even when I said, “I am greatly afflicted.”

¹¹ Even when I was distressed and said,
“I cannot trust anyone,”

I continued to trust in Yahweh.

¹² So now I will tell you what I will offer to Yahweh

because of all the good things that he has done for me.

¹³ I will offer to him a cup of wine
to thank him for saving me.

¹⁴ When I am together with many people who belong to Yahweh,

I will give to him the offerings that I solemnly promised to give to him.

¹⁵ Yahweh is very grieved when one of his people dies.

¹⁶ I am one of those who serves Yahweh;
I serve him like my mother did.

He has ended my troubles.

¹⁷ So I will offer to him a sacrifice to thank him,
and I will pray to him.

¹⁸⁻¹⁹ When I am together with many of the people who belong to Yahweh
in the courtyard outside his temple in Jerusalem,

I will give to him the offerings that I solemnly promised to give to him.

Praise Yahweh!

Psalm 117

¹ You people of all nations, praise Yahweh!

All you people groups, praise him

² because he faithfully loves us as he promised to do,

and he will forever do for us what he promised that he would do.

Praise Yahweh!

Psalm 118

¹ Tell Yahweh that you thank him very much for the good things that he has done for you!

He faithfully loves us, his people, forever.

² You Israelite people should repeatedly shout,

“He faithfully loves us, his people,
forever!”

³ You priests who are descendants of
Aaron should repeatedly shout,

“He faithfully loves us, his people,
forever!”

⁴ All you who revere him should repeatedly shout,

“He faithfully loves us, his people,
forever!”

⁵ When I was distressed, I called out to
Yahweh,

and he answered me and set me free
from my worries.

⁶ Yahweh is on my side,

so I will not be afraid of anything.

No one can do anything that will prevent
God from blessing me forever.

⁷ Yes, Yahweh is on my side,

so I will look triumphantly at my enemies
while he defeats them.

⁸ It is better to trust in Yahweh

than to depend on people.

⁹ It is better to trust Yahweh to protect
us

than to trust that influential people
will protect us.

¹⁰ Armies of many nations surrounded
us,

but Yahweh enabled us to defeat them
by his power.

¹¹ They completely surrounded us,

but we defeated them all by Yahweh’s
power.

¹² They swarmed around me like angry
bees;

they were like a fire that flares up in
a thornbush,

but we defeated them by Yahweh’s
power.

¹³ Our enemies attacked us fiercely and
almost defeated us,

but Yahweh helped us.

¹⁴ Yahweh is the one who makes me
strong,

and he is the one about whom I always
sing;

he has saved us from my enemies.

¹⁵ Listen to the joyful songs of victory
being sung in the tents of the people who
honor God!

They sing, “Yahweh has defeated our
enemies by his mighty power;

¹⁶ he has raised his strong right arm to
show he is happy over defeating his ene-
mies.

Yahweh has completely defeated
them!”

¹⁷ I will not be killed in battle;

I will live to proclaim the great things
that Yahweh has done.

¹⁸ Yahweh has punished me severely,

but he has not allowed me to die.

¹⁹ You gatekeepers, open for me the
gates of the temple

so that I may enter and thank Yahweh.

²⁰ Those are the gates through which we
enter the temple to worship Yahweh;

those who honor God enter through
those gates.

²¹ Yahweh, I thank you that you an-
swered my prayer

and that you saved me from my ene-
mies.

²² Yahweh’s chosen king is like a stone
that the builders rejected

when they were building a house,

but that stone became the cornerstone.

²³ This was done by Yahweh,

and it is a wonderful thing for us to see.

²⁴ This is the day on which we remember that Yahweh acted powerfully to defeat our enemies;

we will rejoice and be glad today.

²⁵ Yahweh, we plead with you to keep rescuing us from our enemies.

Yahweh, please help us accomplish what we want to do.

²⁶ Yahweh, bless the one who will come with your power.

From the temple we bless all of you.

²⁷ Yahweh is God,

and he has caused his light to come to us.

Come, bring animal sacrifice and tie it to the horns of the altar.

²⁸ Yahweh, you are the God whom I worship, and I will praise you!

You are my God, and I will tell everyone that you are great!

²⁹ Thank Yahweh because he does good things for us!

He will faithfully love us forever as he has promised.

Psalm 119

¹ How fortunate are those about whom no one can say truthfully that they have done things that are wrong,

those who always obey the laws of Yahweh.

² How fortunate are those who obey his weighty commands,

those who request him with their entire inner beings to help them to do that.

³ They do not do things that are wrong; they behave as Yahweh wants them to.

⁴ Yahweh, you have given us your principles of behavior,

and you told us to obey them faithfully.

⁵ I want so much to faithfully keep everything that you command.

⁶ If I did that, I would not be ashamed when I thought about your commands.

⁷ When I learn all of your just regulations, I will praise you with a pure inner being.

⁸ I will obey all your statutes; do not desert me!

⁹ I know how a young person can live in a pure way; it is by obeying your commands.

¹⁰ I try to serve you with my entire inner being;

do not allow me to wander away from what you have commanded.

¹¹ I have memorized your commands so that I will not sin against you.

¹² Yahweh, I praise you; teach me your statutes.

¹³ I have announced to the people all the things that you have commanded us to do.

¹⁴ I delight in obeying your requirements;

I enjoy that more than being very rich.

¹⁵ I will study everything you have commanded,

and I will pay attention to how you have shown me to live.

¹⁶ I will be happy to obey your statutes, and I will not forget your words.

¹⁷ Do good things for me, the one who serves you,

so that I may continue to live and obey your words during all my life.

¹⁸ Help me to understand with my mind, to know the wonderful things that are written in your laws.

¹⁹ I am living here on the earth for only a short time;

do not keep me from understanding.

²⁰ In my inner being I strongly desire to know your decrees all the time.

²¹ You rebuke those who are proud; you curse those who disobey your commands.

²² Do not allow them to continue to insult and scorn me;

I request this because I have obeyed your requirements.

²³ Rulers gather together and plan ways to harm me,

but I will meditate on what you have commanded.

²⁴ I am delighted with your requirements;

it is as though they were my advisors.

²⁵ I think that I will soon die; save my life as you have promised me that you would.

²⁶ When I told you about all the things I did, you answered me;

teach me your statutes.

²⁷ Help me to understand how you want me to behave,

and then I will meditate on your amazing instructions.

²⁸ I am very sad, with the result that I have no strength;

enable me to be strong again as you promised me that you would do.

²⁹ Prevent me from telling lies, and be kind to me by teaching me your laws.

³⁰ I have decided that I will faithfully obey you;

I am determined to follow your commands.

³¹ Yahweh, I try to carefully cling to your requirements;

do not abandon me or let me be disgraced.

³² I will eagerly obey your commands because you have helped me understand better and better what you want me to do.

³³ Yahweh, teach me the meaning of your statutes,

and then I will completely obey them.

³⁴ Help me to understand your laws so that I may obey them with all my inner being.

³⁵ I am happy with your commands, so lead me along the paths that you have chosen for me.

³⁶ Cause me to want to do what you command

and not to want to become rich.

³⁷ Do not allow me to look at things that are worthless;

make me able to live as you want me to live.

³⁸ Because I am one who serves you, do what you promised to do for me,

which is what you also promise to do for all those who honor you.

³⁹ I become afraid when my enemies insult me;

stop them!

But you are right when you punish my enemies.

⁴⁰ I very much desire to obey your principles of behavior;

because you are righteous, allow me to continue to live.

⁴¹ Yahweh, show me that you faithfully love me,

and rescue me as you promised you would.

⁴² After you do that, I will be able to reply to those who insult me

because I trust in your word.

⁴³ Never prevent me from speaking your truth

because I have confidence in your regulations.

⁴⁴ I will always obey your laws

forever and ever.

⁴⁵ I will always be safe

because I have tried to obey your principles of behavior.

⁴⁶ I will tell to kings what you require,

and because they are unable to prove me wrong, they will not cause me to be ashamed.

⁴⁷ I am delighted to obey your commands,

and I love them.

⁴⁸ I respect your commandments,

and I love them;

I will meditate on everything you require us to do.

⁴⁹ Do not forget what you said you would do for me, the one who serves you,

because what you have said has caused me to confidently expect good things from you.

⁵⁰ When I have been suffering, you comforted me;

you did what you promised me, and that kept me alive.

⁵¹ Proud people are always making fun of me,

but I do not turn away from obeying your laws.

⁵² Yahweh, when I think about your regulations that you gave to us long ago,

I am comforted.

⁵³ When I see wicked people disregard your laws,

I become very angry.

⁵⁴ While I have been living here on the earth for a short time,

I have written songs about your statutes.

⁵⁵ Yahweh, during the night I think about you,

and so I obey your laws.

⁵⁶ What I have always done is to obey your principles of behavior.

⁵⁷ Yahweh, you are the one whom I have chosen,

and I promise to obey your words.

⁵⁸ With all my inner being I plead with you to be good to me;

act kindly to me as you promised that you would do.

⁵⁹ I have thought about my behavior,

and I have decided to return to obeying your requirements.

⁶⁰ I hurry to obey your commands;

I do not delay at all.

⁶¹ Wicked people have tried to seize me as a hunter tries to catch an animal with a net,

but I do not forget your laws.

⁶² In the middle of the night I awake,
and I praise you for your commands
because they are fair.

⁶³ I am a friend of all those who have an awesome respect for you,

those who obey your principles of behavior.

⁶⁴ Yahweh, you faithfully love people all over the earth;

teach me your statutes.

⁶⁵ Yahweh, you have done good things for me

as you promised that you would do.

⁶⁶ Teach me to think carefully before I decide what to do,

and teach me other things that I need to know

because I believe that it is right for us to obey your commands.

⁶⁷ Before you afflicted me, I did things that were wrong,

but now I obey your words.

⁶⁸ You are very good, and what you do is good;

teach me your statutes.

⁶⁹ Proud people have told many lies about me,

but as for me, I obey your principles of behavior.

⁷⁰ Those people are stubborn,

but as for me, I am delighted with your laws.

⁷¹ It was good for me that you afflicted me

because the result was that I learned your statutes.

⁷² The laws that you give to us are worth more to me than gold,

more than thousands of pieces of gold and silver.

⁷³ You created me and formed my body;

help me to be wise so that I may learn your commands.

⁷⁴ Those who have an awesome respect for you will see what you have done for me,

because they have confidence in the promises of your word.

⁷⁵ Yahweh, I know that your regulations are right

and that you have made me suffer because you love me without end.

⁷⁶ Comfort me by showing that you faithfully love me

as you said to me that you would do.

⁷⁷ Act mercifully to me so that I may continue to live

because I am delighted with your laws.

⁷⁸ Cause the proud people who falsely accuse me to be shamed;

but as for me, I will continue meditating on what you have commanded I should do.

⁷⁹ Cause those who have an awesome respect for you to come back to me

so that they may learn what you command.

⁸⁰ Enable me to perfectly obey your statutes

so that I may not be ashamed because of not doing that.

⁸¹ I am waiting for you to save me from my enemies;

I confidently expect that you will tell me what you will do.

⁸² My eyes are tired from waiting a long time for you to do what you promised that you would do,

and I ask, "When will you help me?"

⁸³ I have become as useless as a wine-skin that is shriveled from hanging a long time in the smoke inside a house,

but I have not forgotten your statutes.

⁸⁴ How long must I wait?

When will you punish those who persecute me?

⁸⁵ It is as though proud people, those who do not obey your laws, have dug deep pits for me to fall into. ⁸⁶ All your commands are trustworthy;

but people are persecuting me by telling lies about me, so please help me.

⁸⁷ Those people almost killed me,

but I have not stopped obeying your principles of behavior.

⁸⁸ Because you faithfully love me, allow me to continue to live

so that I may continue to obey your requirements that you have spoken.

⁸⁹ Yahweh, your word will last forever; it is firmly fixed in heaven.

⁹⁰ You will faithfully continue to act for people who are not yet born;

you have put the earth in its place, and it remains firmly there.

⁹¹ To this day, all things on the earth remain because you decided that they should remain;

everything on the earth serves you.

⁹² If I had not been delighted in obeying your laws,

I would have died because of what I was suffering.

⁹³ I will never forget your principles of behavior

because as a result of my obeying them, you have enabled me to continue to live.

⁹⁴ I belong to you; save me from my enemies

because I have tried to obey your principles of behavior.

⁹⁵ Wicked men are waiting to kill me, but I will think about your requirements.

⁹⁶ I have learned that there is a limit for everything,

but your commands have no limit.

⁹⁷ I love your laws very much.

I meditate on them all during the day.

⁹⁸ Because I know your commands

and because I think about them all the time,

I have become wiser than my enemies.

⁹⁹ I understand more than my teachers do

because I meditate on what you command.

¹⁰⁰ I understand more than many old people do

because I obey your principles of behavior.

- ¹⁰¹ I have avoided all evil behavior
so that I may obey your words.
- ¹⁰² I have not refused to obey them
because you have taught me while I
have studied them.
- ¹⁰³ When I read your words,
they are like honey that I eat;
yes, they are even sweeter than honey.
- ¹⁰⁴ Because I have learned your principles of behavior,
I am able to understand many things;
therefore I hate all evil things that
some people do.
- ¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to guide me;
it is like a light that shows me where
to walk.
- ¹⁰⁶ I have solemnly promised, and I am
solemnly promising it again,
that I will always obey your regulations;
they are all fair.
- ¹⁰⁷ Yahweh, I am suffering very much;
cause me to be strong again as you
have promised to do.
- ¹⁰⁸ Yahweh, when I thank you while I
pray, it is like a sacrifice to you;
please accept it,
and teach me your regulations.
- ¹⁰⁹ My enemies are often trying to kill
me,
but I do not forget your laws.
- ¹¹⁰ Wicked people have tried to seize
me as a hunter tries to catch little animals
with a trap,
but I have not disobeyed your principles of behavior.
- ¹¹¹ I have your requirements forever;
because of them, I am joyful in my
inner being.
- ¹¹² I have decided to always obey your
commands, every one of them.
- ¹¹³ I hate people who only say they love
you,
but I love your laws.
- ¹¹⁴ You are like a place where I can hide
from my enemies,
and you are like a shield behind which
I am protected from them;
I trust in your promises.
- ¹¹⁵ You evil people, go away from me
so than I may obey my God's commands!
- ¹¹⁶ Enable me to be strong as you
promised that you would do,
so that I may continue to live.
I am confidently expecting that you will
restore me;
do not disappoint me.
- ¹¹⁷ Hold me up so that I may be safe
and always pay attention to your commands.
- ¹¹⁸ You reject all those who disobey your
statutes;
because they make deceitful plans
and they do not keep their word.
- ¹¹⁹ You get rid of all the wicked people
on the earth as people get rid of trash;
therefore I love your requirements.
- ¹²⁰ I tremble because I am afraid of you;
I am afraid because you punish those
who do not obey your regulations.
- ¹²¹ But I have done what is right and
fair;
so do not allow people to oppress me.

¹²² Be responsible for doing good things
for me,

and do not allow proud people to
oppress me.

¹²³ My eyes are tired from waiting a long
time for you to rescue me,

for you to save me as you promised
that you would.

¹²⁴ Do something for me to show that
you faithfully love me,

and teach me your statutes.

¹²⁵ I am one who serves you;

enable me to understand what you want
me to know

so that I may learn your requirements.

¹²⁶ Yahweh, now is the time for you to
punish people

because they have disobeyed your
laws.

¹²⁷ Truly, I love your commands more
than I love gold;

I love them more than I love very pure
gold.

¹²⁸ So I conduct my life by your princi-
ples of behavior,

and I hate all the evil things that some
people do.

¹²⁹ Your requirements are wonderful,
so I obey them with all my inner being.

¹³⁰ When someone explains your words,
it is as though they are lighting a light;
what they say causes even people who
have not learned your laws to be wise.

¹³¹ I eagerly desire to know your com-
mands

as a dog pants with its mouth open,
wanting to be fed.

¹³² Listen to me and act kindly to me

as you do to all those who love you.

¹³³ Guide me as you promised;

do not allow evil people to control
what I do.

¹³⁴ Rescue me from those who oppress
me

so that I may obey your principles of
behavior.

¹³⁵ Act kindly toward me

and teach me your statutes.

¹³⁶ I cry very much

because many people do not obey
your laws.

¹³⁷ Yahweh, you are righteous

and your regulations are just.

¹³⁸ You did what was right when
you gave us the laws of your covenant
promise,

and you can be trusted when you
made those promises to us.

¹³⁹ I am furious

because my enemies disregard your
words.

¹⁴⁰ I have found that your promises are
dependable,

and I love them.

¹⁴¹ I am not important, and people de-
spise me,

but I do not forget your principles of
behavior.

¹⁴² You are righteous and you will be
righteous forever,

and your laws will never be changed.

¹⁴³ I constantly have troubles and I am
worried,

but your commands cause me to be
happy.

¹⁴⁴ Your requirements are always fair;

help me to understand them so that I may continue to live.

¹⁴⁵ Yahweh, with all my inner being I call out to you;

answer me and I will obey your statutes.

¹⁴⁶ I call out to you,

“Save me, and I will keep your commandments.”

¹⁴⁷ Each morning I arise before dawn and call to you to help me;

I confidently expect you to do what you have promised.

¹⁴⁸ All during the night I am awake,

and I meditate on your commands and your promises.

¹⁴⁹ Yahweh, because you faithfully love me,

listen to me while I pray;

keep me safe because I keep your regulations.

¹⁵⁰ Those evil people who oppress me are coming closer to me;

they do not pay any attention to your laws.

¹⁵¹ But Yahweh, you are near to me,

and I know that your commands will never be changed.

¹⁵² Long ago I found out about your requirements,

and I know that you intended them to last forever.

¹⁵³ Look at me, see that I am suffering very much, and heal me

because I do not forget your laws.

¹⁵⁴ Defend me when others accuse me and rescue me from them;

allow me to continue to live as you promised that you would.

¹⁵⁵ Wicked people do not obey your statutes,

so you will certainly not save them.

¹⁵⁶ Yahweh, you have been merciful by helping me in many ways;

allow me to continue to live as you have done until now.

¹⁵⁷ Many people are my enemies; many people cause me to suffer,

but I do not neglect your commands.

¹⁵⁸ When I look at those who are not faithful to you, I am disgusted

because they do not obey your requirements.

¹⁵⁹ Yahweh, notice that I love your principles of behavior;

because you faithfully love me, allow me to continue to live.

¹⁶⁰ I can rely on everything that you have said;

all your regulations will endure forever.

¹⁶¹ Rulers persecute me for no reason,

but in my inner being I have a very awesome respect for your words.

¹⁶² I am happy about your words,

as happy as someone who has found a great treasure.

¹⁶³ I thoroughly hate all lies

but I love your laws.

¹⁶⁴ I praise you seven times a day

for your commandments because they are all just.

¹⁶⁵ Things go well for those who love your laws;

nothing will make them abandon your laws.

¹⁶⁶ Yahweh, I confidently expect that you will rescue me from my troubles,

and I obey your commands.

¹⁶⁷ I obey what you require us to do;

I love it all very much.

¹⁶⁸ I obey your principles of behavior,

and you see everything that I do.

¹⁶⁹ Yahweh, listen while I pray for you to help me;

help me to understand your words.

¹⁷⁰ Hear me while I pray,

and rescue me as you said you would.

¹⁷¹ I will always praise you

because you teach me your rules.

¹⁷² I will sing about your words

because all your commands are just.

¹⁷³ I request you to always be ready to help me

because I have chosen to obey your principles of behavior.

¹⁷⁴ Yahweh, I eagerly desire for you to rescue me from my enemies;

I am delighted with your laws.

¹⁷⁵ Allow me to continue to live in order that I can continue to praise you

so that your regulations will continue to help me.

¹⁷⁶ I have sinned and turned away from you like a sheep that has left its flock;

search for me because I have not forgotten your commands.

Psalm 120

¹ When I was distressed, I called out to Yahweh

and he answered me.

² I prayed,

“Yahweh, rescue me from those who lie to me and try to deceive me!”

³ You people who lie to me, I will tell you what God will do to you

and what he will do to punish you.

⁴ He will punish you when soldiers shoot sharp arrows at you;

arrows that were hardened and made sharp

over hot coals from the wood of a broom tree.

⁵ It is terrible for me, living among cruel people

like those who live in the regions of Meshech or Kedar.

⁶ I have lived for a long time among people who hate to live with others peacefully.

⁷ Every time I talk about living together peacefully,

they talk about starting a war.

Psalm 121

¹ When we travel toward Jerusalem,

I look up toward the hills and I ask myself, “Who will help me?”

² My answer is that Yahweh is the one who helps me;

he is the one who made heaven and the earth.

³ He will not allow us to fall;
God, who protects us, will not fall
asleep.

⁴ The one who protects us Israelite people
never gets sleepy or sleeps.

⁵ Yahweh watches over us;
he is like the shade that protects us
from the sun.

⁶ He will not allow the sun to harm us
during the day,
and he will not allow the moon to
harm us during the night.

⁷ Yahweh will protect us from being
harmed in any manner;
he will keep us safe.

⁸ He will protect us from the time that
we leave our houses in the morning until
we return in the evening;

he will protect us now and he will
protect us forever.

Psalm 122

¹ I was glad when people said to me,
“We should go to the temple of Yahweh
in Jerusalem!”

² Now we are here,
standing inside the gates of Jerusalem.

³ We can see that Jerusalem was a care-
fully built city.

Every part of the city was built to fit
together
within the city as a whole.

⁴ We people of the tribes of Israel
who belong to Yahweh can now go up
there,

as Yahweh commanded that we should
do,
so we can thank him.

⁵ There are the thrones,
the thrones that the kings of Israel sat
when they ruled Israel.

These are the thrones of the descen-
dants of King David.

⁶ Pray that there will be peace in
Jerusalem!

“I pray that those who love Jerusalem
will succeed in life.

⁷ I pray that there may be peace inside
the walls of the city
and that people who are inside the
palaces may be safe.”

⁸ For the sake of my relatives and
friends,

“I pray that people will live peacefully
inside Jerusalem.”

⁹ And because I love the temple of Yah-
weh our God,

“I pray that things will go well for the
people who live in Jerusalem.”

Psalm 123

¹ Yahweh, I look up toward you,
up to heaven, from where you rule.

² As servants ask their masters for what
they need

and as maids ask their mistresses for
what they need,

we ask you, Yahweh our God, for what
we need,

until you act mercifully toward us.

³ Yahweh, act very mercifully toward
us

because our enemies have acted very contemptuously toward us.

⁴ Arrogant people have made fun of us for a long time,

and proud people have oppressed us and have acted as though we were worthless.

Psalm 124

¹ You Israelite people, answer this question:

What would have happened to us if Yahweh had not been helping us?

² When our enemies attacked us,

if Yahweh had not been fighting for us,

³ we would have all been killed

because they were very angry with us!

⁴ They would have been like a flood of water sweeping us away;

it would have been as though the water had covered us,

⁵ and we would all have drowned in the flood.

⁶ But we praise Yahweh

because he has not allowed our enemies to destroy us.

⁷ We have escaped from our enemies as a bird escapes from the trap that hunters have set;

it is as though the trap that our enemies set for us was broken

and we have escaped from it!

⁸ Yahweh is the one who helps us;

he is the one who made heaven and the earth.

Psalm 125

¹ Those who trust in Yahweh are like Mount Zion,

which cannot be shaken or moved out of its place.

² As the hills that surround Jerusalem protect it,

so Yahweh protects us, his people,

and he will protect us forever.

³ Wicked people should not be allowed to rule over the land where righteous people live.

If they did that, those righteous people would think of doing wrong themselves.

⁴ Yahweh, do good things to those who do good things to others

and to those who sincerely obey your commands.

⁵ But when you punish the Israelites who no longer obey you,

you will punish them the same as you punish all the other evildoers.

I wish that things may go well for people in Israel!

Psalm 126

¹ When Yahweh made Jerusalem prosperous again,

it was wonderful;

it seemed as though we were dreaming.

² We were extremely happy,

and we continued shouting joyfully.

Then the other people groups said about us,

“Yahweh has done great things for them!”

³ We said, “Yes, Yahweh truly has done great things for us,

and we are very happy.”

⁴ Restore us, O Yahweh, like the rains that fill the streams in the southern Judean wilderness.

Enable our nation to become great again like it was before.

⁵ We cried when we planted seeds because it was hard work preparing the soil that had not been plowed for many years;

now we want to shout joyfully because we are gathering a big harvest.

⁶ Those who cried as they carried the bags of seeds to the fields will shout joyfully

when they bring the crops to their houses at harvest time.

Psalm 127

¹ If people are building a house without Yahweh helping them,

they are building it in vain.

Similarly, if Yahweh does not protect a city,

it is useless for guards to stay awake at night.

² It is also useless to arise very early and go to sleep late at night

so that you can work hard all day to earn money to buy food

because Yahweh gives food to those whom he loves even while they sleep.

³ Children are a gift that comes to parents from Yahweh;

they are a reward from him.

⁴ If a man has sons while he is still young,

when they grow up, they will be able to help him defend his family

as a soldier can defend himself if he has a bow and arrows in his hand.

⁵ How fortunate is a man who has many sons;

he is like a soldier who has many arrows in his quiver.

If a man with his many grown sons is taken by his enemies to the place where they decide matters, his enemies will never be able to defeat that man

because his sons will help to defend him.

Psalm 128

¹ How fortunate are you who have an awesome respect for him

and do what he wants you to do.

² You will be able to enjoy the food you provide yourself with;

you will be fortunate and prosperous.

³ Your wife will be like a grapevine that bears many grapes;

she will give birth to many children.

Your children who sit around your table;

you will be like a strong olive tree that has many shoots growing up around it.

⁴ Like that, Yahweh will bless every man who has an awesome respect for him.

⁵ I wish that God in his temple on Mount Zion may help you greatly,

and that you will see the people of Jerusalem prospering every day that you live!

⁶ I wish that you may live many years and that you may have grandchildren and be able to see them.

I wish that things may go well for people in Israel!

Psalm 129

¹ I say that my enemies have afflicted me ever since I was young.

Now I ask you, my fellow Israelites, to repeat those same words:

² "Our enemies have afflicted us since our nation began,

but they have not defeated us!

³ Our enemies struck us with whips that cut into our backs

as a farmer uses a plow to cut deep furrows into the ground."

⁴ But Yahweh is righteous, and he has freed us from being slaves to wicked people.

⁵ I wish that they may all be shamed because we will defeat them—all of Jerusalem's enemies.

⁶ I hope that they may be of no value, like grass that grows on the roofs of houses, that dries up and does not grow tall;

⁷ no one wants to cut it and tie it up as bundles and carry it away.

⁸ People who pass by and see men harvesting grain usually greet them by saying to them,

"We wish that Yahweh may bless you!"

But this will not happen to the enemies of Israel.

We, acting as Yahweh's representatives, bless you, our fellow Israelites!

Psalm 130

¹ Yahweh, I have great troubles, so I call out to you.

² Yahweh, hear me

while I call out to you to have mercy on me!

³ Yahweh, if you kept a record of the sins that we have committed,

not one of us would escape from being condemned and punished!

⁴ But you forgive us,

with the result that we have an awesome respect for you.

⁵ Yahweh has said that he would help me;

I trust what he said, and I wait eagerly for him to do that.

⁶ I wait for Yahweh to help me

more than watchmen wait for the morning to come;

yes, I wait more eagerly than they do!

⁷ You, my fellow Israelites, confidently expect that Yahweh will bless us.

He will bless us because he has mercy on us,

and he is very willing to save us.

⁸ It is he who will save us Israelite people from being punished for all the sins that we have committed.

Psalm 131

¹ Yahweh, I am not proud;

I do not deserve to achieve impressive things in life.

I do not worry about problems that are too difficult for me to solve.

² Instead, I am calm and peaceful in my inner being

like a small child who no longer nurses but is happy to be with its mother.

In the same way, I am peaceful within my inner being.

³ You, my fellow Israelites, confidently expect that Yahweh will do good things for you

now and forever!

Psalm 132

¹ Yahweh, do not forget King David
and all the hardships he endured!

² He made a solemn promise to you,
the mighty God whom our ancestor Jacob worshiped.

³ He said, "I will not go home,

I will not rest on my bed,

⁴ and I will not sleep at all

⁵ until I build a place for Yahweh,

a home for the mighty God whom Jacob worshiped."

⁶ In Ephrathah we heard where the sacred chest was.

So we went and found it near the city of Kiriath Jearim, and we took it to Jerusalem.

⁷ Later we said, "Let us go to the sacred tent of Yahweh in Jerusalem;

let us worship there in front of the throne where he is sitting."

⁸ Yahweh, come to the place where you live eternally,

to the place where your sacred chest is,

to the place that shows that you are very powerful.

⁹ I want that the righteous behavior of your priests will always be evident,

and that your people will always shout joyfully.

¹⁰ You chose David to serve you as king of Israel;

do not reject him!

¹¹ Yahweh, you made a solemn promise to David,

a promise that you will not break.

You said, "I will cause your descendants to rule as kings like you.

¹² If they obey my covenant with them and obey all the commands that I will give them,

the line of kings descended from you will never end."

¹³ Yahweh has chosen Jerusalem;

that is where he wants to rule from.

¹⁴ He said, "This is the city where I will live forever;

this is the place where I want to stay.

¹⁵ I will give to the people of Jerusalem all that they need;

I will give enough food to satisfy even the poor people there.

¹⁶ I will cause the priests to behave in a manner worthy of ones whom I have saved;

and all my people who live there will shout joyfully.

¹⁷ There in Jerusalem I will cause one of David's descendants to become a great king;

he also will be my chosen king,

It is there that I will make David's line of descendants continue.

¹⁸ I will defeat his enemies and cause them to be very ashamed;

but the crown that my king wears will always shine."

Psalm 133

¹ It is very good and very pleasant for God's people to gather together in peace.

² It is as delightful as the precious oil that ran down from the high priest Aaron's head onto his beard when Moses anointed him,

that ran down onto the collar of his robes.

³ Gathering together in peace is as delightful as the dew that falls on Mount Hermon

and the dew that falls on Mount Zion.

Yahweh has promised to bless his people there in Jerusalem

by making their nation last forever.

Psalm 134

¹ All you people who serve Yahweh, who stand up and serve him at night in his temple,

come and praise him!

² Lift up your hands to pray to him in the temple

and praise him!

³ I hope that Yahweh, who created heaven and the earth,

may bless you from where he lives in the temple on Mount Zion!

Psalm 135

¹ Praise Yahweh!

You who worship Yahweh, praise him!

² You who stand at the temple of Yahweh our God in its courtyards, ready to serve him,

praise him !

³ Praise Yahweh because he does good things for us;

sing to him because it is a joyful thing to do so.

⁴ He has chosen us, the descendants of Jacob;

he has chosen us Israelites to belong to him.

⁵ I say these things because I know that Yahweh is great;

he is greater than all the gods.

⁶ Yahweh does whatever he desires to do

in heaven, on the earth,

and in the seas, down to the bottom of the seas.

⁷ He is the one who causes clouds to appear from very distant places on the earth;

he makes lightning bolts to flash with the rain,

and he brings the winds from the places where he stores them.

⁸ He is the one who killed all the first-born males in Egypt,

the firstborn of people and of animals.

⁹ There he performed many kinds of miracles

to punish the king and all his officials.

¹⁰ He attacked many nations

and killed the powerful kings who ruled them:

¹¹ Sihon, the king of the Amor people group,

Og, the king of Bashan,

and all the other kings in the land of Canaan.

¹² Yahweh gave us their land,

so that it would belong to us, his people Israel, forever.

¹³ Yahweh, your name will endure forever,

and people who are not yet born will remember the great things that you have done.

¹⁴ Yahweh declares that we, his people, are innocent,

and he acts mercifully toward us.

¹⁵ But the idols that the other people groups worship are only statues made of silver and gold,

things that humans have made.

¹⁶ Their idols have mouths, but they cannot say anything;

they have eyes, but they cannot see anything.

¹⁷ They have ears, but they cannot hear anything,

and they are not even able to breathe.

¹⁸ The people who make those idols are as powerless as those idols,

and those who trust in those idols can accomplish no more than their idols can!

¹⁹ My fellow Israelites, praise Yahweh!

You priests who are descended from Aaron, praise Yahweh!

²⁰ You men who are descended from Levi, you who assist the priests, praise Yahweh!

All you who have a reverential respect for Yahweh, praise him!

²¹ Praise Yahweh in the temple on Mount Zion in Jerusalem

where he lives!

Praise Yahweh!

Psalm 136

¹ Thank Yahweh because he does good things for us;

he will love us forever as he has promised.

² Thank God, the one who is greater than all other gods;

he will love us forever as he has promised.

³ Thank the Lord who is greater than all other lords;

he will love us forever as he has promised.

⁴ He is the only one who performs great miracles;

he will love us forever as he has promised.

⁵ He is the one who, by being very wise,
created the heavens;

he will love us forever as he has
promised.

⁶ He is the one who caused the ground
to rise up above the deep waters;

he will love us forever as he has
promised.

⁷ He is the one who created great lights
in the sky;

he will love us forever as he has
promised.

⁸ He created the sun to shine in the day-
time;

he will love us forever as he has
promised.

⁹ He created the moon and stars to shine
during the nighttime;

he will love us forever as he has
promised.

¹⁰ He is the one who killed the firstborn
males in Egypt;

he will love us forever as he has
promised.

¹¹ He led the Israelite people out of
Egypt;

he will love us forever as he has
promised.

¹² With his strong hand he led them out;

he will love us forever as he has
promised.

¹³ He is the one who caused the Sea of
Reeds to divide;

he will love us forever as he has
promised.

¹⁴ He enabled the Israelite people to
walk through it on dry land;

he will love us forever as he has
promised.

¹⁵ But he caused the king of Egypt and
his army to drown in it;

he will love us forever as he has
promised.

¹⁶ He is the one who led his people safely
through the wilderness;

he will love us forever as he has
promised.

¹⁷ He killed powerful kings;

he will love us forever as he has
promised.

¹⁸ He killed kings who were famous;

he will love us forever as he has
promised.

¹⁹ He killed Sihon, the king of the Amor
people group;

he will love us forever as he has
promised.

²⁰ He killed Og, the king of the region of
Bashan;

he will love us forever as he has
promised.

²¹ He gave their lands to us, his people;

he will love us forever as he has
promised.

²² He gave those lands to us people of
Israel, who serve him;

he will love us forever as he has
promised.

²³ He is the one who did not forget about
us when our enemies had defeated us;

he will love us forever as he has
promised.

²⁴ He rescued us from our enemies;

he will love us forever as he has
promised.

²⁵ He is the one who gives food to all
living creatures;

he will love us forever as he has promised.

²⁶ So thank God, who lives in heaven

because he will love us forever as he has promised.!

Psalm 137

¹ When we had been taken to Babylonia far from Jerusalem,

we sat down by the rivers there,

and we cried when we thought about the temple on Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

² On the willow trees alongside the rivers we hung our harps

because we did not want to play them anymore and because we were very sad.

³ The soldiers who had captured us and taken us to Babylonia forced us to sing for them;

they told us to entertain them; they said,

“Sing for us one of the songs that you previously sang in Jerusalem!”

⁴ But we thought to ourselves,

“We are sad because we have been punished by Yahweh and brought to this foreign land;

we cannot sing songs about Yahweh while we are here!”

⁵ If I forget about Jerusalem, I hope that my right hand will wither

so that I will be unable to play my harp!

⁶ I hope that I will not be able to sing again

if I forget about Jerusalem,

if I do not consider that Jerusalem causes me to be more joyful than anything else does.

⁷ Yahweh, punish the people of the Edom people group

for what they did on the day that the army of Babylon captured Jerusalem.

Do not forget that they said,

“Tear down all the buildings! Destroy them completely! Leave only the foundations!”

⁸ You people of Babylon, you will certainly be destroyed!

How fortunate are those who punish you for what you did to us;

⁹ How fortunate are those who take your babies

and smash them to pieces on the rocks.

Psalm 138

¹ Yahweh, I thank you with all my inner being.

I sing to praise you, even though many people worship idols.

² When I look toward your sacred temple, I bow down

and thank you because you faithfully love us and do all that you have promised.

You have given cause for people everywhere to honor you and what you have said more than anything else.

³ When I called out to you, you answered me;

you enabled me to be strong and brave.

⁴ Yahweh, someday all the kings of this earth will praise you

because they will have heard what you have said.

⁵ They will sing about what you have done;

they will sing and say that you are very great.

⁶ Yahweh, you are supreme,

but you take care of people who are considered to be unimportant.

However, you do not show yourself to proud people as faithful.

⁷ When I am in the middle of many troubles,

you save me.

With your hand you rescue me from my enemies who are angry at me.

⁸ Yahweh, you will do for me everything that you promised;

you faithfully love us forever.

Finish what you started to do for us, your Israelite people!

Psalm 139

¹ Yahweh, you have examined what is in my inner being,

and you know everything about me.

² You know when I sit down and when I stand up.

Even though you are far away from me, you know what I am thinking.

³ From the time that I rise in the morning until I lie down to sleep at night,

you know everything that I do.

⁴ Yahweh, even before I say anything,

you know everything that I am going to say!

⁵ You protect me on all sides;

you put your hand on me to protect me with your power.

⁶ I am not able to understand that you know everything about me.

That is too hard for me to really understand.

⁷ Where could I go to escape from your Spirit?

Where could I go to get away from you?

⁸ If I go up to heaven, you will be there.

If I lie down in the place where the dead people are, you will be there.

⁹ If the sun could carry me across the sky,

if I flew west and made a place to live on an island in the ocean,

¹⁰ you would be there also to lead me by your hand,

and you would help me.

¹¹ I could wish for the darkness to hide me,

or I could wish for the light around me to become darkness.

¹² But even if that happened, you would still see me.

For you the night is as bright as the daytime,

because daylight and darkness are no different to you.

¹³ You created all the parts of my body;

you put the parts of my body together when I was still in my mother's womb.

¹⁴ I praise you because you made my body very awesomely and wonderfully.

Everything that you do is amazing!

I certainly know that very well.

¹⁵ When my body was being formed,

while it was being put together where
no one else could see it,

you saw it!

¹⁶ You saw me before I was born.

You wrote in your book the number
of days that you had decided that I would
live.

You did that before any of those days
had even started!

¹⁷ God, what you think about me is very
valuable.

There are a huge amount of things
that you think about.

¹⁸ If I could count them, I would see
that they are more than the grains of sand
at the seashore.

When I awake, I am still with you.

¹⁹ God, I wish that you would kill the
wicked people!

I wish that violent men would all leave
me.

²⁰ They say wicked things about you;
they slander your name.

²¹ Yahweh, I certainly hate those who
hate you!

I despise those who rebel against you.

²² I hate them completely,
and I consider that they are my ene-
mies.

²³ God, search my inner being;
find out what I am thinking!

²⁴ Find out whether there is anything
evil in my inner being,

and lead me along the road that leads
to my being with you forever.

Psalm 140

¹ Yahweh, rescue me from being at-
tacked by evil men;

even more, keep me safe from being
attacked by violent people.

² They are always planning to do evil
things,

and they are always encouraging peo-
ple to start quarrels.

³ By what they say, they injure people
as poisonous snakes do.

⁴ Yahweh, protect me from the power
of wicked people.

Keep me safe from violent men who
plan to ruin me.

⁵ It is as though proud people have set
a trap for me;

it is as though they have spread their
nets to catch me;

it is as though they have put these
things along the road to catch me.

⁶ I say to you, "Yahweh, you are my God.

Listen to me while I cry out to you to
help me."

⁷ Yahweh, my Lord, you are the one who
strongly defends me;

you have protected me during bat-
tles as though you had put a helmet on my
head.

⁸ Yahweh, do not give to wicked people
the things that they desire,

and do not allow them to do the evil
things that they plan to do.

⁹ Do not allow my enemies to become
proud;

cause the evil things that they say they
will do to me to happen to them instead.

¹⁰ Cause burning coals to fall on their heads!

Cause them to be thrown into deep pits from which they cannot climb out!

¹¹ Do not allow those who slander others to succeed;

cause evil things to happen to violent men and destroy them!

¹² Yahweh, I know that you will defend those who are oppressed,

and that you will do what is just.

¹³ Righteous people will surely thank you,

and they will live in your presence.

Psalm 141

¹ Yahweh, I call out to you;

please help me quickly!

Listen to me when I am calling to you.

² Accept my prayer as though it were incense being burned as an offering to you.

Accept me while I lift up my hands to pray to you,

just as you accept sacrifices that are offered to you in the evening.

³ Yahweh, do not allow me to say things that are wrong;

guard what I say as a sentry guards a door.

⁴ Prevent me from wanting to do anything that is wrong

and from joining with wicked men when they want to do evil deeds.

Do not even allow me to share in eating delightful food with them!

⁵ It is all right if righteous people strike me or rebuke me

because they are trying to act kindly toward me to teach me to do what is right;

if they do that, it will be as if someone honored me by anointing my head with olive oil;

but I am always praying that you will punish the wicked because of the wicked deeds that they do.

⁶ When their rulers are thrown down from the top of rocky cliffs,

they will know that what I am saying here is good.

⁷ They will know one day that their bodies will lie scattered on the ground in the place of the dead,

just as one scatters clods of earth when he plows a field.

⁸ But Yahweh God, I continue to request that you help me.

I ask you to protect me;

do not allow me to die now!

⁹ It is as though people have set traps for me;

protect me from falling into those traps.

It is as though they have spread nets to catch me;

keep me from being caught in those nets.

¹⁰ I wish that wicked people may fall into the traps they have set to catch me

while I escape from them.

Psalm 142

¹ Yahweh, I cry out to you;

I plead for you to help me.

² I am bringing to you all my problems;

I am telling you all my troubles.

³ When I am very discouraged,
you know what I should do.

Wherever I walk, it is as though my enemies have hidden traps for me to fall into.

⁴ I look around,
but there is no one who sees me,
no one who will protect me,
and no one who cares about what happens to me.

⁵ So Yahweh, I cry out to you to help me;
you are the one who protects me;
you are all that I need while I am alive.

⁶ Listen to me while I cry out to you for help
because I am very distressed.

Rescue me
because those who make me suffer
are very strong;
I cannot escape from them.

⁷ Free me from my troubles
so that I may thank you.

If you do that, when I am with others
who live rightly,

I will praise you for having been very
good to me.

Psalm 143

¹ Yahweh, hear me while I pray to you!
Because you are righteous
and because you faithfully do what
you have promised,

listen to what I am pleading for you
to do for me.

² I am one who worships you;
do not judge me

because you do not consider anyone
to be completely innocent.

³ My enemies have pursued me;
they have completely defeated me.

It is as though they have put me in a
dark prison

where I have nothing good to hope for.

⁴ So I am very discouraged in my inner
being;

I am very dismayed.

⁵ I remember what has happened previously;

I meditate on all the things that you
have done;

I consider all the great deeds that you
have performed.

⁶ I lift up my hands to you while I pray;

I want very much to be with you as
much as I would thirst for water in a vast
wilderness.

⁷ Yahweh, I am very discouraged,
so please answer me right now!

Do not keep away from me

because if you do that, I will soon
be among those who descend to where the
dead people are.

⁸ Every morning cause me to remember
that you faithfully love me

because I trust in you.

I pray to you;

show me the things that I should do.

⁹ Yahweh, I have gone to you for you to
protect me,

so rescue me from my enemies.

¹⁰ You are my God;

teach me to do what you want me to
do.

I want your good Spirit to show me the right things to do.

¹¹ Yahweh, restore me when I am close to dying as you promised to do

because you are righteous!

¹² I am one who serves you;

so because you faithfully love me as you promised to do,

kill my enemies

and get rid of all those who oppress me.

Psalm 144

¹ I praise Yahweh, who is like a huge rock on which I am safe!

He trains my hands so that I can use them to fight battles;

he trains my fingers so that I can shoot arrows in a war.

² He is the one who protects me as he promised;

he is like a fortress in which I am safe,

he protects me as shields protect soldiers,

and he gives me refuge.

He defeats other nations and then puts them under my power.

³ Yahweh, we people are so insignificant! Why do you notice us?

It is amazing to me that you pay attention to humans.

⁴ The time that we live is as short as a puff of wind;

our time to live disappears as a shadow does.

⁵ Yahweh, tear open the sky and come down!

Touch the mountains so that smoke may pour out from them!

⁶ Cause lightning to flash with the result that your enemies will run away!

Shoot your arrows at them and cause them to run away in panic.

⁷ It is as though my enemies are like a flood around me;

reach your hand down from heaven and rescue me from them.

They are men from foreign countries

⁸ who always tell lies.

Even when they swear to tell the truth, they tell lies.

⁹ God, I will sing a new song to you,

and I will play my ten-stringed harp while I sing to you.

¹⁰ You enable kings to defeat their enemies;

you rescue those who serve you as I did.

¹¹ So I ask you to save me from being killed by the swords that those evil people carry.

Rescue me from the power of those men from foreign countries

who always tell lies.

Even when they swear to tell the truth, they tell lies.

¹² I wish that our sons may all grow to full adulthood;

I wish that our daughters may grow up to be as straight and tall

as the pillars that stand in the corners of palaces.

¹³ I wish that our barns may be full of many different crops.

I wish that the sheep in our fields may give birth to tens of thousands of baby lambs.

¹⁴ I wish that our cattle may give birth to many calves

without having any miscarriages or deaths when they are born.

I wish that there may not be any time when the people in our streets cry out in distress

because foreign armies are invading.

¹⁵ If good things like that happen to a nation,

the people will be very fortunate.

How fortunate are those who worship Yahweh as God!

Psalm 145

¹ My God and King, I will proclaim that you are very great;

I will praise you now and forever.

² Every day I will praise you;

Yes, I will praise you forever.

³ Yahweh, you are great, and you ought to be praised very much;

we cannot fully realize how great you are.

⁴ Parents will tell their children the things that you have done;

they will tell their children about your mighty deeds.

⁵ I will think about how you are very glorious and majestic,

and I will meditate on all your wonderful deeds.

⁶ People will speak about your powerful and awesome deeds,

and I will proclaim that you are very great.

⁷ People will remember and proclaim that you are very good to us,

and they will sing joyfully that you always act justly.

⁸ Yahweh, you act kindly and mercifully toward us;

you do not quickly become angry;

you faithfully love us very much as you have promised to do.

⁹ Yahweh, you are good to everyone,

and you act mercifully to everything that you have made.

¹⁰ Yahweh, all the creatures that you made will thank you,

and all your people will praise you.

¹¹ They will tell others that you rule very gloriously as our king

and that you are very powerful.

¹² They will do that so that everyone will know about your powerful deeds

and that you rule over us gloriously.

¹³ You will never stop being king;

you will rule throughout all generations.

¹⁴ Yahweh, you help all those who are discouraged,

and you lift up all those who have lost hope.

¹⁵ All of the creatures that you made expect that you will provide food for them,

and you give them food when they need it.

¹⁶ You give food to all living creatures generously,

and you cause them to be satisfied.

¹⁷ Everything that Yahweh does, he does justly;

all that he does, he does mercifully.

¹⁸ Yahweh comes near to all those who call out to him,

to those who call to him sincerely.

¹⁹ To all those who have an awesome respect for him he gives what they need.

He hears them when they cry out to him and saves them.

²⁰ Yahweh protects all those who love him,

but he will get rid of all the wicked people.

²¹ I will always praise Yahweh;

I wish that all people everywhere may praise him forever, for he does everything perfectly.

Psalm 146

¹ Praise Yahweh.

With my whole inner being I will praise Yahweh.

² I will praise Yahweh as long as I am alive;

I will sing to praise my God all the rest of my life.

³ You people, do not trust in your leaders;

do not trust humans because they cannot save.

⁴ When they die, their corpses decay and become soil again.

After they die, they can no longer do the things that they planned to do.

⁵ But how fortunate are those whom God helps, the God whom Jacob worshiped.

These are the people who confidently expect Yahweh, their God, to help them.

⁶ He is the one who created the heavens and the earth,

the oceans and all the creatures that are in them.

He always does what he has promised to do.

⁷ He decides matters fairly for those who are treated unfairly,

and he provides food for those who are hungry.

He frees those who are in prison.

⁸ Yahweh enables those who are blind to see again.

He lifts up those who have fallen down.

He loves the righteous people.

⁹ Yahweh takes care of those from other countries who live in our land,

and he helps widows and orphans.

But he stops wicked people from what they are doing.

¹⁰ Yahweh will continue to be our king forever;

you people of Israel, your God will rule forever!

Praise Yahweh!

Psalm 147

¹ Praise Yahweh!

It is good to sing praises to our God.

It is a delightful thing to do and the right thing to do.

² Jerusalem was destroyed, but Yahweh is enabling us to build Jerusalem again.

He is bringing back the people who were taken to other lands.

³ He enables those who were very discouraged to be encouraged again;

it is as though they have wounds and he bandages them.

⁴ He has determined how many stars there will be

and gives names to all of them.

⁵ Yahweh is great and very powerful, and no one can measure how much he understands.

⁶ Yahweh lifts up those who have been oppressed,

and he throws the wicked down to the ground.

⁷ Thank Yahweh while you are singing to him to praise him;

on the harps, play music to our God.

⁸ He covers the sky with clouds, and then he sends rain to the earth and causes grass to grow on the hills.

⁹ He gives to animals the food that they need;

he gives food to young crows when they cry out because they are hungry.

¹⁰ He is not impressed with strong horses

or with men who can run fast.

¹¹ Instead, what pleases him are those who have an awesome respect for him,

those who confidently expect him to continue to love them as he promised to do.

¹² You people of Jerusalem, praise Yahweh!

Praise your God!

¹³ He guards your city by keeping its gates strong.

He blesses the people who live there.

¹⁴ He causes your people to become wealthy.

He gives you plenty of very good wheat to eat.

¹⁵ He commands things to happen throughout the earth;

his words quickly reach the place to which he sends them.

¹⁶ He sends snow to cover the ground like a white wool blanket,

and he scatters frost on the ground as wind scatters ashes.

¹⁷ He sends hail down like pebbles;

when that happens, it is very difficult to endure because the air becomes very cold.

¹⁸ But he commands the wind to blow, and it blows.

Then the hail melts and the water flows into the streams.

¹⁹ He sends his message to the descendants of Jacob;

he tells to his Israelite people the things that he has decreed and what he has decided.

²⁰ He has not done that for any other nation;

the other nations do not know his laws.

Praise Yahweh!

Psalm 148

¹ Praise Yahweh!

Praise him, you angels who are in the heavens;

praise him, you angels up in the sky!

² All you angels who belong to him, praise him!

All you who are in the armies of Yahweh, praise him!

³ Sun and moon, you also must praise him!

You shining stars, you praise him!

⁴ You highest heavens, praise him!

You waters that are high above the sky, praise him!

⁵ I want all of these to praise Yahweh because by commanding that they exist, he created them.

⁶ He set them in place; he commanded that they should be there forever.

They cannot disobey that command!

⁷ Everything on the earth, praise Yahweh!

You huge creatures and everything else that is deep in the ocean,

⁸ fire and hail, snow and frost,

and strong winds that obey what he commands,

I tell all of you to praise Yahweh!

⁹ Hills and mountains,

fruit trees and cedar trees,

¹⁰ all the wild animals and all tame animals,

reptiles and other things that creep on the ground,

and all the birds, I tell all of you to praise Yahweh!

¹¹ You kings on this earth and all the people that you rule,

you princes and all other rulers,

¹² you young men and young women,

you old people and children, everyone, praise Yahweh!

¹³ I want them all to praise Yahweh because he is greater than anyone else.

His power controls everything on the earth and in the heavens.

¹⁴ He caused us, his people, to be strong so that we Israelite people who are very precious to him

should praise him,

So praise Yahweh!

Psalm 149

¹ Praise Yahweh!

Sing a new song to Yahweh;

praise him whenever his faithful people gather together!

² You Israelite people, be glad because of what God, who created you, has done for you!

You people of Jerusalem, rejoice because of what God, your king, has done for you!

³ Praise Yahweh by dancing, by beating tambourines,

and by playing harps to praise him!

⁴ Yahweh is pleased with his people;

he honors humble people by helping them to defeat their enemies.

⁵ Because they have won battles, God's people should rejoice

and sing joyfully all during the night!

⁶ They should shout loudly to praise God;

but they should also hold sharp swords in their hands,

⁷ ready to use them to defeat the soldiers of nations that do not worship God

and to punish the people of those nations.

⁸ They will fasten their kings and other leaders with iron chains.

⁹ They will judge and punish the people of those nations as God wrote should be done.

Everyone else will honor God's faithful people for doing that!

Praise Yahweh!

Psalm 150

¹ Praise Yahweh!

Praise God in his temple!

Praise him who is in his fortress in heaven!

² Praise him for the mighty deeds that he has performed;

praise him because he is very great!

³ Praise him by blowing trumpets loudly;

praise him by playing harps and small stringed instruments!

⁴ Praise him by beating drums and by dancing.

Praise him by playing stringed instruments and by playing flutes!

⁵ Praise him by clashing cymbals;

praise him by clashing very loud cymbals!

⁶ I want all living creatures to praise Yahweh!

Praise Yahweh!

PROVERBS

Chapter 1

¹ These are the sayings that compare one example with another, to teach moral lessons and to make people wise, from Solomon the king of Israel, who was son of David.

² The purpose of these sayings is to teach the meaning of wisdom

and give examples of moral instruction, so wise teaching can guide you.

³ These sayings offer correction so you may live by wisdom,

by the measures of what is right, what is just, and what is fair.

⁴ They give wise teaching to those who have no experience and to instruct those who do not know how to live a moral life,

and to give the young the knowledge they need and to teach them the understanding they do not have—

⁵ so the wise may listen to these sayings and increase in their learning,

and those who already have insight will gain more ways to live according to the lessons of wisdom.

⁶ They seek to understand the lessons of the proverbs and the meaning of the parables.

These are the words of the wise and their difficult riddles.

⁷ You must begin your search for knowledge by honoring Yahweh and respecting him,

a fool who dishonors himself hates wisdom and fights against the one who corrects him.

⁸ My son, listen when your father teaches you

and do not disobey the rules your mother set down.

⁹ Their teaching is a wreath upon your head,

and beautiful necklaces around your neck,

they are priceless gifts from your parents.

¹⁰ My son, as sinners try to draw you into their sin with smooth talk and flattery,

do not listen to what they say and do not follow them.

¹¹ They may say, "Come with us! Join us!

We will hide in wait and we will take the life of one who passes by.

We will hide ourselves and we will rise up and attack a person who has done us no wrong—that will be our sport.

¹² Like the grave has power to take even a healthy person and drag them to the place of the dead, we will take their life from them.

We will make them like those who fall into the place where there is no hope of escape.

¹³ We will find many valuable and expensive items,

and we will fill our houses with what we stole from them!

¹⁴ So, come, be part of our team!

We will split into equal shares, and give to each member of our team, from all the things we stole."

¹⁵ My son, do not walk that road with them!

Do not put your foot down on the same path on which they walk!

¹⁶ They run to the places where they do terrible things,

They hurry so they can commit murder.

¹⁷ It is useless to put out a net to trap a bird

while the bird is watching you.

¹⁸ These men make plans that turn around and kill them.

They set a trap and the trap catches them.

¹⁹ These are the ways of all who gain their riches through theft and deceit;

the things they stole destroy the lives of the thieves who cling to them.

²⁰ Wisdom is like a woman who cries out in the streets.

Wisdom calls out to people in the plazas.

²¹ At the intersection of busy streets she cries out

and at the entrance of city gates.

²² She cries, "How long will you who have not been taught, will you love being enticed to do what will harm you?

How long will you who think you know more than the wise, have so much joy in the little you know?

How long will you fools refuse to learn?

²³ If you pay attention to me when I correct you,

I will tell you all I am thinking.

I will help you understand what I am saying to you.

²⁴ But when I called to you, you refused to listen.

I beckoned you and stretched out my hands to you,

but no one paid any attention.

²⁵ You refused to listen to my advice and you did not listen when I corrected you.

²⁶ I will laugh at you, when you are experiencing troubles,

when you are terribly afraid,

I will have contempt for you and not compassion.

²⁷ When troubles strike you like a powerful storm,

and disasters hit you like a violent wind,

when you experience distress and you go through difficulties,

I will have contempt for you.

²⁸ When people call to me to help them, but I will not answer them.

They will be desperate for my help, and search everywhere for me,

but they will not find me.

²⁹ They reject what I say and they hate what I know,

and they made a choice not to show respect to Yahweh.

³⁰ They would not obey what I told them to do,

and they did not pay attention when I tried to correct them.

³¹ So they will experience the consequences of their actions

when they carry out their evil plans.

³² Those who have not been taught wisdom are foolish.

Fools choose to make no decision about anything, but be sure of this: Their failure to make a decision will destroy their lives.

³³ But those who pay attention to me
will live in peace and safety,

and they will rest and not be afraid
of any disaster that may come.”

Chapter 2

¹ My son, listen to what I say,
and consider my commands to be as
valuable as a treasure.

² Pay attention to wisdom
and try hard to understand what is
wise.

³ Call out to Yahweh to get insight,
plead with him to help you understand
more of what he wants you to know.

⁴ Search eagerly for wisdom, like you
would search for silver—

like you would search for a treasure
that someone has hidden.

⁵ If you do that, you will understand how
to give Yahweh the respect he deserves,
and you will succeed in knowing God.

⁶ Yahweh is the one who gives us wis-
dom.

He is the one who tells us things that
we need to know and understand.

⁷ He stores up good advice so he can
give it to them who honor him by the way
they live their lives.

He protects those who do with their
lives what they say with their lips.

⁸ He guards justice and works to see it
is done,

and he keeps safe those who are faith-
ful to him.

⁹ You will understand what Yahweh
sees is right and what Yahweh determines
is just to do,

and he will show you the best way to
live.

¹⁰ Wisdom will fill your life;
knowing what Yahweh wants you to
know will cause you to be joyful.

¹¹ You will learn to tell the difference
between right and wrong
and that will keep you safe.

¹² You will not do what Yahweh forbids
you to do,

and you will stay away from those who
imagine horrible things and talk about
them.

¹³ They go the wrong way,
and they walk where there is no light.

¹⁴ They are glad when they do what is
wrong,

they twist good things into bad and
enjoy doing what they know is wrong.

¹⁵ They bend the truth and live by de-
ception

and their lies hide what they have
done.

¹⁶ Wisdom will keep you safe from the
adulterous woman,

and you will not pay attention when a
strange woman invites you to be with her.

¹⁷ Those women left the husbands they
married when they were young,

they forgot the promise they made to
God to love only the one they married.

¹⁸ Those who enter her house are taken
to their death,

because the way to her house takes
them where dead people are buried.

¹⁹ All who go to her to sleep with her
have no way to get out of her house,

they will be so lost they will never
find the way back to life.

²⁰ You must live your life in the same way that good men are living.

You should do the same things as those who do what is right.

²¹ Those who do what is right will receive the land as a gift from Yahweh,

and only those who do what they have promised will stay in the land for a long time.

²² Those who do bad things will have no claim to this land,

and people who take advantage of others and do not keep their word, they will never have even a small part of the land.

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Chapter 3

¹ My son, do not forget the lessons I have taught you.

Keep my commands inside of you, as important guidance for how you will live,

² because they will help you live a long life, measured in either days or years,

and they will bring you peace in addition to all the lessons they teach you.

³ Treat others with tenderness and always speak the truth to them.

Let tenderness and truth guide you in every relationship,

as if they both were on a necklace you wear, a necklace that guides you in everything you say.

⁴ Then you will experience God's delight in you,

and people will also approve of you.

⁵ Put all your trust in Yahweh,

and do not take action because you made up your mind what you should do;

⁶ but in every choice and decision, look to Yahweh,

and he will show you how you must live.

⁷ Do not think you are wise enough to direct your life,

give Yahweh the reverence he deserves,

and when evil invites you in, turn aside from it.

⁸ Giving Yahweh reverence will make your body healthy

and it will give your bones the food it needs.

⁹ When you gain money, honor Yahweh by giving him the tithe;

give him the first portion of what you received, to remember it all came from him.

¹⁰ If you honor Yahweh, your store-rooms will be so full that they will overflow,

and your barrels will be bursting with all the wine you have made.

¹¹ My son, do not hate it when Yahweh corrects you,

and when he rebukes you, do not resent it,

¹² for Yahweh only corrects those he loves,

just like parents correct their children whom they love.

¹³ Those who get wisdom are fortunate; with her they also get understanding.

¹⁴ Wisdom gives you a better profit than owning silver,

and she will give you something that is much more valuable than gold.

¹⁵ Being wise is more precious than jewels

and there is nothing you desire that is worth as much as wisdom.

¹⁶ Wisdom can make you able to live a long life, if you do what she teaches;

she is also ready to make you wealthy and to persuade other people to honor you.

¹⁷ Wisdom is known by how kind she is, and she always directs you to the place where you will find peace.

¹⁸ Wisdom is like a tree whose fruit gives life to those who hold on to it,

and Yahweh gives happiness to those who hold on to it.

¹⁹ By his wisdom Yahweh laid out the earth from the very beginning,

and by his understanding he put everything in the heavens exactly where they should be.

²⁰ The deepest part of the oceans broke open according to Yahweh's design,

and in the same way, he made the dew so it would fall from the clouds above.

²¹ My son, hold on to good sense in the decisions you make,

and do not take your eye off of them.

²² They will bring life to you,

and a sign of Yahweh's blessings on your life

that people can see by your good judgment.

²³ Your good decisions will take you where you are going in safety,

and they will keep you from taking a wrong step on the way.

²⁴ When you lie down to sleep, you will not have any fear,

and your sleep will be refreshing.

²⁵ Do not let a disaster fill you with terror,

and do not let the wicked fill you with fear when they come for you.

²⁶ Yahweh takes your side to defend you, he will not allow any trap to catch and hold you.

²⁷ Give good gifts to those who deserve it, when you can, help them.

²⁸ Do not say to your neighbor, "Come back later;

perhaps I will help you tomorrow,"

when you have the money with you and can help them now.

²⁹ Do not make plans to harm anyone you know,

especially those who live close to you and trust you.

³⁰ If a person has done nothing to you,

do not argue with him or say he has done something to you, when he has not.

³¹ Do not envy a person who does violence to others,

and do not imitate anything he does.

³² A lying person is hated by Yahweh for what he does,

but Yahweh is a close friend to anyone who lives rightly.

³³ Yahweh promises punishment to the families of those who do evil things.

but he makes happy the families of the good.

³⁴ Yahweh makes fools of those who treat others with disrespect,

but he gives his kindness to people who are humble.

³⁵ Those who are wise will be honored,

but foolish people will become well known for their dishonor.

Chapter 4

¹ Listen, children, listen to what I am teaching you.

If you pay attention, you will learn about what it means to understand.

² The lessons I give to you are good teaching, given in order.

So do not refuse to learn the lessons I teach you.

³ When I was my father's boy,
and the only child of my mother,

⁴ my father told me, "Put my words deep within you,

obey my orders to you,
and you will have life.

⁵ Hold on to what is wise and whatever helps you understand,

and do not forget the lessons I taught you and do not throw away the insights I spoke to you.

⁶ Do not run away from the lessons which the wise teach you,

because if you become wise, wisdom will keep you safe.

Love wisdom and it will guard your life.

⁷ The most important thing you can do is to study the principles of wisdom

and spend all you own so you can grow more and more in your understanding.

⁸ Wisdom is to be loved more than anything that is valuable, and she will raise you to a high position—

and wisdom will honor you when you show how much you love it.

⁹ When you have attained wisdom, it will be like a beautiful wreath of honor on your head;

she will give you a beautiful crown."

¹⁰ Hear, my son, listen and understand what I say to you—

do this, and you will live a long life.

¹¹ I directed you in the way you should walk and to use the wisdom you were taught;

I led you by the hand down the roads, roads that are the right way for you to go.

¹² When you live, you do not have anyone to blame; if you live wisely,

when you use all your effort, you will succeed .

¹³ Remember the lessons that discipline taught you,

and do not let them go.

Guard them; for you live your life by them.

¹⁴ Do not do what wicked people do, nor be with them;

do not be with people who do evil things.

¹⁵ Stay far from those ways;

turn another way and go on another road.

¹⁶ Evil people cannot rest until they have done something that Yahweh said they must not do.

They will not rest until they force someone to fall, someone who was doing well until they came along.

¹⁷ They get their strength, and they are fed by doing what is wrong;

and they are intoxicated by hurting others; they get drunk on it.

¹⁸ The path taken by those who do right grows brighter and brigher, like the rising of the sun at dawn,

and it shines brighter and brighter until it is as full as the light of day.

¹⁹ The actions of the wicked are like the darkness—

they stumble because they cannot see what makes them fall.

²⁰ My son, pay attention to what I am saying to you.

Pay attention to these lessons I am teaching you.

²¹ Keep reading them over and over,
and keep them deep within you.

²² For my words bring a message of life to those who pay attention to them,

and their message brings health to the entire body.

²³ Protect your heart with all your strength and guard what you love;

guard it, for it becomes a fountain overflowing with life.

²⁴ Make it your aim to keep away from you any lying speech,

and put any deceptive talk far away.

²⁵ Look straight ahead because you are focused on what is good and right,

and do not turn aside to the right or to the left.

²⁶ Take care about where you will go, and take care to be sure that the way is safe;

then you will know what to expect along the way.

²⁷ Do not leave the straight road by turning to the left or to the right,

and do not follow the way that leads to evil.

Chapter 5

¹ My son, learn the lessons I teach you about wisdom.

I understand much about this, so listen very carefully to what I tell you.

² If you do that, you will learn the difference between what is important and what is not,

and you will not mix true knowledge with mistakes when you speak.

³ The woman who desires to commit adultery speaks with words that are sweet,

and her kisses are smoother than oil,

⁴ but in the end, she is so bitter you can taste it,

and she cuts you like a sharp sword.

⁵ She walks down to the place of death;

if you follow her, she will lead you all the way to the grave.

⁶ She does not want to take the path that will let her live for a long time.

She goes here and there, but where she is going she does not know.

⁷ So now, my sons, pay attention to what I say,

and do not forget or disobey the instruction I am giving you.

⁸ Stay far away from the immoral woman;

do not go near the door of her house.

⁹ If you go to her you will lose the respect of others,

and you give your life to someone who will not have mercy on you.

¹⁰ It may be that others will take all the wealth that you have earned,

and it goes into the houses of people you do not know.

¹¹ And when you are about to die,
you will groan because your flesh and
your body are wasting away.

¹² Then you will say, "I hated it when I
was punished for doing wrong;

I despised people when they told me
how to live.

¹³ I did not obey my teachers
and I paid no attention to those who
taught me.

¹⁴ I was almost destroyed by bad things
that happened to me;

and this was known to everyone who
came together to worship Yahweh."

¹⁵ Just as you drink water from your
own cistern, be faithful to your own wife.

¹⁶ You would not waste your own water
by pouring it into the street,

or let your water run into the public
places.

¹⁷ Let both your water and your wife be
for you alone to enjoy,

and not for others to share with you.

¹⁸ May your fountain be blessed;
may you be happy with the woman you
married when you were young.

¹⁹ She is as graceful as a loving deer and
as graceful as a young doe.

Let her breasts always satisfy your
longings,

so you are forever enraptured with
her love.

²⁰ My son, why should you be caught up
in the arms of an adulteress?

Why should you caress the breasts of
another man's wife?

²¹ Yahweh sees everything we do; nothing
is hidden from him.

He sees every path we take; he knows
everywhere we go.

²² An evil person's sinful desires take
hold of him;

his sins are like a trap that catches
him.

²³ An evil man will die because he could
not say, "No" to his desires;

he gets lost because his foolishness
has no limits.

Chapter 6

¹ My son, if you provide a guarantee for
a neighbor who takes out a loan,

or if you give the promise that you
will pay for a loan of a person you do not
know,

² you laid a trap for yourself by making
the promise,

and you have been caught by agreeing
to a contract for someone you did not
know.

³ Do this, my son, and deliver yourself
from this difficulty:

humbly go to your neighbor and
beg him to cancel the agreement that you
made.

⁴ Do not sleep,

and do not rest until you go and talk
with him.

⁵ Save yourself,

like a deer that escapes from the
hunter;

or like a bird that flies away from the
hand of one who hunts for birds.

⁶ You lazy person, learn something from watching the ants.

Become wise and watch what they do.

⁷ The ant has no commander, officer, or ruler telling him what to do,

⁸ but during the summer it works hard, gathering and storing food to eat during the winter.

⁹ But you lazy person, how long will you continue to sleep ?

When will you rise and go to work?

¹⁰ You sleep a for a little time, and then you say, "A little more sleep, a little more resting in bed,

a little more folding of the hands to take a nap."

¹¹ Suddenly poverty will take over your life like a thief who steals everything from you.

¹² A worthless person — a person who does bad to others—he lives by the lies he speaks to others.

¹³ They tell tales by winking their eyes and they give signals by moving their feet, and they make plans by pointing with their fingers.

¹⁴ The one who does bad things lays out plans within himself;

he stirs up constant conflict wherever he goes.

¹⁵ His own disaster will overtake him in a second;

he will be crushed to the point that he cannot be healed.

¹⁶ There are six, even seven, things that Yahweh hates.

¹⁷ Yahweh hates the eyes of the proud, the tongue that tells lies,

the hands that shed the blood of the innocent, ¹⁸ a heart that plots and makes plans to do evil things to others,

¹⁹ the witness who breathes out lies when he gives testimony,

and the one who causes strife between members of the same family.

²⁰ My son, obey the command of your father,

and do not walk away from what your mother taught you.

²¹ Keep these lessons and tie them close inside as a part of yourself;

tie them around your neck, to remind you how important they are to you.

²² When you walk, those lessons will guide you.

When you sleep, they will watch over you and protect you.

When you wake up in the morning, they will teach you.

²³ These commands are like a lamp for you, and what we teach you is like a light to guide you.

When people correct you, this is to continually teach you the right way to live.

²⁴ These lessons keep you from the immoral woman,

they tell you about her enticing words and warn you to be on guard.

²⁵ Do not throw your desires after such a woman, nor should you desire her beauty;

do not let her capture you by the way she looks at you.

²⁶ Sleeping with a prostitute may cost you only the price of a loaf of bread,

but if you sleep with another man's wife, it may cost you your life.

²⁷ Can you carry hot coals in your pockets and not be burned?

²⁸ Can you walk on burning coals and not scorch your feet?

²⁹ So is anyone who sleeps with another man's wife—he will suffer for doing that.

It is certain he will be severely punished.

³⁰ We do not despise a thief if he steals some food because he is very hungry.

³¹ But if he steals something and then is caught by others,

he will have to pay back seven times as much as he stole,

even if he must sell everything that is in his house to get enough money to repay what he stole.

³² But a man who commits adultery is has no good judgment

because he is destroying his own self.

³³ Wounds and shame will come to him;

he will never forget how others disgraced him for his deed.

³⁴ Because that woman's husband will be jealous, he will become furious,

and when he gets revenge, he will not act mercifully toward that man.

³⁵ And he will not accept any bribe to stop him.

³ Write down my commands and tie them to your fingers to remind yourself of them;

let it be as if you had written them in your inner self.

⁴ Think of wisdom as if it were a woman, one of your own sisters, whom you love;

think of understanding as if it were a person, one of your own family, to whom you are loyal.

⁵ If you do this, you will be able to stay away from women whom you must not be with,

random women who say nice things to you so that you will sin with them.

⁶ Standing in my house, I looked out of a window,

through the wooden shade,

⁷ and I saw some young men who had not yet learned how to live wisely.

I especially saw a young man there who had no good judgment.

⁸ He walked down the street near the house on the corner of the road,

and he walked toward the house of the adulteress.

⁹ It was the time of day when night and darkness were coming near.

¹⁰ That was where the woman who was seeking an affair met the young man, and she greeted him.

She was dressed as prostitutes dress, with seductive and enticing clothes, and she had secret plans.

¹¹ She was loud and wayward, attracting attention.

She did not stay in her own home.

¹² She searched for a man as she walked along the streets one day; on another day

Chapter 7

¹ My son, obey the words I say to you; remember all my orders.

² If you obey my commands, you will live.

Consider my commands to be the most precious thing you possess, and obey them.

she stood in the market place to find a man.

At any street corner she waited for someone who would commit sin with her.

¹³ When she saw the young man, she firmly took hold of him, and then she kissed him.

Without any shame and with great boldness, she said,

¹⁴ "Today I have meat in my house, because I made a sacrifice in the temple to promise friendship with Yahweh.

In this way I kept my vows to Yahweh,

¹⁵ and now I have come out here to meet you.

I was looking for you, and now I have found you!

¹⁶ I have put on my bed sheets—the finest colored linen fabrics from Egypt.

¹⁷ I have sprinkled perfumes on my bed—

myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.

¹⁸ Come! Let us make love all night, until the morning comes.

Let us enjoy ourselves with many ways of making love, as much as we want.

¹⁹ My husband is not at home;

he has gone away on a long journey.

²⁰ He filled a bag with money and took it with him;

he will not come back until the middle of the month."

²¹ So she she convinced the young man with her persuasive words;

because of her smooth and convincing talk, he gave in to what she wanted to do.

²² He suddenly decided to follow her inside.

He followed her like an ox going to the place where its owner will slaughter it,

or like a deer

²³ caught in a trap, where the hunter kills it by shooting an arrow into its inner parts.

He was like a bird that flies into a trap without knowing that it will die there.

²⁴ My sons, listen to me,

and pay careful attention to what I say to you.

²⁵ You must resist her from within you, from deep inside. Do not decide to do what you want and follow her.

You must decide that you will never follow her where she goes.

²⁶ She has caused many men to be ruined;

truly, no one can count the men she destroyed—they are too many to count.

²⁷ The road to her house is the road to the grave;

it goes down to the place where the dead are kept.

Chapter 8

¹ Listen to Wisdom calling; her voice sounds like that of a woman who shouting in the public square.

Understanding raises her voice; she sounds like a woman who calls out to be heard.

² On the top of the hills and where the roads come together,

there Wisdom stands.

³ Wisdom also stands at the gates at the entrance to the city, and she calls out with a loud voice. Wisdom says:

⁴ "I am calling out to everyone;
I am shouting to all people!

⁵ You people who have no training, you must be taught how to live;

you must learn so that you can understand completely.

⁶ Listen to me, because I will explain to you some excellent things.

I can teach you about what is right—

⁷ for I speak what is true;

I detest evil things so much, I hate to even speak about them.

⁸ Everything that I say is right;

I do not say anything that changes the meaning of what is good or that leads people away from it.

⁹ My words give good advice to the one who understands the meaning of what I say;

those who have learned to tell good from evil will easily know that my words are right.

¹⁰ Choose what I teach you,

instead of trying to get much silver;

and choose the knowledge I will show you, for it is more valuable than gold.

¹¹ For I, Wisdom, am more precious than jewels;

nothing is as valuable for you as I am.

¹² I, Wisdom, live with Common Sense; we are like two people living in the same house.

I know many things, and I act carefully.

¹³ Everyone who honors Yahweh hates what is evil.

I am Wisdom, and I hate it when people are proud, when they think they are more important than others.

I hate it when people act in evil ways, and when they tell lies.

¹⁴ I give good advice and I have the best wisdom;

I have true understanding about the nature of things, and I have great strength.

¹⁵ When kings are wise, they rule well; and when rulers are wise, they make laws that are just.

¹⁶ By me princes rule, noblemen, and all who govern with justice.

¹⁷ I am Wisdom, and I love all who love me;

those who work hard to find me will find me.

¹⁸ These people will have lasting riches, and they will live right,

because I have riches and honor with me.

¹⁹ What I can give people is more valuable than fine gold and the best silver.

²⁰ I always do what is right and just.

²¹ I give wealth to those who love me, and I fill up their treasuries.

²² Yahweh created me, Wisdom; he made me when he began to create the world;

I was the first thing he created in the beginning.

²³ He made me long ago—at the very first, at the beginning of the earth.

²⁴ I was born before the oceans were created,

when there were no springs from which water flowed.

²⁵ I was born before the hills and mountains were set in place.

²⁶ I am Wisdom and I was born before Yahweh made the earth,

before he made the tiny particles of dust in the earth, I was there.

²⁷ I was there when Yahweh put the heavens where they are,

on the day when he marked on the ocean's surface how far a person at sea can see in every direction.

²⁸ I was there when Yahweh put the clouds above the earth,

and when he made the springs at the bottom of the sea to give water to the oceans.

²⁹ I was there when he fixed a boundary for the seas,

so that the water in the seas would not go past those boundaries,

and when he marked out the limits of the dry land.

³⁰ I was at Yahweh's side as his master craftsman;

I made him happy every day, and I always rejoiced when I was with him.

³¹ I was delighted with the whole world he created;

I was happy with the people he brought into existence, too.

³² So, you who are my children, listen to me.

How fortunate are those who live as I live.

³³ Listen to what I teach you and you will become wise.

Do not reject what I have taught you.

³⁴ How fortunate are those who listen to me,

those who wait for me outside my house every day.

³⁵ Those who find me will find life, and Yahweh will be pleased with them.

³⁶ But those who do not find me, they hurt themselves.

All those who hate me love death."

Chapter 9

¹ Wisdom builds her own house, just like a woman who has built her home;

she made seven pillars to support the roof of her house.

² She prepared a meal and set her table;

she prepared the animals and cooked them to serve for the dinner,

and she made the wine ready for her guests.

³ Like a woman who sends out her maids to give the invitations to her guests, Wisdom calls out from the highest place in the city for all to hear, and she says:

⁴ "If you are still immature, come here,"

and she gives the invitation to those who have no good judgment.

⁵ "Come and eat the food that I have prepared," she says,

"and drink the good wine that I have mixed.

⁶ Leave your untrained ways behind you, and live,

and I will show you how to walk on the road that will give you understanding.

⁷ If you rebuke someone who says insulting things about other people, he will insult you, too.

If you offer correction to an evil person, he will hurt you.

⁸ A person who insults others will hate you if you tell him to stop.

But if you rebuke a wise person, he will become your friend.

⁹ If you give instruction to a wise person, he will become even more wise.

And if you teach a person who does what is right, he will learn even more.

¹⁰ The first step in getting wisdom is to give Yahweh the respect he deserves,

and knowing Yahweh, the Holy One, is the where understanding comes from.

¹¹ If you become wise, your days will be filled full,

and you will add years to your life.

¹² If you become wise, you will gain many benefits from it;

if you ridicule other people, you will suffer by yourself.”

¹³ A foolish woman talks loudly;

she is untaught in the subjects of wisdom and she knows very little.

¹⁴ She sits at the door of her house

or on the highest place in the town,

¹⁵ and she calls out to the men who are passing by,

to those walking down the road, concerned only about where they are going.

¹⁶ “Any of you who have no experience, come here,”

she says to those who have no good judgment.

¹⁷ “If you sleep with me, it will as sweet as drinking water that you have stolen,

or eating delicious food all by yourself.”

¹⁸ Any man who accepts her invitation does not know that the dead are in her home,

that those who accepted her invitation and went into her house are now in the world of the dead.

Chapter 10

¹ These are the proverbs of Solomon:

A child who lives according to wisdom makes his father happy;

but if a child does foolish things, he causes his mother to be very sad.

² Riches that you got by being dishonest will not have any value;

but when you do what is right, you will be protected from death.

³ Yahweh does not allow people who do right to starve,

but he will makes it impossible for wicked people to get what they want.

⁴ A lazy person who will not work becomes poor;

those who work hard become rich.

⁵ He is wise who harvests the crops when they are ready to be gathered;

but it would be shameful for him to sleep while others are harvesting the crop.

⁶ Those who do right will receive many good gifts from God;

but those who do wicked things cover their violence so they cannot be seen.

⁷ When we remember those who do what is right, we get a blessing from Yahweh;

but we cannot remember the names of the wicked.

⁸ Wise people follow good instructions, but a fool who talks too much will fail.

⁹ An honest person lives his life and has nothing to hide;

but one who is dishonest—his lies will be discovered.

¹⁰ The one who winks his eye signals others to help him do something that is wrong,

and a fool will be ruined because he talks too much.

¹¹ A person who does right is like a spring that gives life-saving water;

but the wicked person hides his brutality by his words.

¹² Hatred has the power to start many arguments;

but love covers anything that may hurt us.

¹³ Those who have good sense say what is wise,

but people who do not have good judgment must be punished.

¹⁴ Wise people continue to learn all that they can,

but when foolish people speak, they will soon experience destruction.

¹⁵ The wealth that rich people have protects them like a city is protected by a strong wall around it,

but because people are poor, they have no one to help them.

¹⁶ If you do what is right, your reward will lead you to life,

but all that sinful people gain is the ability to sin even more.

¹⁷ Life can be found by the one who is trained by discipline;

but the one who will not listen to correction wanders away.

¹⁸ Those who hide their hatred of others, must lie to cover it up.

and those who repeat slander are foolish.

¹⁹ When people talk a lot, sin is sure to follow;

if you are wise, you will always be careful about what you say.

²⁰ The one who does right is like pure silver;

there is little value in the heart of the one who does wicked things.

²¹ What those who do right say benefits many,

but foolish people die because they lack good sense.

²² Yahweh gives good gifts that make some people wealthy,

and he does not make them suffer for it.

²³ Foolish people play games when they do what is wrong,

but people with understanding enjoy wisdom.

²⁴ What the wicked fear will happen to them;

those who do what is right will get what they hoped for.

²⁵ Wicked people are like the storm that comes and then it is gone.

but those who do right are like a foundation that lasts forever.

²⁶ Like vinegar in our mouths or smoke in our eyes,

that is what the lazy man is like to the one who hired him. ²⁷ If you give Yahweh the respect he deserves, you will live for a long time;

but wicked people die before they become old.

²⁸ Those who do right have hope in their joy,

but the wicked can expect their lives to be short.

²⁹ Following Yahweh brings protection to those who keep their promises;

but those who do not follow him find out he destroys those who do what is evil.

³⁰ Those who do right will never be defeated,

but wicked people will not have a home.

³¹ Wisdom is like a fruit that those who do right bear,

but Yahweh will cut out the deceitful tongue.

³² Those who do right know the words Yahweh permits them to speak,

but wicked people say what Yahweh has forbidden.

Chapter 11

¹ When people use scales that are not correct;

Yahweh is angry that they are stealing from their customers;

he is delighted with those who use correct weights on the scales.

² People who are proud live in such a way that always ends in disgrace;

people who are humble are the only ones who can learn about wisdom.

³ People who keep their promises also make choices that lead them in the right way;

those who cannot be trusted are destroyed by their own dishonesty.

⁴ Your money will not help you on the day Yahweh judges the world;

but if you do what is right, you will be kept safe from many dangers, even death.

⁵ When people are honest and good, they know where they should go and what they should do;

but those who do evil find that their wickedness will destroy them.

⁶ God rescues those who do what is right, but those who do what is evil become slaves to their desires.

⁷ When a wicked person dies, all he hoped for in the future is lost;

what he wanted to accomplish with his strength, will never happen.

⁸ The one who does what is right, Yahweh delivers from trouble;

and Yahweh gives that trouble to the wicked.

⁹ A person who has no kind of religious faith uses his words to destroy his neighbor;

but people who do right will be saved by the knowledge they have gathered.

¹⁰ When things go well for those who do what is right, those in their city are happy,

and shouts of joy are heard when wicked people die.

¹¹ When there are people in the city who please God and they give good gifts to others, the city becomes great;

but the words spoken by the wicked tear down the city.

¹² The one who treats his friend with contempt has no good judgment;

a person who has learned what is important says nothing.

¹³ Those who spread gossip tell secrets to others,

but a person you can trust will not talk about it.

¹⁴ A nation will be destroyed if it does not have leaders who guide it wisely;

but the nation will have victory when it listens to many advisors.

¹⁵ If you promise to pay off a loan that is taken by a stranger, you will lose your money.

You will be safe if you refuse to make any kind of agreement to pay someone else's debts.

¹⁶ A kindhearted woman earns respect;

but violent people take hold of riches.

¹⁷ By their kindness to others kind people give good gifts to themselves,

but one who is cruel hurts himself by his cruelty.

¹⁸ Wicked people tell lies to make more money,

but those who do what is right will be paid even more because they earned it.

¹⁹ Those who do what is right will live,

but those who do what is wrong will die.

²⁰ Yahweh hates those who take good things and they twist them and they do bad things with them,

but he is delighted with those who always do what is right.

²¹ It is certain that evil people will not escape their punishment.

and the children of those who do right will be kept safe.

²² If you see a gold ring in a pig's nose,

that is very much like a beautiful woman who does not have good sense.

²³ Those who do what is right desire things that result in good,

but the reward of the wicked is that they will experience Yahweh's wrath.

²⁴ If a person sows seed, he can expect to harvest a crop;

his few seeds will give him much more;

another person does not plant a crop, and he becomes poor.

²⁵ Those who give generously to others will prosper;

if you share your water with other people, you will have enough for yourself, too.

²⁶ People will curse the merchant who will not sell them grain,

but they praise the one who sells it.

²⁷ If you work hard and go out to find what is good, you will also find good will.

but if you look for evil, you will find it.

²⁸ Those who trust in their money will fall down,

but those who do what is right will grow like a healthy tree.

²⁹ Those who bring troubles to their families will inherit nothing,

and those who do foolish things will become the servants of those who are wise.

³⁰ Those who do what is right will be like a life giving tree,

but acts of violence take away life.

³¹ It is sure that those who do what is right will get what they truly deserve;

but even more, the person who does bad things

and the one who sins against Yahweh, will surely receive what they deserve.

Chapter 12

¹ The one who wants to learn will welcome correction.

But the one who does not want to be corrected will remain stupid.

² Yahweh approves of those who are good,

but he condemns those who make evil plans.

³ Wickedness is a bad foundation for a person's life.

People who do well are as stable as a tree with deep roots.

⁴ A good wife brings praise to her husband,

but a wife who brings shame home is like a disease that destroys his bones.

⁵ People who do the right thing make plans that are fair and just.

But advice given by wicked people are filled with lies.

⁶ What wicked people say is like setting up a secret attack while planning to commit murder;

but when those who please Yahweh speak, their words keep them out of danger.

⁷ Wicked people are put out of power, and they are gone,

but those who do what is right will have many generations and that family will continue for a long time.

⁸ A person will be praised according to how much wisdom he has;

but one who takes good things and twists them into bad will be hated.

⁹ It is better to be a humble person, just living your life as a servant to others,

than to tell others how important you are, but you have nothing to eat.

¹⁰ People who do what is right care about the feeding and health of their animals,

but even when the wicked try to do something for their animals, it becomes an act of cruelty.

¹¹ The farmer who works hard in the fields will have enough food to eat,

but those who have no good judgment take on projects that bring them nothing.

¹² Wicked people desire the things that evil people have—things they stole from others.

But people who do what is right have what they have earned; it is their reward.

¹³ An evil person is trapped by the wicked things he says,

but those who do right stay away from much trouble.

¹⁴ The good words spoken by a person fill his life with good things,

just as his hard work brings him a reward.

¹⁵ Foolish people think that what they are doing is always right;

but wise people are willing to listen to advice.

¹⁶ A foolish person quickly shows how angry he is;

but those who have good sense ignore it when someone insults them.

¹⁷ Speaking the truth is the same as saying what is right,

but a dishonest person tells lies.

¹⁸ When a person speaks without thinking, it is like they are taking stabs at you with a sword;

but what wise people say helps to heal the hurts.

¹⁹ Speaking the truth will never be out of favor,

but a lie is over in a moment.

²⁰ When evil is planned there must be lies within those who carry it out;

but those who give advice that leads to peace, those advisors will celebrate.

²¹ Bad things do not happen to those who do what is right,

but wicked people's lives are filled up with troubles.

²² Yahweh detests those who tell lies,

but he is delighted with those who live faithfully.

²³ Those with good sense do not reveal all that they know,

but foolish people shout out their foolish thinking.

²⁴ Those who are known for their hard work will gain authority over others,

but those who are lazy will be forced to work, even though they hate it.

²⁵ When a person is anxious, it is like he is carrying a heavy load,

but a good word makes him feel better.

²⁶ The one who does right will be a good guide for his friend,

but wicked people always get lost.

²⁷ Lazy people do not even cook the animal they caught,

but those who work hard will acquire wealth that is worth keeping.

²⁸ Those who walk in the right way find life

and on that road there is no death.

Chapter 13

¹ A wise child pays attention to the teaching his father gives him;

but a stubborn child refuses to listen to correction.

² Good things come as the fruit of what one says,

but the desire of the deceitful is to consume more and more violence.

³ The person who is very careful about what he says preserves his life;

the one who talks too much ruins everything.

⁴ People who are lazy are hungry for everything, but they will not get anything.

People who work hard will get more than they desired.

⁵ Anyone who does right hates it when other tell lies,

but a wicked person brings disgrace on himself.

⁶ Anyone who does right always acts in ways that are respected,

but the one who does what Yahweh has forbidden ruins his own wicked life.

⁷ Some people have many possessions, but they have nothing of value;

but other people give all they have away, and yet have the best kind of riches.

⁸ A rich person may have to use his wealth to buy back his life from a criminal who holds him as a hostage,

but a poor person does not listen even when he is threatened.

⁹ The one who does what is right shines like a light that gives joy,

but wicked people are like a lamp that will be extinguished.

¹⁰ Pride works within a person and it results in conflict and arguments,

but those who listen to good advice find the wisdom they need.

¹¹ People who think too much of themselves will spend all their money;

the one who makes his money by working with his hands will find ways to make his money grow.

¹² When hope for the future is postponed, it makes you sick—you feel you will never receive what you long for,

but if you receive what you desire, that will be like a tree that gives life.

¹³ Those who despise good advice bring the punishment for disobeying upon themselves;

the one who pays attention to the instruction will receive honor.

¹⁴ The lesson taught by the wise is like a fountain that gives life to all who drink from it,

and they inform you about all the deadly dangers around you.

¹⁵ Having a mind that understands right and wrong brings you respect,

but the one who twists good gifts for bad purposes—he never reaches his destination.

¹⁶ Those who have good sense always take action from what they know is true;

a foolish person proves his decisions are folly, and everyone sees it.

¹⁷ A wicked messenger will not deliver the message,

but bitter enemies are brought together

when the messages are delivered by a dependable messenger.

¹⁸ The one who does not learn from the lessons of discipline will be poor, and he will know shame,

but the one who takes the lessons of discipline and learns from them, honor will find him.

¹⁹ When a longing comes true,

it is sweet delight to the one with desires;

and those who are foolish continue to turn toward evil again and again.

²⁰ If you spend time with wise people, by their lives they will show you how you can be wise, as well.

²¹ Sinners run away and disasters chase after them,

but those who do what is right find the good is their reward.

²² A good person sets apart money to give his grandchildren when he dies,

but a sinful person will store up his wealth, not knowing that it will be given to the one who does right.

²³ A field owned by a poor person can produce much food,

but the poor are victims of injustice more than the rich,

and the crop is not planted.

²⁴ A parent who does not train his child in how he should live does not show him any love,

but the one who is careful to train the child in how he should live shows his great love.

²⁵ Those who do what is right eat enough food to satisfy their hunger,

but the wicked complain that they are always hungry.

Chapter 14

¹ A wise woman holds her family together,

but a foolish woman tears it apart by the foolish things she does.

² The one who honors Yahweh in the way he lives, gives to Yahweh the respect he deserves;

the dishonest person shows his disrespect, and he despises Yahweh.

³ Pride grows out of the mouth of the fool, like an offshoot from a tree;

but what wise people say preserves their lives.

⁴ Where there are no cattle feeding in the barn, the feeding trough is clean;

but if a farmer only has one ox, still he can grow a very great crop.

⁵ You can tell if a witness is reliable, if he tells the truth,

but when a witness breaths out lie after lie, he is a false witness and cannot be depended on.

⁶ One who thinks he is better than others, he may seek wisdom, but he will not find it,

but the one who has grown in knowledge can easily learn much more.

⁷ Do not stay close to a foolish person: Walk away from him.

There is no knowledge to be learned from him.

⁸ The one who has learned much knowledge applies it to his own life; that is wisdom.

The foundation of all folly is the lie.

⁹ Fools watch the guilt offering being sacrificed in the temple, and they make fun of it,

but those who please Yahweh are glad to share his favor.

¹⁰ A person keeps close inside all his bitterness and disappointment;

and no stranger will ever know all the joy it contains.

¹¹ The family of the wicked will be destroyed,

but a little tent where the upright live will grow, like a tree grows into something grand.

¹² A person sees a way, and it appears to be the right way for him to go,

but he does not know that it only leads to death.

¹³ A person can be in great pain and still be able to laugh;

a time of great joy may end in grief.

¹⁴ The faithless man will receive from Yahweh what he deserves;

but Yahweh will give a good person what is his.

¹⁵ Those who have had no instruction believe everything they are told,

but the man who has learned some knowledge thinks about what he will do.

¹⁶ A wise person sees evil and is afraid of it, and he turns away from it;

the foolish person boldly throws aside every warning.

¹⁷ Those who get angry quickly do foolish things;

people hate those who make evil plans.

¹⁸ Those who have not been instructed have foolishness handed to them;

those who have learned a little knowledge are surrounded by it.

¹⁹ Evil people will bow down before those who are good,

and the wicked people will bow down
at the gates of those who do right.

²⁰ The poor are hated even by their own
companions,

but the rich have many friends.

²¹ It is sinful to have contempt for your
neighbors;

but how fortunate are those who do
kind things for the poor.

²² Those who plot with evil plans, do
they not go astray?

But those who make plans for the
good will receive love and faithfulness.

²³ If you work hard, you will make some
money,

but where there is only talk, it leads
to poverty.

²⁴ The reward of the wise is the wealth
they have,

but the folly of fools only brings them
more foolishness.

²⁵ A witness who tells the truth, saves
the lives of the innocent;

a lying witness is filled with deceit.

²⁶ Those give Yahweh the honor he de-
serves

have much confidence in him;

giving honor to Yahweh will also pro-
tect your children.

²⁷ Giving Yahweh the honor he deserves
is like having a fountain that gives life;

so you can keep away from being
trapped by death.

²⁸ A king measures his glory by the num-
ber of the people in his kingdom,

but if the prince has no people, he is
brought to ruin.

²⁹ Those who do not quickly become
angry have much understanding;

the quick-tempered praise foolish-
ness.

³⁰ Being at peace is good for the whole
body,

but having evil within, rots the bones.

³¹ The one who oppresses a poor person
curses Yahweh who made him,

but those who show favor to a poor
person honor Yahweh.

³² The wicked person is brought down
by his evil actions,

but those who do what is right have
a safe home, even in death.

³³ Wisdom finds a place to rest in some-
one who has discernment,

but wisdom lets herself be known
even among fools.

³⁴ When a people do what is right, the
nation does well,

but sin brings disgrace upon any peo-
ple.

³⁵ A king is pleased with a servant who
does his work with good judgment,

but the king is angry with any servant
who brings shame to him.

Chapter 15

¹ A gentle answer turns away anger,
but a harsh reply stirs up anger even
more.

² When wise people speak, they give
praise to the value of knowledge;

foolish people continually say foolish
things.

³ Yahweh sees everything that is hap-
pening;

he keeps account of the evil and of
the good.

⁴ A person who can give healing with what they say is like a tree that gives life;

when someone lies to you, it can feel like they have crushed you.

⁵ A fool has contempt for his father when he disciplines him,

but the one who learns from correction has insight.

⁶ In the families of those who do right there are great treasures,

but the wealth that the wicked have gives them great troubles.

⁷ The wise scatter knowledge about like the farmer scatters his seed,

but the hearts of fools are not so generous.

⁸ Yahweh hates it when the wicked offer their sacrifices,

but when those who please him pray, he is delighted.

⁹ Yahweh hates the way the wicked live,

but he loves the one who runs after what is right.

¹⁰ Yahweh will discipline those who lose their way,

and those who hate correction will die.

¹¹ The places of death and destruction are known to Yahweh;

how much more does Yahweh know everything within the minds of the people he has made?

¹² The one who thinks he is better than anyone, he resents being corrected by anyone;

he thinks he is so smart, he will never talk with one who is wise.

¹³ When people are happy, they have smiles on their faces,

but sadness is so strong it crushes the person.

¹⁴ The longing of the one who is wise is to gain more knowledge,

but foolish people only say foolish things.

¹⁵ Every day for one who is oppressed is misery for him,

but those who have a happy heart, for them life is a never-ending party.

¹⁶ It is much better to have only a little and to give Yahweh the honor he deserves,

than to have great wealth along with much confusion.

¹⁷ It is better to have a simple meal with vegetables when there is love in the home,

than to enjoy a delicious meal served by people who hate you.

¹⁸ When a person is angry, he stirs up more arguments,

but one who does not quickly become angry, he is able to stop an argument and make peace.

¹⁹ The life of a lazy person is like someone trying to walk through a hedge of thorns,

but those who do what pleases Yahweh are like those who are walking on a level highway.

²⁰ A wise child brings happiness to his father,

but it is a foolish person who despises his mother.

²¹ Foolish people enjoy their folly;

those who have insight live a good life.

²² When there is no one giving advice, plans go wrong,

but with many advisors, they will succeed.

²³ People rejoice when they give a good answer,

and how nice is the right word spoken at the right moment.

²⁴ The path leading to life goes up, away from death;

he follows that way and turns from the place of the dead.

²⁵ Yahweh destroys the generations of proud people,

but he protects the little owned by a widow.

²⁶ Yahweh hates what wicked people are thinking about,

but when people say what is kind, they are pure.

²⁷ The thief brings many troubles to his family,

but the one who refuses to accept bribes will live.

²⁸ The people who do right think carefully before they answer;

it is like the wicked pour out of their mouths all kinds of evil when they talk.

²⁹ Yahweh is far away from wicked people,

but he listens to the prayers of those who do what is right.

³⁰ When people smile, it makes them happy,

and good news brings healing to the body.

³¹ If you pay attention when someone corrects you,

you will stay among those who are wise.

³² The one who refuses to follow discipline, despises himself;

the one who receives correction gains understanding as well.

³³ The honor that Yahweh deserves will be the lesson that will teach you wisdom,

and then humility comes before honor.

Chapter 16

¹ People make plans out of their longings deep within them,

but it is Yahweh who tells him what will happen.

² A person sees nothing wrong with what he does,

but Yahweh measures every part of what a person does according to his purposes.

³ When you work, give all your ideas and your labor to Yahweh,

and your plans will be successful.

⁴ When Yahweh made everything, he made them so they would all accomplish something for him.

He has even made the wicked for the day when there is great trouble.

⁵ Yahweh hates those whose pride comes from deep within them.

But you can be sure of this: They will still be punished for their pride.

⁶ Love and faithfulness will cover over sin and forgive sin.

When people give Yahweh the respect he deserves,

they will be able to turn away from doing what is evil.

⁷ When a person pleases Yahweh by the way he lives his life,

he even causes that person's enemies to get along with him.

⁸ It is better to have a little money and to follow what is right,

than to have a large amount of money and to live by spreading injustice.

⁹ From deep within a person come the plans he makes,

but Yahweh leads the person in each step he takes.

¹⁰ A king can speak with inspired judgment;

and when he makes a ruling, it is good and true.

¹¹ Honest scales come from Yahweh;

it is he who decided how much each unit should weigh.

¹² We should hate it when kings do wicked things,

for the throne is set on a firm foundation when the king does what is right.

¹³ A king is happy when he hears someone speaking what is right;

and he loves the one who is direct when he talks.

¹⁴ If a king becomes angry, his wrath is a danger that can kill;

so wise people will try to calm him so that he is not too angry.

¹⁵ In a king's smile there is life;

when he is happy, he is like the cloud that brings the spring rain.

¹⁶ Becoming wise is better than having gold;

getting good understanding is better than having silver.

¹⁷ The one who lives in the way that is right will turn away from doing evil;

whoever is careful about how he lives his life

will preserve his life.

¹⁸ Pride happens to someone first, and then he perishes.

If someone thinks he is better than others,

he will have a terrible fall.

¹⁹ It is better to be humble and live among the poor

than to receive a portion of what proud people took by force.

²⁰ Those who think about what they have been taught

find many good things in the lesson;

how fortunate are those who put their trust in Yahweh.

²¹ One who has wisdom deep inside him is given the title, "discerning,"

and those who speak in a way that can be understood

and can motivate their hearers, teach well.

²² When you understand, it is as if you have found a fountain of life within you;

but fools find their punishment when their foolishness comes back to them.

²³ From deep within him, the wise person speaks from the insight he has learned;

and so when he speaks he has the power to persuade others.

²⁴ Kind words are like a honeycomb;

they are sweet for us to take in,

and they give healing to our bodies.

²⁵ A person lives out his life and he thinks he is doing what is right,

but when he comes to the end of his life, all he finds is death.

²⁶ A worker's appetite drives him to work harder,

his hunger urges him to keep working.

²⁷ A worthless man digs and digs until he finds something

he can use to embarrass someone and cause them trouble;

and what he says about them is like a fire that burns the field.

²⁸ A person who has no morals stirs up conflict between people;

and those who spread rumors pull friends apart.

²⁹ A violent person tells lies to his friend,

and he leads him down a path that will never find what is good.

³⁰ The one who winks the eye is signaling to others it is time to begin their terrible plot;

those who press their lips together, they do evil things.

³¹ Gray hair is like a glorious crown;

it is given to those who live their lives

by doing what is right.

³² The one who is slow to get angry is stronger than a warrior;

the one who is self-controlled is mightier than one who conquers a city by force.

³³ The stones making up the "lot" are thrown into a person's lap,

but Yahweh decides on which side of the stones they will stop rolling.

Chapter 17

¹ It is better to eat a dry piece of bread and not have strife

than to live in a house where quarreling is as regular as feasting.

² A slave who acts wisely will rule over the son of his master

if that son does shameful things.

That slave will receive a share of the inheritance and will be treated like one of his master's sons.

³ Silver is put into the crucible to be refined, and gold is put into the furnace to be made pure,

but it is Yahweh who makes people pure.

⁴ Those who do what is evil pay attention to the person who talks in wicked ways,

and those who tell lies listen to those who speak in order to make trouble.

⁵ The one who makes fun of those who are poor insults Yahweh who made him;

Yahweh will punish those who are happy when someone else has troubles.

⁶ Grandchildren bring honor and respect to the aged,

and parents bring honor to their children.

⁷ A fool is not able to give an eloquent speech;

even more is it wrong to lie to someone with a royal title.

⁸ A bribe works like magic for the one who is giving the bribe;

everything he tries to do by giving bribes succeeds.

⁹ You must learn not to be offended by the one you love,

but if you bring up something to your friend that hurt you, and you do it over and over,

that will pull the best of friends apart.

¹⁰ A rebuke to someone with understanding goes deeper into him

than trying to teach a fool by hitting him a hundred times with a stick.

¹¹ An evil person is only interested in disobeying the rules;

he deserves a messenger who will be cruel to him.

¹² You would be better off meeting a mother bear who had been robbed of her cubs

than to meet a fool who is being foolish.

¹³ If someone gives back evil for the good that was given to him,

evil will stay in his family.

¹⁴ Starting a quarrel is like pumping water and letting it run everywhere;

it is much better to walk away before it starts.

¹⁵ When a court sets the wicked free and condemns those who do what is right,

Yahweh hates both of these actions.

¹⁶ There is no benefit for a fool when he pays money to learn about wisdom;

no matter how much he tries, he will not be able to learn about wisdom.

¹⁷ A friend loves you all the time,

and when you are in trouble, there is no one better than a brother to help you.

¹⁸ One having no good judgment will make a contract he cannot pay,

and he will even may a promise to pay the money his neighbor owes.

¹⁹ The one who loves to have arguments, that person also loves the sin that lies behind the conflict;

one thing leads to another: The one who makes the threshold of his door too high, it is sure to make someone break the bones in his foot.

²⁰ A person who is dishonest because of what is within him, he will never find what is good,

and the one who tells lies will fall into trouble.

²¹ The father who has a fool brings sadness into his life;

the father of a fool cannot live a happy life.

²² Being cheerful is like medicine that makes you feel better,

but when you are crushed by sadness, it is as if every bone within you could break with only a touch.

²³ A wicked person accepts a bribe in such a way as no one could see him,

so the bribe would change the verdict in his favor.

²⁴ The one who has begun to understand, he knows that he must also now go after wisdom.

However, the foolish person has bold plans and impossible dreams,

and he looks for them no matter how far away they may be.

²⁵ A foolish child brings a father great sadness,

and regret to the mother who gave birth to him.

²⁶ It cannot be good to punish someone who does what is right,

and if a good man with moral character is punished by the law, this can never be good.

²⁷ The one who has learned knowledge,
learned to speak well using few words,
and the one who has understanding,
does not lose his temper.

²⁸ When a fool keeps silent, some may
think he is very wise;
when he keeps his mouth shut, even
a fool looks intelligent.

Chapter 18

¹ The one who keeps himself away from
other people will only live for his own de-
sires,
and he never acts with good judgment.

² A foolish person does not enjoy under-
standing anything;
he only wants to tell others what he
thinks.

³ A wicked person comes, and with them
comes the contempt they have for other
people—
and then comes shame and disgrace
following along.

⁴ The words a man speaks are like the
deep waters of an ocean
or a fountain that flows with wisdom.

⁵ When the wicked are treated with spe-
cial honor, it is not good,
and it is not good to refuse to give
justice to those who do what is right.

⁶ A foolish person says things that start
arguments;
he says things that make other people
want to beat him with a stick.

⁷ A foolish person brings himself to ruin
by the things he says;
his very words set a trap in which he
will be caught.

⁸ When a person gossips, his words
are as sweet to other people as candy is
in their mouths,
and they love to listen to them.

⁹ The person who does a poor job when
he is working
is a relative to the one who destroys
everything.

¹⁰ The name of Yahweh is like a castle
that can never be overrun;
those who do what is right run
for safety into it, and in the fortress of his
name, they are safe.

¹¹ The wealthy person depends on his
wealth as a city depends on its fortifica-
tions;
he thinks it protects him as well as a
high wall.

¹² When a person is about to be ruined, it
is his proud heart that brings his destruc-
tion,
but before a person can gain great
honor, he must first learn to become hum-
ble.

¹³ A person who gives you an answer
before he listens to you—
there is nothing more foolish
and nothing that gives him more
shame.

¹⁴ A person may survive a terrible sick-
ness in his body,
but if he feels his inner self is crushed,
how can he survive?

¹⁵ Intelligent people have a desire to get
more and more knowledge,
and wise people will find someone to
teach them even more knowledge.

¹⁶ If you take a gift to an important per-
son, you will open the way to allow you to
talk to him.

¹⁷ The first person to present his case before a judge seems right

until the other side comes and questions him.

¹⁸ When there are two strong people having a dispute,

casting lots can help to settle the dispute.

¹⁹ If you offend your brother, finding a way to have peace with him again

may be harder than waging a battle to win a city.

and having an argument is more difficult to overcome

than breaking down the bars of a castle.

²⁰ The words a person speaks can bring satisfaction to himself,

like the food he eats satisfies his stomach.

²¹ People are able to kill others or keep them alive by means of what they say.

And there is danger for those who love the power of their speaking.

²² The one who finds a wife, finds something so good it is a gift to bless his life,

and it is Yahweh who gives him this wonderful gift.

²³ A poor person desperately begs for mercy, but a rich person is rude when he answers.

²⁴ One person says that he has many friends, but his life is ruined by them;

but there is a friend who stands with us through everything,

and he is always close at our side, even closer than a brother.

Chapter 19

¹ Compare a poor person who keeps his promises,

with a fool who is full of lies.

² And consider, having desire without knowledge

is like running so fast that you miss the path you want to take.

³ The folly of a fool destroys his life, but he becomes furious with Yahweh for his troubles.

⁴ Those who are wealthy easily find many friends, but a poor person will find that his poverty separates him from the one friend he had.

⁵ A person who lies in order to become a friend will be punished for taking advantage,

just as the one whose every word he speaks is a lie, he will not escape.

⁶ When a person is generous with their gifts, many people will ask for favors,

it seems that everyone is a friend of the one who gives many gifts.

⁷ All the brothers of one who is poor hate him;

and even more do his friends hate him, and they go far away from him;

he calls out to them, but they have left.

⁸ The one who makes every effort to learn about wisdom, loves himself;

having understanding helps you know what is good and what is not.

⁹ The ones who lie when they give testimony will be punished,

but the one whose every word is a lie, he will die.

¹⁰ When a fool lives in luxury—it is not right,

and it is even worse for a slave to rule over princes.

¹¹ A person with good sense is slow to get angry,

and it is to his honor that he overlooks it when someone does him wrong.

¹² What is the wrath of the king like? It is like the roaring of a young lion,

but his kindness is like the dew on the grass.

¹³ A foolish child will ruin a father.

A wife who is always quarreling will upset her husband like water that is constantly dripping.

¹⁴ We can inherit houses and money from our parents,

but a sensible wife is from Yahweh.

¹⁵ The one who is lazy finds that sleep comes easily to him,

but anyone who refuses to work will go hungry.

¹⁶ The one who follows the command he was taught puts a guard over his life,

but the one who does not think about how he lives his life will die.

¹⁷ One who is kind to the poor, it is as if he were lending to Yahweh;

and Yahweh will pay him for what he did.

¹⁸ Train your children and give them discipline while it is still possible to rescue them;

but do not allow them to offend you so much that you consider taking their lives.

¹⁹ A hot-tempered person will pay a price for his anger;

if you rescue him after he has an outburst, you will have to do it again and again.

²⁰ Pay attention to good guidance and let others teach you

so that you can become wise by the end of your life.

²¹ A person has many plans that come from within him,

but Yahweh has his own plans, and he will carry them out.

²² A person wants loyalty,

and a poor person is better than a liar.

²³ Anyone who has respect for Yahweh will live a long life;

such a person who has this respect for Yahweh will be satisfied,

and will come to no harm.

²⁴ The lazy person puts his hand in the dish;

he is not able to raise his hand up to his mouth to eat.

²⁵ If you punish someone who mocks others,

an uninstructed person will learn how to be prudent.

If you correct someone who has understanding,

he will gain more knowledge.

²⁶ Someone who steals from his father and alienates his mother

brings shame and disgrace to himself.

²⁷ My son, if you will not listen to the teaching,

you will wander away from the words of knowledge.

²⁸ A lying witness laughs at anyone who acts justly,

and wicked people act sinfully as easily as they eat food.

²⁹ Yahweh is ready to punish those who make themselves out to be better than other people,

and he is ready to flog the backs of fools.

Chapter 20

¹ Wine makes you loud, and strong drink makes you foolish;

whoever lets alcohol lead them to where they get lost is not wise.

² The king's wrath makes people as afraid as if they were facing a young lion roaring at them;

the person who makes a king angry is giving up his own life.

³ It is an honor to stay out of an argument,

but every fool is ready to join one.

⁴ The lazy person is not willing to plow his crops again in autumn,

and when it is harvest time, he looks, but there is nothing growing in his field.

⁵ The purposes within a person's life are like waters in a deep well,

but a person who has understanding is able to draw them out.

⁶ Many people proclaim that they can be trusted to do what they promise,

but it is very difficult to find one who can really be trusted.

⁷ The person who always does right—

how fortunate will be his children who follow after him.

⁸ A king who sits on his throne to act as a judge

can distinguish between all the kinds of evil before him just by looking at them.

⁹ No one can truthfully say, "I have kept my heart pure, and I am free from my sins."

¹⁰ Uneven weights, improperly marked, and unequal measures, that favor the one who is selling,

Yahweh hates both of them.

¹¹ Also, even a youth is known by how what he does,

it is clear whether what he does is pure and respectable or not.

¹² Ears that hear and eyes that see—

Yahweh made them both.

¹³ If you love to sleep all the time, you will become poor;

stay awake when you should be at work and you will have plenty to eat.

¹⁴ "It is no good," the buyer says when he is bargaining with you about the price.

But after he buys it, he goes and boasts to his friends what a good price he bought it for.

¹⁵ Consider the value of gold and many expensive jewels,

but the words of the one who has knowledge are like precious jewels.

¹⁶ Take the expensive coat of the person who guarantees a loan for a stranger, so it can be sold if the debt is not paid back.

And if he makes a pledge for an immoral woman, hold his coat as a guarantee for the loan he makes.

¹⁷ Bread gotten by telling a lie, may taste sweet,

but later his mouth will be like it was full of gravel, because of his lies.

¹⁸ Good plans are made in consultation with good advisors,

and only with wise advisors giving their advice should anyone go to war.

¹⁹ A gossip tells secrets,

so stay away from people who talk too much.

²⁰ If a person curses his father or his mother,

his life will be put out as a light that is snuffed out.

²¹ An inheritance that comes to a person quickly, may do some good at the beginning,

but later it will do less good for the person who received it.

²² Do not say, "I will pay you back for the wrong you did to me."

Wait for Yahweh and he will take care of the matter.

²³ Yahweh detests those who use dishonest scales

and weights that are not accurate.

²⁴ Yahweh is the one who directs the way a person will go.

So then, how can someone understand where he is going?

²⁵ It is dangerous to declare that something is holy to Yahweh,

and it is worse to think about the meaning of holiness only after you have made a vow.

²⁶ A king who is wise will separate the wicked from among his people;

then he will severely punish those wicked people.

²⁷ The life-giving spirit within a man is the light shining from Yahweh within us,

it shines deep within and shows what is hidden deep inside us.

²⁸ Love and faithfulness preserve the life of the king;

his throne is made strong by steadfast love.

²⁹ The honor of young people is seen in how strong they are,

but the splendor of old people is in their gray hair.

³⁰ When we are beaten, the wound that results may cleanse away evil,

and beatings make our inmost self clean.

Chapter 21

¹ The motives of the king are directed like a stream of water by Yahweh;

he diverts the king like he directs the flow of water, in any way he wants.

² When a person looks at his own life, everything he does may seem right to him,

but what matters is what Yahweh thinks about what he does.

³ Doing what is right and just is more acceptable to Yahweh

than offering sacrifices to him.

⁴ When you show people that you think you are better than they,

and add to that the pride you have within you—this shines like a light and it tells others you are a wicked person—

they are examples of sin.

⁵ Those who work hard and who carry out their plans will be successful,

but everyone who takes action too quickly and with little planning, make themselves poor.

⁶ When someone becomes rich because he tells lies,

that wealth fades away like the mist;
that wealth will kill him.

⁷ When wicked people act with violence,
they are destroyed by their own violence,
because they refuse to do what is
right.

⁸ A guilty person follows a path covered
with lies,

but the innocent chooses to do what
is right.

⁹ It is better to live alone in the corner
of a housetop

than inside a house with a wife who
always wants to argue with you.

¹⁰ The wicked man craves evil more than
anything;

and when he looks at his neighbor,
the wicked man's eyes reveal

that he is not going to be kind to his
neighbor.

¹¹ When a person who acts like he is
better than other people is punished,

the simple—who do not know
about right and wrong—are taught an im-
portant lesson,

and if you teach one who is wise, they
can learn even more.

¹² One who does what is right watches
the house where evil people live,

and he confronts their wickedness
and brings them to justice.

¹³ When the poor cried out for help,
there was a person who refused to listen
to their cries,

but when he cried out, because he cov-
ered his ears to their cries, no one heard
his cries.

¹⁴ Give a gift to a person who is angry
with you, and it may turn away his anger;

a secret gift may help a person who
is angry at you to calm down.

¹⁵ When there is justice, those who love
what is right are happy,

but when there is justice, it brings
great fear to those who do what is evil.

¹⁶ A person who does not understand
right and wrong, will get lost when he
tries to make decisions,

he will only rest when he is dead.

¹⁷ Love pleasure and it will make you
poor;

you cannot be rich and love to drink
wine and eat expensive foods.

¹⁸ A person who does right is honored
much more than a wicked man,

and a good man is worth far more
than one who never keeps his promise.

¹⁹ It is better to live alone in a desert
than with a wife who is always stirring
up conflicts and never stops complaining.

²⁰ Those who are wise have very pre-
cious treasures and they live very well,

but foolish people waste all they have.

²¹ A person who does right and is kind,
lives a good life, makes wise decisions,
and receives honor from others.

²² When a wise leader goes up against
a city of mighty warriors,

he knows how to bring down the
defenses of the city and he conquers it.

²³ Be careful, if you could put a guard
to watch over the words that come out of
your mouth and tongue,

you would keep away from a lot of
trouble.

²⁴ The mocker thinks he is better than
other people,

and his actions come from his pride and his arrogance.

²⁵ The things that the lazy person chooses to do will kill him;

he refuses to work.

²⁶ All day long he desires things—he could not desire for more things—

but whoever does right gives gifts to others, and he never holds back anything that is good.

²⁷ When the wicked decide to give an offering to Yahweh, Yahweh hates it,

and Yahweh hates it even more when the wicked man comes to worship Yahweh in order to get something for himself.

²⁸ Those who lie about other people, will die,

but the one who takes time to listen—when he says something, people will remember it.

²⁹ The wicked man acts as if he were strong,

but an honest man has thought about what to do and is certain about it.

³⁰ Can there be any wisdom, any understanding, or any advice, that is wiser than Yahweh?

³¹ The groomsman prepares the horse for the day of battle,

but the outcome of the battle, the winner or the loser, is determined by Yahweh.

Chapter 22

¹ Being a person who keeps his word is more important than having great riches,

and being a person who everyone respects for doing right, is better than having silver and gold.

² People who are rich and people who are poor have at least one thing in common—

Yahweh made both of them.

³ One who has good sense takes cover when he sees trouble coming,

but those who have no experience or knowledge rush ahead into danger.

⁴ When a person is humble and gives Yahweh the respect he deserves,

these are his rewards: Riches, and honor, and life.

⁵ Where the perverse walk, their way is like a road covered with thorns, and there are traps in every step.

When you guard your own life from evil, you will stay away from all these dangers.

⁶ A child must be shown the way to live and the direction he should go,

and when he reaches old age, he will stay on that same path.

⁷ The fact is that the rich often have power over the poor,

and one who borrows money is almost like a slave to the one who lends him the money.

⁸ If you plant the seeds of wickedness, you can expect a crop of trouble,

and when you use a rod to discipline your child,

but you use it when you are furious, it will do no good.

⁹ The one who looks for people to help, Yahweh will give many good gifts,

because he considered it important to share his food with the poor.

¹⁰ If you throw out the conceited person,
out will go all kinds of conflict with him.

No one will quarrel or insult anyone
else when he is gone.

¹¹ When a person loves to do something
just because he wants to do what is good
and right—

he is sincere, and his speech is filled
with kindness

—the king will be his friend.

¹² Yahweh gives protection to knowl-
edge, to keep it safe,

just as surely as he makes the lying
promises of the betrayer fail.

¹³ A lazy person calls out, “There is a lion
in the street! If I go out, I will be killed!”

¹⁴ The words spoken by an adulteress
will draw you in, and it will be as if you
have fallen into a deep and dangerous pit!

All those who fall into that pit will be
in trouble,

but what is worse, they will experi-
ence Yahweh’s anger for what they have
done.

¹⁵ Stupid and silly things are bound up
within a child,

and they come out in foolishness;

but correcting a child with discipline
drives the folly far away.

¹⁶ The one who makes his money by
taking advantage of the poor,

or by giving more money to the
wealthy,

Yahweh will bring him into poverty.

¹⁷ Now listen to what those who are wise
have said;

give it all your attention and learn
the knowledge you will need if you are to
become wise.

¹⁸ It will be good for you to make them
the guiding principles you live by,

and be able to repeat all of them to
others.

¹⁹ The most important thing is for you
to trust in Yahweh,

and so I am teaching them to you, yes,
even to you.

²⁰ I have written thirty of these sayings
for you to learn;

sayings to give you advice and to teach
you what you do not know.

²¹ These lessons show you what is true
and they teach you with faithful lessons,

so you may give reliable and true
answers to those who sent you.

²² Anyone can rob a poor person. Do
not do it.

And do not hurt them who are begging
at the city gate,

²³ for Yahweh stands to defend them,

and he will take the life of those who
stole from the poor.

²⁴ Do not become a friend with one
whose life is controlled by his anger,

and do not associate with a person
who rages in his terrible wrath,

²⁵ or you will learn to be like him,

and your anger will become like a
trap, a trap that will take charge of your
life.

²⁶ Be careful that you do not shake hands
and promise to pay for the debts of others,

and do not make or sign a pledge so
another person can take out a loan.

²⁷ For if you cannot pay it back,

they will surely come and take away
everything from you, even your bed on
which you sleep.

²⁸ The ancient boundary stones show where the property lines are. Do not take them away or move them. Your ancestors put them there. Leave them alone.

²⁹ One who learns a trade and is skillful at it will become a servant of kings.

Because of his achievements he will not serve mere ordinary people.

Chapter 23

¹ When you sit down to eat a meal with ruler of a country,

think carefully about what is in front of you.

² It is said, “put a knife to your throat” if you think of eating a lot of food,

because it would be foolish to eat too much at such an important event.

³ Do not crave the special and expensive food the ruler enjoys;

the food will deceive you.

⁴ Do not work so much that you are always tired, so you can become rich;

be wise and know when you should stop and rest.

⁵ As soon as you look at the money, it will be gone;

it will be as if it suddenly took up wings

and flew up like an eagle, up into the sky.

⁶ Do not eat with an evil man—he will gaze at your food for a long time—

do not desire his fine food,

⁷ because he will be thinking about how much your food cost him,

and he will say to you, “Eat and drink,”

but that is not what he will really be thinking.

⁸ When you realize what he is really thinking, you will want to vomit what you have eaten;

and you will have wasted all the compliments you gave about the fine meal he prepared.

⁹ Do not waste time talking to a fool;

he will only despise the wise things that you say.

¹⁰ Again, do not remove the ancient boundary stone. It is a marker for the property lines;

and do not claim land that is set apart for orphans to work,

¹¹ because the One who redeems them is strong,

and he will plead their case against you.

¹² Pay attention to what you are learning,

and listen to the words of knowledge.

¹³ Do not refuse to discipline your children;

if you punish them, they will not die,

¹⁴ and if you beat them with the rod of discipline,

you may save their lives from death.

¹⁵ My son, if you have taken wisdom deep within yourself,

I will be very happy,

¹⁶ and I will be sincerely glad

when you say what is right.

¹⁷ Do not envy sinful people;

but give Yahweh the respect he deserves, all day long.

¹⁸ If you respect him, you will have a life in the future,

and Yahweh will certainly do for you what you are confidently expecting him to do.

¹⁹ My son, listen to me so you may become wise,

and think about the way you live your life.

²⁰ Do not associate with those who get drunk with wine,

or with those who are eat far too much food,

²¹ because drunkards and gluttons will become poor;

and they will sleep so much that they will have nothing but rags to wear.

²² Pay attention to your father who brought you into the world,

and do not hate your mother when she is old.

²³ When you study wisdom, think of it as buying truth, but never selling it;

and the same for wisdom, and with discipline, and also with understanding;

let it be as though you were buying them so you can keep them for the rest of your life.

²⁴ The father of a child who does what is right will be very happy;

any man who has a wise son will be very happy because of him.

²⁵ Make your father and mother proud, and let your mother be glad.

²⁶ My son, take what I say and put it deep within you,

and pay attention to the way that I live.

²⁷ A prostitute is like a very deep pit, that is easy to fall into, but difficult to get out;

another man's wife is a narrow pit; just as dangerous as a deep pit, but of a different kind.

²⁸ The immoral woman is waiting for you, waiting like a robber waits for his victim;

and they cause many men to become liars and traitors to those who love them.

²⁹ Who is it who had trouble? Who has sorrows? Who has conflicts and fights?

Who has quarreling? Who is wounded for no reason?

Whose eyes are always bloodshot because they drank too much or ate too much?

³⁰ It is those who drink too much wine

and those who drink the mixed wine.

³¹ Do not look with pleasure at red wine when it sparkles in the cup,

and it goes down the throat smoothly.

³² But, in the last, it bites you like a poisonous snake .

³³ It makes you see strange things,

and within you, you say perverse things when you are drunk.

³⁴ You will think you are on a ship that is tossing on the sea;

you will be like someone who is trying to sleep up on the rigging of the boat.

³⁵ You will say, "I think that someone struck me, but he did not hurt me;

They beat me, but I did not feel it.

When will I wake up

in order that I can drink some more wine?"

Chapter 24

¹ Do not want what evil people have;
do not desire them for friends,

² because they are plotting to do violence;
they talk about making trouble.

³ It takes wisdom to build a house,
and by understanding the builder exercises his craft, and a house is made solid on its foundation.

⁴ It takes knowledge to fill the rooms of the house
with all the beautiful and expensive decorations.

⁵ A man who has wisdom has strength,
and a person with knowledge is mightier than the one who is strong,

⁶ for with wise guidance you can wage a war successfully,
and by the advice of many advisors there will be victory.

⁷ Wisdom is something that a fool cannot understand;
at the gate where the elders gather, the fool has nothing to say.

⁸ There is a man who does evil and makes plots—he is called the Master of Schemes.

⁹ A foolish plan is not only folly, it is sin;
when people tell the truth, they hate those who are conceited and mock everyone.

¹⁰ When trouble comes, and you are terrified like a coward,
then your strength is small.

¹¹ Rescue the ones who are being carried away to the slaughter;

they stagger and fall—hold them back from the one who would kill them.

¹² If you say, “I did not know that those people needed any help,” then think about this:

God knows why we do everything, so he also knows why you said those people needed no help.

God sees everything you do in this life, so he certainly understands why you said that about those people.

He will certainly pay you back—and everyone else, too—for the harm they have done.

¹³ My son, eat honey, because it tastes good;
the honeycomb is sweet.

¹⁴ Wisdom is like the honeycomb, it feeds your life, if you can find it.

If you can find it, you will have a future,
and you will come to the future with hope that will not be cut short.

¹⁵ Do not be like wicked people who hide and wait to attack the home of those who do what is right.

Do not commit a violent attack on the place where the good man rests!

¹⁶ Even if good people fall down seven times,
they always get back up,
but when a disaster comes to the wicked,
they are ruined by it.

¹⁷ When your enemy falls, do not rejoice,
and do not be happy when he stumbles,

¹⁸ for Yahweh will see how you treat your enemy, and if he disapproves how you treat him,

Yahweh may turn his wrath from your enemy and put it on you.

¹⁹ Do not worry about those who do what is evil,

and do not be jealous of them,

²⁰ for there is no future for the wicked;

they are like a lamp whose light will soon be put out.

²¹ My son, give to Yahweh and give to the king the respect each of them deserves,

and do not associate with anyone who rebels against either Yahweh or the king;

²² because disasters will suddenly come upon those rebels,

and no one knows how terrible the disasters will be that will come from both Yahweh and from the king. ²³ Here are more things that wise people have said:

It is wrong for judges to decide matters unfairly.

²⁴ If they say to people who are guilty, "You are innocent,"

they will be cursed by foreign peoples, and hated by nations.

²⁵ But if judges say that guilty people must be punished,

things will go well for those judges, and they will receive gifts of goodness.

²⁶ Answering honestly—that is the best thing a person can do.

²⁷ First, do the work that needs to be done outside,

and prepare your fields;

and after that, build your house.

²⁸ Do not give testimony against your neighbor if there is no reason for it,

and do not deceive people when you are telling what you know.

²⁹ Do not say, "I will do to him what he did to me;

I will pay him back for what he did to me."

³⁰ I walked by the field of a lazy man, past the vineyard of a man who had no good judgment.

³¹ Thorns grew there and the stone wall had fallen down.

³² When I saw that, I thought about it, and I learned this:

³³ A little sleep, a little nap, a little folding of the hands to rest—and while you rest,

³⁴ poverty will come to you like a thief who steals from you,

and poverty will come like an armed soldier who attacks you.

Chapter 25

¹ Here are more wise sayings of Solomon that were written down by the men of Hezekiah, the king of Judah.

² God honors himself when he hides something so people cannot know it.

But it is to the honor of kings to search out the things that God has hidden.

³ What kings think is above the way peasants think; they are like the heavens, they are above us all;

and all kings have the same deep burdens that others cannot understand.

⁴ Silver cannot be used by the metal worker,

unless the silver is heated and dross is removed from it;

⁵ just as the dross is removed, even so, if wicked men are removed from the king's court,

his throne will be more secure, and he will be able to do what is right.

⁶ When you stand in front of a king, do not bring attention to yourself

and do not stand in the place set aside for those the king is honoring.

⁷ It is better if someone important invites you, saying, "Come up and sit closer to the king,"

than to embarrass you in front of an important nobleman by making you move so that you now sit far away from the king.

When you witness something that gives you concern,

⁸ you should not quickly bring the matter to trial,

unless you are very sure about it.

because your neighbor may have a good explanation for what you saw.

⁹ If you and your neighbor are having a disagreement,

settle it between yourselves, and do not tell others any secret you have learned about;

¹⁰ for others might find out what you have done,

and you would be ashamed;

and from that time on, you will have a bad reputation.

¹¹ Use the right words and a phrase put together to say exactly what you mean;

this is as delightful as seeing designs of gold in a silver bowl.

¹² When a wise person rebukes someone who is willing to listen to him,

it is as priceless as a gold ring or jewelry made of finest gold.

¹³ A messenger who is reliable and on time, gives delight to those who sent him,

to them he is like the cold of snow at harvest time, that refreshes the ground.

¹⁴ When someone boasts about a gift he is going to give, but never gives it,

he is like the clouds and the wind that do not bring rain.

¹⁵ With patient persuasion even a ruler's mind can be changed,

like the proverb that says, 'a soft tongue can break a bone.'

¹⁶ If you find some honey, eat just a little, because if you eat too much, you could vomit it up.

¹⁷ Do not go to your neighbor's house too often;

he may get tired of you, and if you do not stop, he could even grow to hate you.

¹⁸ To falsely accuse others in court

is like attacking them with a club used in battle, or with a sword, or with sharp arrows.

¹⁹ Depending on an unreliable person during times of trouble

is like having a bad tooth or a foot that slips and makes you fall.

²⁰ Singing a song to someone who is feeling sad,

it is as unhelpful as taking off a coat on a very cold day,

or pouring vinegar into soda, making it bubble.

²¹ If your enemies are hungry, give them something to eat;

if they are thirsty, give them something to drink;

²² that will be the equal to pouring coals of fire on his head, without doing him any harm,

and Yahweh will reward you for doing that.

²³ When wind blows from the north, it will certainly rain;

it is just as certain that someone who tells secrets about others will make people angry.

²⁴ It is better to live alone in the corner of a housetop

than inside a house with a wife who always wants to argue with you.

²⁵ When you receive news from a far away country,

that is like giving cold water to a person who is thirsty.

²⁶ A good person who falls before the wicked,

that is as bad as a spring that becomes muddied or a fountain that becomes polluted.

²⁷ It is not good to eat too much honey; that is like searching for more honor when you already have honor.

²⁸ A person who cannot control himself is like a city with no way to keep out enemies; its walls have fallen down.

Chapter 26

¹ When it snows in the summer, or when it rains in the harvest,

that is what it is like when a fool gets honor—

honor for him comes at the wrong time, and the wrong place.

² A sparrow flies here and there fluttering around, and a swallow darts back and forth when it flies,

that is like someone speaking a curse against you—but it cannot land on you.

³ A horse needs a whip to make it move, and a donkey must have a bridle in its mouth, or it will not carry its load.

In the same way, a fool needs someone to beat him on his back to get him to do anything.

⁴ Do not reply to a fool when he is trying to draw you into his foolishness,

or you will be just as much a fool as he is.

⁵ Give a fool an answer that will be just as foolish as his question,

and that may open his eyes so he can see that he is not as wise as he thinks.

⁶ If you entrust an important message to be delivered by a fool,

that would as foolish as cutting of your own feet, and then taking a drink of poison.

⁷ A lame man cannot use his legs; they hang down and are useless,

as useless as when fools are reciting proverbs to one another that they do not understand..

⁸ When you tie a stone into a sling so it cannot be thrown,

that is like one who gives honor to a fool,

for no matter how much you praise him,

it will never do him any good.

⁹ When a drunk man picks up a bush full of thorns

and starts to swing it around at people,

that is as helpful as a fool reciting proverbs,

people stand back and try to get away from him.

¹⁰ An archer who aims and shoots arrows at people standing around him,

is as dangerous as one who hires a fool

or he takes so little care that he hires the next person who comes along.

¹¹ When you see a dog return to his vomit,

that is just like a fool who does the same foolish thing over and over again.

¹² Do you know someone who has this idea about himself—

he thinks he is a very wise person?

It is easier to teach a fool than him.

¹³ The lazy person has many reasons for not working—

you might hear him say, “But there is a lion in the street!”

or “Oh, there is a lion in the market!”

¹⁴ When you see a door swing back and forth on its hinges,

that is just like one who is lazy, when he is lying on his bed, turning back and forth.

¹⁵ One who is lazy might reach down with his hand to get some food,

but he does not have the energy to put the food into his mouth.

¹⁶ The one who is lazy considers himself to be very wise,

more wise than seven men who are known for their insight.

¹⁷ Someone who walks by a dog lying on the ground, who then reaches down and pulls its ears;

he is like someone who hears an argument as he is walking by,

and he gets involved, and becomes angry

and then he takes sides and joins in—

even though he had nothing to do with it.

¹⁸⁻¹⁹ Who is like an insane person who shoots burning arrows in every direction?

One who lies to his neighbor!

He makes an excuse to his neighbor and tells him,

“I was only joking;”

but just like the madman’s arrows,

what he said has set everything on fire.

²⁰ The fire goes out when there is no more wood to burn;

and so arguments stop when no one is gossiping.

²¹ As charcoal can ignite into burning coal and a log of wood into a fire;

so the one who argues sets anger ablaze.

²² The gossip tells stories that are like sweet treats to eat;

people eat them like candy until they are filled.

²³ A shining glaze applied with great heat, covers the clay pot,

and that is like the fiery words that cover an evil heart.

²⁴ The one who is filled with hate, by the words he speaks, he hides his true feelings;

and he stores up more and more lies within himself.

²⁵ He may speak kind words, but you should not believe them,

because deep within him is everything that Yahweh despises.

²⁶ Even though he covers up his hatred by his lies,

everyone will realize how wicked he is.

²⁷ One who digs a pit will fall into it;

and a stone rolls back on the one who tried to push it up a hill.

²⁸ The one who lies hates the people he destroys;

just as much as the person who uses flattery causes terrible destruction.

Chapter 27

¹ Do not boast about what will happen tomorrow,

because you do not know what will come to you during that day.

² Do not praise yourself; let someone else praise you.

It is better for someone you do not know to praise you,

than for you to praise yourself.

³ If you think about how heavy a stone can be, or how much sand can weigh—

then you will understand that the trouble a fool causes is harder to carry than both of those things.

⁴ If you think about how cruel can be people who rage at others, and how angry people can attack others like a flood of water,

then think about how jealous people are even worse;

no one can resist being harmed by a jealous person.

⁵ It is better to offer a rebuke out in the open, than to have a love that is hidden.

⁶ A wound from a friend is better than kisses from an enemy.

⁷ When a person is walking along and he has a full stomach, he may step on a honeycomb because he is not hungry;

but if he were very hungry, even bitter things would taste sweet to him.

⁸ When a man wanders away from his home,

he is acting like a bird that stays far from its nest.

⁹ The aroma of perfume and the scent of incense can help to make a person feel happy;

and we most appreciate friends who give us good advice.

¹⁰ Do not forget your friend or a friend of your father;

and when you have a problem and you need help,

do not go to your brother's home.

When there is trouble, a neighbor who lives close by

is better than a brother who lives far away.

¹¹ My son, if you become wise, you will make me happy;

so I will be able to give an answer to anyone who argues against me.

¹² One who has good sense takes cover when he sees trouble coming,

but those who have no experience or knowledge rush ahead into danger.

¹³ Take a man's garment as security when he is guaranteeing a loan for a stranger.

Hold the garment in pledge to protect yourself from losing your money when he puts up security for an adulteress.

¹⁴ Whoever shouts out a blessing in a loud voice early in the morning,

that blessing will be heard as if it were a curse.

¹⁵ A wife who continually argues with her husband is as annoying as

the constant dripping of water on a rainy day;

¹⁶ and stopping her from arguing would be as difficult as restraining the wind,

or trying to catch oil in one hand.

¹⁷ Iron is used to sharpen an iron blade, just like a man makes his friend better.

¹⁸ The farmer who takes care of a fig tree will enjoy its fruit when it is ripe.

This is just like the one who protects his master, he will get honor from his master.

¹⁹ When a person looks in the water, he sees his own face;

similarly when we look at what a person loves, we know what he is like deep inside.

²⁰ You know that the Place of the Dead and The Destroyer are never satisfied;

and people, too, are never satisfied and always want more.

²¹ Silver is refined in a crucible, and gold is put into a furnace to be made pure;

and how a person responds to the praise given to them

will tell you what kind of person he is.

²² Though you grind a fool as if you were grinding up grain,

you will not be able to take his foolishness out of him.

²³ A good shepherd will know the condition of all his sheep and he will check on them every day.

²⁴ Wealth does not last forever.

Does the crown of a king endure for all generations?

²⁵ The grass dies out and then the new growth starts to grow;

and on the mountains food for the cattle is stacked up in the barns.

²⁶ The lambs will give you warm clothing and the goats will give you enough to pay for the cost of the field.

²⁷ There will be milk from the goats that you can drink—that will be food for everyone who lives in your house—

and it is food to feed your servant girls, as well.

Chapter 28

¹ A wicked person runs away even when no one is coming after him,

but the one who does what is right is as brave as lions.

² The more sin there is in a country, the greater the number of rulers it will have;

but when there is a ruler who has understanding and knowledge, the country can last a long time.

³ When a poor person oppresses other poor people,

it is like a hard rain that destroys the crops and leaves no food for anyone to eat.

⁴ Those who reject the law are the same people who speak well of those who are wicked;

but those who obey the law fight against the wicked.

⁵ As difficult as it is for evil people to understand what is just,

even so those who want to find Yahweh understand everything that is important.

⁶ It is better to be honest and poor,
than to be dishonest in all you do, and to be rich.

⁷ The one who obeys the law is a child who has understanding of the ways of wisdom;

but if children go around with friends who are only interested in eating too much, they put their father to shame.

⁸ The person who becomes rich by charging a high rate of interest ,

he does not know that he is gathering his money, and it will be given to someone who helps the poor and is kind to them.

⁹ If you refuse to hear what the law says to you about how you should live;

then Yahweh is offended by your prayers.

¹⁰ If someone tricks an honest person into doing that is bad,

the one who did that will fall into his own trap,

but those who have tried to right will received many good things.

¹¹ A rich person can think of himself as being wise,

but someone who is poor but who has good sense will be able to tell if the rich man is really wise.

¹² When those who do what is right have a victory, it is a time to celebrate,

but when those who are wicked rise up in victory, people run and hide.

¹³ The one who tries to cover up his sins will be found out,

but Yahweh will forgive those who tell their sins to him, and they turn away from doing them.

¹⁴ How fortunate are those who always honor Yahweh;

but those who refuse to listen to him, who do not want to learn from him, will fall into trouble.

¹⁵ You know what a roaring lion or a charging bear is like;

they are just like the wicked ruler who is tearing apart poor people.

¹⁶ A king who does not have good sense thinks he is wise when he is cruel and he takes everything away from his people.

but a person who hates getting anything by breaking the law, will live a long life.

¹⁷ If a person is guilty of murdering another

he will live like a fugitive until he dies;
and no one will help him.

¹⁸ When a person lives his life and is blameless, Yahweh will keep him safe;

but one who lives by his lies will be suddenly ruined.

¹⁹ A farmer who works his field will have plenty of food to eat;

but anyone who gives his time to worthless dreams, will be very poor.

²⁰ Yahweh will give good things to a faithful person;

but he will certainly punish those who become rich quickly.

²¹ It is bad to give a favor to one person and not to another;

some people will do what is wrong just to get a piece of bread.

²² A man who hates to spend his money will run to more,

but he does not know that poverty is coming to him.

²³ The one who rebukes a person will later be appreciated more

than the one who says nice things just to flatter him.

²⁴ Anyone who steals things from his father or his mother

and says "That is not sinful,"

he is friend of the one who destroys.

²⁵ A greedy person stirs up arguments between people;

but the one who trusts in Yahweh will do well.

²⁶ One who depends on himself is a fool,

those who make wise decisions escape danger.

²⁷ One who gives to help the poor, will not lack anything,

but many curses will come to whoever turns away and ignores them.

²⁸ When wicked people get power, men and women hide;

but when the wicked die, there will be more and more of those who do what is right.

Chapter 29

¹ When you rebuke a person who has rejected your words and who refused to listen to you,

he will be crushed to the point that he cannot be healed.

² When people live the right way, they become more numerous,

but when a wicked ruler starts to govern, the people groan.

³ A son who desires to learn about wisdom makes his father very happy;

but the son who is a companion of prostitutes will lose all his money

⁴ When a king rules with honest rules and good laws, he causes his nation to be strong,

but anyone who asks for bribes ruins his nation.

⁵ One who praises his neighbor to get something from him,

is like the one who listens for the sound of his footsteps,

so he can catch him in a net.

⁶ A bad person sets a trap with his sin; then he falls into it;

but one who does right is full of songs and joy.

⁷ The one who does right stands up for the poor and defends them;

but wicked people do not see the importance of standing up for the poor.

⁸ People who sneer and mock others are like those who set a city on fire;

but those who help people get rid of their anger are wise.

⁹ If a wise person has any conflict with a foolish person,

the foolish person screams at him and then laughs at him, and it never ends.

¹⁰ A murderer hates him who does everything right;

and they seek to kill the one who has a good reputation.

¹¹ A fool shows all his anger,

but a person who is wise holds his anger, and he knows how to calm himself down.

¹² If a ruler believes the lies that are told to him,

he teaches all his officials to be wicked.

¹³ What do a poor person and one who takes advantage of people have in common?

Yahweh gives life to both of them.

¹⁴ If a king judges the poor by listening to the truth,

he will build a kingdom that will continue forever.

¹⁵ If a child is punished,

the gift of wisdom is given to him;

but when a child is out of control,

this brings shame to his mother.

¹⁶ When wicked people have authority, lawbreaking is common;

but those who do what is right will see the day

when the wicked will lose their power.

¹⁷ Discipline your child and he will help you and serve you;

you will truly rejoice over him.

¹⁸ When no prophet receives any vision from Yahweh, the people go out of control,

but those who obey the law are fortunate.

¹⁹ Talk to a slave as much as you want,

but though he understands what you are saying, they have learned not to give you an answer.

²⁰ Do you see someone who is quick to speak, quick to give an opinion?

Yahweh can give a fool more help in the future easier than he can help him who is quick to speak.

²¹ If a slave is excused from his labor

and treated better than other slaves by his master

from the time he is young;

but when he is grown,

that slave will give trouble to his master.

²² A person who cannot control his anger stirs up many quarrels

and uses his rage to rule over others, and so he commits many sins.

²³ Any person who is proud will be humbled;

but the one who is humbled will be given honor.

²⁴ A person who helps a thief, hates himself;

he overhears the curse, but he does not say anything about it.

²⁵ When one is afraid of what people can do,

it is like setting a trap for himself.

but whoever trusts in Yahweh is safe.

²⁶ Many people want to come before a ruler to get help from him,

but Yahweh is the only one who gives him true justice.

²⁷ Those who do what is right detest a person who treats others in an unfair way;

just as the wicked hate those who live good lives.

Chapter 30

¹ These are sayings containing wisdom, the sayings of Agur son of Jakeh.

Agur wrote them for Ithiel, yes, to Ithiel and to Ucal.

² I am more like an animal than any human being!

I lack the understanding that a human being has!

³ I have not learned about wisdom;

I do not know Yahweh, the Holy One.

⁴ Who has ever gone up to heaven and come back down again?

Who can catch the wind in his hand?

Who can gather up the waters in an overcoat?

Who set the limits to the size of the earth?

What is his name? And what is the name of his son?

Do you know?

⁵ Every word of God is proven by a test that it is true;

he is like a shield that protects those who run to him.

⁶ Be careful not to add to Yahweh's words more than he has said;

if you do that, he will correct you and he will prove that you lied about what he said.

⁷ I ask Yahweh for two things,

and that he give them to me before I die.

⁸ Put vain pride and lies far away from me;

and do not give me poverty or riches,

just give me the food I need every day.

⁹ For if I have too much money,

it is possible that I will deny my God and say, "Who is Yahweh?"

Or it is possible that I will become so poor that I steal from others

and bring disgrace on the name of my God.

¹⁰ Do not speak badly about a slave when he is standing before his master;

if you do, he will curse you, and you will be responsible; you brought it on yourself.

¹¹ There are many people who curse their fathers

and they do not praise their mothers or thank them;

¹² those people think everything they do should not be criticized,

but really they have never been cleansed from their filth.

¹³ These people show how proud they are in their eyes;

they make people look at them and they show their pride in their faces!

¹⁴ These people use their mouths to speak the most hurtful words, like they are cutting and tearing people apart;

it is as if they are eating up the poor people from the earth,

and swallowing up the needy from humanity.

¹⁵ There are leeches that suck blood, imagine they had two daughters;

they say, "Give to us! Give to us!"

There are four things that are never satisfied—

they always want more :

¹⁶ The grave, the place of the dead;

the womb of a woman that never conceived a child;

soil that badly needs to be watered;

and a fire that burns hot and it never says, "The fire is hot enough!"

¹⁷ The one who dishonors his father,
and who disrespects and disobeys his
mother.

such a person would be killed and have
his eyes pecked out by crows,

and would be devoured by the vul-
tures.

¹⁸ There are three wonderful things I
can mention;

no, there are four that are too amazing
and I cannot understand them.

¹⁹ How eagles fly in the sky;

how snakes move over a big rock,

how ships can sail on the seas,

and how a man is able to win the love
of a woman.

²⁰ This is what a woman is like who is
not faithful to her husband:

she eats and then wipes her mouth,

and she says, "There is nothing wrong
in what I have done."

²¹ There are four things that make the
earth tremble:

²² the earth trembles with a slave be-
comes a king;

the earth trembles when fool has eaten
his food and is filled;

²³ the earth trembles when a woman
who is hated by all, gets married,

and the earth trembles, when the maid
becomes the wife of her master.

²⁴ There are four creatures on the earth
that are small, but they are very wise.

²⁵ Ants are not strong,

but they store up food during the sum-
mer in order to have it during the winter.

²⁶ Rock badgers also are not strong,

but they make their homes among the
rocks.

²⁷ Locusts do not have a king,

but they march in rank like soldiers
in the army.

²⁸ Lizards are very small and you can
hold them in your hand,

but they get inside kings' palaces.

²⁹ There are four animals that walk with
great pride and they are very impressive
as they walk.

³⁰ Lions, which are the strongest among
wild animals

and are not afraid of any of them.

³¹ Strutting roosters, and male goats,
and kings who stand with their soldiers
beside them.

³² If you have acted foolishly, exalting
yourself,

or if you been planning to do some-
thing evil,

put your hand over your mouth! Stop
it!

³³ Just as when you churn milk, and it
produces butter,

even so, if you hit someone hard on his
nose, the result is that his nose will bleed;

and, in the same way, when people
are angry, they will argue and fight.

Chapter 31

¹ These are sayings of King Lemuel—an or-
acle his mother taught him.

² She says: You are my son; I carried
you in my womb;

you are the son, I made promises to
Yahweh for you.

³ Do not give your strength to women;

and do not tell what your plans are,
to the women who destroy kings.

⁴ Lemuel, kings should be careful about
drinking wine;

and a king should never ask, “Where
is the strong drink?”

⁵ They could drink but then they might
forget that they made a decree of the king,

and tear down the rights of those who
have been taken advantage of.

⁶ Give strong drink to those who are
dying

and to those who are grieving their
loss. ⁷ One who drinks will forget he is
poor,

and he will not remember his trouble.

⁸ Speak for those who cannot speak for
themselves,

speak for those who are approaching
death.

⁹ Speak out and render judgment ac-
cording to what is right;

and plead for justice to come in the
cases of the poor and the needy.

¹⁰ Who can find a wife who is good at
many things?

Her value is much more than the
jewels she could wear.

¹¹ Her husband completely trusts her,
and because of her, he will never be
poor.

¹² She does good things for him and not
evil,

all the days of her life.

¹³ She finds wool and flax in the market,
and she enjoys spinning it to make
yarn and fabric.

¹⁴ She is like the merchant ships

because she brings her food to her
home from far away.

¹⁵ She gets up before dawn to prepare
food for her family,

and she gives each servant girl her
duties for the day.

¹⁶ She goes out and considers what field
she will buy, and she buys it.

With the money she has made in other
ventures,

she plants a vineyard.

¹⁷ She prepares herself with her
strength,

and her arms are strong, able to do
hard work.

¹⁸ She knows when she is getting a good
profit from her business.

She keeps a lamp burning all night long.

¹⁹ She holds the spindle,

and then she spins the thread that she
will use.

²⁰ She gives an outstretched hand to help
the poor.

²¹ She is not worried about the snow,

for everyone in her house have the
best winter coats.

²² She makes covers for the beds.

She wears fine purple linen clothes—
the color of royalty.

²³ Her husband is well known at the city
gates,

and there at the gates he sits with the
other leaders of the town.

²⁴ She makes linen garments and she
sells them.

She sells sashes to shop owners.

²⁵ She is strong in her character and
respected,

and she laughs at what will happen
in the future.

²⁶ When she speaks, she says what is
wise,

and she lives by the law of kindness.

²⁷ She watches over everything that is
done in her household,

and nothing in her actions would be
anything like laziness.

²⁸ Her children speak highly of her;
her husband also praises her.

²⁹ He says to her, "There are many
women who do admirable things,
but you surpass them all!"

³⁰ Elegance can deceive
and make you think more highly of a
person than you should;
and beauty has no lasting value.

But a woman who honors Yahweh will
be praised for the person she is. ³¹ Give
her what she has earned,

and her works will praise her among
the leaders of the town.

ECCLESIASTES

Chapter 1

¹ These are the words and sayings of the descendant of King David, who is king in Jerusalem. The people call me 'The Teacher.'

² The Teacher says, "Nothing is permanent.

It is all like the morning mist or the wind;

It goes and comes, but for what reason?

³ What do people gain from all the work that they do here on the earth?"

⁴ Each year old people die and babies are born,

but the earth never changes.

⁵ Each morning the sun rises, and each evening it sets,

and then it hurries around to where it started from.

⁶ The wind blows south,

and then it turns around to start blowing to the north.

It goes around and around in circles.

⁷ All the streams flow into the sea,

but the sea is never full.

The water returns under the earth and comes up again into the rivers;

then it flows to the sea again.

⁸ Everything is so unsatisfactory that we do not even want to talk about it.

We see the same things,

and we become bored with them.

We hear the same things,

but we want to hear something more.

⁹ Everything continues to be the same as it has always been.

Things that happen have happened previously, and they will happen again.

What has been done before will be done again.

There is nothing really new in this world.

¹⁰ Sometimes people say, "Look at this! This is something new!"

But it has existed previously.

It existed before we were born.

¹¹ People do not remember the things that happened long ago,

and in the future, people will not remember what we are doing now.

¹² I, the Teacher, have been the king of Israel for many years, ruling in Jerusalem.

¹³ By using my wisdom, I concentrated on understanding everything that was being done on the earth. It is a task that wears me out, just like anyone else who tries it.

¹⁴ It seems that nothing that happens on the earth really enables us to do anything useful. It is like trying to control the wind.

¹⁵ Many things that are crooked cannot be caused to become straight.

We cannot count things that we cannot see.

¹⁶ I said to myself, "I am wiser than any of those who ruled in Jerusalem before me. I am wiser and know more than any of them!" ¹⁷ So I determined to learn more about being wise, and also to learn about doing things that are very stupid and foolish. But I found out that trying to understand those things was also useless, like trying to control the wind. ¹⁸ Anyone who becomes very wise also becomes very

frustrated. The more one knows, the sadder he becomes.

Chapter 2

¹ Then I said to myself, "Well, I will try to do everything that I enjoy. I will find out whether doing what I enjoy can truly enable me to be happy." But I found out that doing that was also useless. ² So I said to myself, "It is foolish to laugh all the time, and continually doing what makes me happy does not bring any lasting benefit." ³ So, after thinking a lot about it, I decided to cheer myself up by drinking a lot of wine. While I was still trying to be wise, I acted stupidly. I tried to learn what people can do to be happy during the short time that they are alive on the earth. ⁴ I did great things. I caused houses to be built for myself and vineyards to be planted. ⁵ I made gardens and parks. Then I planted the gardens with many kinds of fruit trees. ⁶ I built pools of water to store water to irrigate the fruit trees. ⁷ I bought male and female slaves. Babies who later became my slaves were born in my palace. I also owned more livestock than any of the previous kings in Jerusalem had owned. ⁸ I also accumulated large amounts of silver and gold that were acquired from the treasures of kings and rulers of provinces. I owned men and women who sang for me, and I had many wives and concubines, whom men all over the world would enjoy possessing. ⁹ So I gained more power and wealth than any king who had ruled before me in Jerusalem, and I allowed my wisdom to continue to guide me.

¹⁰ I got everything that I saw and wanted.

I did everything that I thought would enable me to be happy.

All the things that I enjoyed were like a reward for all my hard work.

¹¹ But then I thought about all the hard work that I had done to obtain all those things.

I saw that none of my work brought me any lasting benefit.

It was all like trying to control the wind.

¹² Then I started to think about being wise, and also about being foolish.

I said to myself, "I certainly do not think that anybody will be able to do anything better than I can."

¹³ And I thought, "Surely it is better to be wise than to be foolish,

like light is better than darkness,

¹⁴ because wise people walk in the daylight and can see where they are going,

but foolish people walk in the darkness and cannot see where they are going."

But I also realized that both wise people and foolish people eventually die.

¹⁵ So I said to myself,

"I am very wise, but I will die at the end of my life like foolish people do.

So how has it benefited me to be very wise?

I do not understand why people consider that it is valuable to be wise.

¹⁶ Wise people and foolish people all die.

And after we die, we will all eventually be forgotten."

¹⁷ So I hated being alive, because all the work that we do here on the earth distressed me. It all seemed to be useless, like trying to control the wind.

¹⁸ I also began to hate all the hard work that I had done here on the earth, because when I die, everything that I have acquired will belong to the one who inherits it after me. ¹⁹ And who knows whether that person will be wise or foolish? But even if he is foolish, he will acquire all the things that I worked very hard and wisely to get. ²⁰ I thought about all the hard work that I had done in this world. It seemed useless, and I became depressed. ²¹ Some people work wisely and skillfully, using the things that they have learned. But when they die, they leave everything, and someone who has not worked for those things acquires them. That fact also seemed to be senseless and caused me to be discouraged. ²² So it is useless for people to work for all they do. ²³ Every day the work that they do causes them to experience pain and to be worried. And during the night their minds are not able to rest. That also shows how temporary everything is.

²⁴ So I decided that the best thing that we can do is to enjoy what we eat and drink, and also to enjoy our work. And I realized that those things are what God intends for us. ²⁵ There is absolutely no one who is able to enjoy those things if God does not give those things to him. ²⁶ God enables those who please him to be wise, to know many things, and to enjoy many things. But if sinful people work hard and become rich, God can take their money away from them and give it to those who please him. However, the reason for that is also something that is difficult for me to understand. It seems useless that they worked so hard; it is like trying to control the wind.

Chapter 3

¹ There is a right time for everything,

a time for everything that we do in this world.

² There is the right time for any certain person to be born, and there is the right time for him to die.

There is the right time to plant crops, and there is the right time to harvest crops.

³ There is the right time to kill people, and there is the right time to heal people.

There is the right time to tear things down, and there is the right time to build things.

⁴ There is the right time to cry, and there is the right time to laugh.

There is the right time to mourn, and there is the right time to dance joyfully.

⁵ There is the right time to throw away stones from a field, and there is the right time to gather stones to build walls.

There is the right time to embrace people, and there is the right time to keep from embracing them.

⁶ There is the right time to search for things, and there is the right time to stop searching for things.

There is the right time to keep things, and there is the right time to throw things away.

⁷ There is the right time to tear our clothes because we are grieving, and there is the right time to mend our clothes.

There is the right time to say nothing, and there is the right time for speaking.

⁸ There is the right time when we should love things that people do, and there is the right time when we should hate things that people do.

There is the right time for war, and there is the right time for peace.

⁹ What do people gain from all the work that they do? ¹⁰ I have seen the work that God has given people to do. ¹¹ God has fixed a time that is right for everything to happen. He has also caused people to realize that there are things that will last forever. But in spite of that, no one can completely understand everything that God has done, from the time that he starts doing things until he finishes them. ¹² I know that the best thing for us people to do is to rejoice and to do good things during the time that we are alive. ¹³ And I also know that everyone should enjoy what they eat and drink, and enjoy the work that they do. Those are gifts that God gives to us. ¹⁴ I also know that what God does endures forever. No one can add to what God does, and no one can take away from the things that he does. God does those things in order that people will honor him.

¹⁵ Things that exist now have already existed previously,

and things that will happen in the future have already happened previously;

God causes us to want to understand mysteries.

¹⁶ Furthermore, I saw that on this earth, even in the courts where we expect judges to make right decisions about what people had done, they did many wicked things.

¹⁷ So I said to myself, "God will judge both righteous people and wicked people. There is certainly a time for him to do that because there is a time for him to do everything."

¹⁸ And regarding humans, I also said to myself, "God is testing us, to show us that in one way people are no different than animals." ¹⁹ What happens to people happens to animals. Animals die, and people die. We all must breathe to remain alive. People have no advantage over animals in that way. Everything disappears

so quickly. ²⁰ People and animals all die and are buried. We are all made of soil, and when we die, our corpses become soil again. ²¹ No one knows if people go up and animals go down to the place where the dead are.

²² So I think that the best thing for us people to do is to be happy about the work that we do, because that is what God has given to us. I say this because no one of us knows what happens to us after we die.

Chapter 4

¹ I thought some more about all the suffering that people are made to experience on the earth.

I thought about the tears of people who were oppressed

and who had no one to comfort them.

Those who oppress them have power,

and there is no one able to comfort the oppressed.

² So I thought that those who are already dead are more fortunate

than those who are still alive.

³ And those who have not yet been born are even more fortunate than those two kinds of people,

because those who have not been born have not seen all the evil things that are done on the earth.

⁴ I also thought about all the hard work that people do and the things they are able to accomplish. And I thought about how someone who works hard sometimes makes his neighbor jealous. I decided that this also is something that is not accomplishing anything useful. It is like trying to control the wind.

⁵ Foolish people refuse to work.

They sit idly with their hands folded and do not work.

So they ruin themselves.

⁶ So some say, "It is better to be content with working quietly for a little bit of money,

than to work anxiously and try to get a lot of money,

which is as useless as trying to control the wind."

⁷ I thought about something else that happens on the earth that seems useless.

⁸ There are people who live alone;

they do not have a family nor even children or any brothers or sisters living with them.

Every day they work very hard without stopping; they make a lot of money,

but they are never satisfied with the things that they get.

They ask themselves,

"Why am I working so hard; whom am I actually helping?

Why am I not doing things that I would enjoy doing?

What I have been doing seems useless." This is very bad.

⁹ Having someone work with you is better than being by yourself all the time.

If you have a friend, he can help you to do your work.

¹⁰ If you fall down, he can help you get up again.

But if you fall down when you are alone, you will have trouble,

because there is no one to help you stand up.

¹¹ Similarly, if two people lie down together,

they can help each other to remain warm.

But someone who sleeps alone will certainly not be warm.

¹² Someone who is alone can easily be attacked and defeated by another person,

but two people can help each other and resist someone who attacks them.

Three people can defend themselves even more easily,

like a rope that is made from three cords is harder to break than a rope made from two cords.

¹³ A young man who is poor but wise is a better person than a foolish old king who refuses to pay attention when people try to give him good advice. ¹⁴ It is possible for a young man like that to succeed and some day become king, even if his parents were poor or even if he was in prison in the past. ¹⁵ But then some other young man becomes king, and everyone starts to support him. ¹⁶ Large crowds of people crowd around him. But after a few years, they will be tired of him, too. So it is all senseless, like trying to control the wind.

Chapter 5

¹ Be careful when you approach God in his house. Listen well to him. That is better than offering sacrifices to him and then not obeying him, which is foolish.

² Do not speak too quickly without thinking about the words you say;

and do not be too quick in your heart to complain about something to God.

Remember that God is very different from you and he is in heaven.

You, however, are very limited and you must live all your life here on earth.

So think carefully about what you say to God, and do not speak without thinking about how you should speak to him.

³ If you are continually thinking and worrying about things,

you will have bad dreams about them and not rest well.

And the more you talk,

the more likely it will be that you will say things that are foolish.

⁴ When you solemnly promise God that you will do something, do not foolishly delay in doing it, because God is not pleased with foolish people. Do all the things that you promise God that you will do. ⁵ It is better to not promise anything than to promise to do something and then not do it. ⁶ Do not let the things that you promise to do cause you to sin by not doing them. And if you promise God that you will do something but then do not do it, do not say to God's priest that it was a mistake for you to promise to do that. If you do that, God can destroy everything you have worked to accomplish. ⁷ Promising to do something and not doing it is like having a useless dream. Instead, honor God by doing what you promised him that you would do.

⁸ Do not be surprised if you see poor people being oppressed. There are people able to stop others from oppressing them, but even these people are under the power of someone even higher. ⁹ Even though people throughout the land own their fields, the king forces them to give him some of the crops that they harvest.

¹⁰ Everyone who tries to get as much money as they can

will never think that they have enough.

They will never be satisfied with the money that they have.

That fact also makes no sense.

¹¹ The more money that people have, the more they want to spend it.

People who have a lot of money do not benefit from it,

except to look at it and admire it.

¹² Those who work hard sleep peacefully at night,

even if they do not have much food to eat.

But rich people do not sleep well

because they worry about their money.

¹³ I have seen another terrible thing that happens here on the earth.

People save up all their money and become rich,

but they are miserable because they store up their money.

¹⁴ If something happens that causes their money to be gone,

then when they die,

there is no money for their children.

¹⁵ When we are born,

we do not bring anything with us,

and when we die,

we take nothing with us

from all that we have earned by working hard.

¹⁶ That also seems to make no sense.

People bring nothing into the world when they are born,

and when they leave this world they take nothing with them.

They have worked hard,

but they receive no lasting benefit.

¹⁷ Furthermore, rich people are always miserable, sad,

and depressed.

¹⁸ So the best thing for people to do here on the earth during the few years that God allows them to be alive is to eat, drink, and enjoy their work, because those are the things that he allows them to do. ¹⁹ If people are rich and have a lot of possessions, and are able to enjoy the things that they have and to enjoy their work, those things are also gifts from God. ²⁰ Those people do not think much about everything that has happened during their lifetime, because God makes sure that they keep working at what they enjoy.

Chapter 6

¹ I have seen something else here on this earth that troubles people. ² God enables some people to receive a lot of money and possessions and to be honored by him. They have everything that they want. But God sometimes does not allow them to enjoy those things. Someone else gets them and enjoys them. That seems senseless and unfair.

³ Someone might have a hundred children and live for many years. But if he is not able to enjoy the things that he has acquired, and if he is not buried properly after he dies, I say that a child that is dead when it is born is more fortunate. ⁴ This is true, even though that dead baby's birth is meaningless—even though it does not have a name, and its brief life becomes only a sad memory in the future. ⁵

That baby does not live to see the sun or know anything. But even so, it finds more rest than rich people do who are alive. ⁶ Even if people should live for two thousand years, if they do not enjoy the things that God gives to them, it would have been better for them never to have been born.

All people who live a long time certainly all go to the same place—to the grave.

⁷ People work hard to earn enough money to buy food to eat,

but often they never get enough to eat.

⁸ So it seems that wise people do not receive more lasting benefits

than foolish people do.

And it seems that poor people do not benefit from knowing how to conduct their lives.

⁹ It is better to enjoy the things that we already have

than to constantly want more things.

Continually wanting more things is senseless,

like trying to control the wind.

¹⁰ All the things that exist on the earth have been given names.

Everyone knows what people are like,

so it is useless to argue with God,

who is stronger than we are.

¹¹ The more that we talk,

the more often we say things that are senseless,

so it certainly does not benefit us to talk a lot.

¹² No human being can know everything that is good for himself in this life. People live for a few seemingly meaningless days. Life passes by quickly, like a shadow, and no one know what is coming after we die. We live for only a short time, and then we disappear like a vapor.

Chapter 7

¹ It is better that other people honor us than to have fine perfume.

The day that we die is better than the day that we are born.

² It is better to go to a house where people are mourning about someone who has died

than to go to a house where people are feasting,

because everyone will die some day,

and people should think about when they will die.

³ It is better to be sad than to be always laughing,

because when we are sad, we can think better about the things that will make us wise and happy.

⁴ Wise people go to where others are mourning to comfort them,

but foolish people only search for those who are laughing.

⁵ It is better to pay attention to someone who is rebuking you

than to listen to the songs of a foolish person.

⁶ By listening to foolish people laughing we will not learn anymore than by listening to the crackling of thorns being burned under a pot.

Listening to fools is senseless.

⁷ When wise people say to others, "You must pay me a lot of money for me to protect you,"

that causes those wise people to become foolish.

Those who accept bribes become unable to do what is right.

⁸ Finishing something is better than starting something,

and being patient is better than being proud.

⁹ Do not quickly lose your temper,

because it is foolish people who become very angry.

¹⁰ Do not say, "Things were a lot better previously,"

because it is only foolish people who say that.

¹¹ Being wise is like inheriting valuable things.

There are lasting benefits for anyone on earth who is wise.

¹² We are sometimes protected by being wise,

as we are sometimes protected by having a lot of money.

However, being wise is better than having a lot of money,

because being wise prevents us from doing foolish things that would cause us to die.

¹³ Think carefully about what God has done.

Certainly no one can cause to become straight

the things that God has caused to be crooked.

¹⁴ When things are going well for you, be happy,

and when things are not going well for you,

remember that God is the one who causes good things to happen

and who also causes disasters.

Yet God does not reveal to anyone exactly what his future holds.

¹⁵ During all the time that I have been alive I have seen many things that seem senseless.

I have seen righteous people die while they were still young,

and I have seen wicked people remain alive for a very long time

in spite of their continuing to be wicked.

¹⁶ So do not think that you are very righteous,

and do not think that you are very wise,

because if you think those things, you will destroy yourself.

¹⁷ If you do what is evil or do what is foolish,

you might die while you are still young.

¹⁸ Continue to try to become wise and do what is right.

Both of those things are found in the person who always respects God.

¹⁹ If you are wise, you will be more powerful

than the ten most powerful men in your city.

²⁰ There is no one in this world who always does what is right,

who never sins.

²¹ Do not pay attention to everything that people say,

because if you do that, you might hear your servant curse you.

²² After all, you yourself know very well that you have also cursed other people.

²³ I said to myself that I would use my wisdom to study all the things that I have written about,

but I was not able to do it.

²⁴ Wisdom seems to be far from me.

There is no one who can truly understand everything.

²⁵ But I decided to investigate things and by my wisdom try to understand the reason for everything.

I also wanted to understand why people act wickedly

and why they act very foolishly.

²⁶ One thing I learned was that allowing a woman to seduce you is worse than dying.

A woman who tries to seduce men is as dangerous as a trap.

If you allow her to put her arms around you, it will be as though she is fastening you with chains.

Women like that will capture sinful men,

but men who please God will escape from such women.

²⁷ This is what I have learned. I tried to learn more and more about things to try to find out the reason for everything, ²⁸ and I continued to try to learn more, but I could not find all that I was searching for. But one thing that I found out was that among one thousand people I found one righteous man, but I did not find even one righteous woman. ²⁹ I have learned only this: That when God created people, they were righteous, but they have found many ways to complicate their own lives.

Chapter 8

¹ I will tell you about those who are truly wise,

with the result that they can explain why everything happens.

Being wise enables people to be happy and enables them to smile.

² You solemnly promised God that you would obey what the king commands, so do that. ³ Do not do anything rashly when it concerns the king. And do not join with those who want to rebel against him, because the king will do what he wants to do. ⁴ We need to obey what the king says more than we need to obey what anyone else says, for no one can say to the king, "Why are you doing that?"

⁵ If you obey what the king commands, he will not harm you.

So be wise, and know the correct time to do things and the right way to do them.

⁶ Although people experience many troubles,

there is a right way to do them and a right time to do them.

⁷ No one knows what will happen in the future,

so there is no one who can tell him what is going to happen.

⁸ We cannot control our breathing,

and we cannot control when we will stop breathing and die.

Soldiers are not permitted to go home during a battle,

and evil people will not be saved by doing what is evil.

⁹ I thought about all those things, and I thought about all the other things that happen on this earth. I saw that sometimes people are able to do severe harm to others. ¹⁰ I also saw that sometimes after evil people die, they are highly honored at their funerals by the people in the

cities where they had done evil deeds. It was difficult to understand why that happens.

¹¹ If evil people are not immediately punished, it causes other people to also want to do evil things. ¹² But even if sinful people commit a hundred crimes, and even if they live for a long time, I know that things will go better for those who honor and revere God. ¹³ I also know that things will not go well for those who are evil, because they do not honor God. Shadows do not last a long time. Similarly, evil people will not live a long time.

¹⁴ Another thing that sometimes happens on this earth is that bad things happen to righteous people, and good things happen to evil people. It is difficult to understand why that happens. ¹⁵ So I decided that I would recommend that people be happy while they are alive, because the best thing that people can do here on this earth is to eat and drink and be happy. Enjoying those things will help people while they do their work, all the days that God has given to them to remain alive here on the earth.

¹⁶ I thought about being wise and about people who work very hard on this earth, working day and night and not taking time to sleep. ¹⁷ Then I thought about everything that God has done, and I realized that no one can understand everything that happens here on this earth. Truly, people are not able to fully understand everything that God does, even if they try hard to do that. Even if wise people claim that they understand it all, they cannot.

Chapter 9

¹ I thought about all those things, and I decided that God controls what happens to everyone, even those who are wise and

those who are righteous. No one knows whether others will love them or whether they will hate them.

² But we know that some time in the future we will all die.

It does not matter whether we act righteously or wickedly,

whether we are good or whether we are bad,

whether we are acceptable for worshipping God

or whether we have done things to cause us to be unacceptable.

It does not matter if we offer sacrifices to God or if we do not.

It does not matter if we do what we have promised God that we will do or if we do not.

We all die.

The same thing will happen to good people and to sinful people,

to those who solemnly promise to do things for God and to those who are afraid to make such promises.

³ It seems wrong that the same thing happens to everyone on this earth. Everyone dies. Furthermore, people's inner beings are full of evil. People do foolish things while they are alive, and then they join those who are dead. ⁴ While we are alive, we can expect that good things will happen to us. We despise dogs, but it is better to be a dog that is alive than to be a majestic lion that is dead.

⁵ We who are alive know that some day we will die,

but dead people do not know anything.

Dead people do not receive any more rewards,

and people soon forget them.

⁶ While they were alive, they loved people, they hated people, they envied people,

but they stop doing any of that when they die.

They will never again be a part of anything that happens here on the earth.

⁷ So I say, be joyful while you eat your food and drink your wine, because that is what God wants you to do. ⁸ Wear nice clothes and cause your face to have a good appearance. ⁹ Enjoy living with your wife whom you love, all during the time that God has given to you to be alive here on this earth. Even though it is difficult to understand why many things happen, this life with your wife is your reward for doing the work that you do here on this earth. ¹⁰ Whatever you are able to do, do it with all your energy, because at some point you will die, and in the place of the dead where you are going, no one works or plans to do anything or knows anything or has any wisdom.

¹¹ I have seen something else here on the earth:

The person who runs fastest does not always win the race,

the strongest soldiers do not always win the battle,

the wisest people do not always have food,

the smartest people do not always become rich,

and the people who have studied a lot are not always honored by others.

We cannot always control what things will happen to us and where they will happen.

¹² No one knows when he will die.

Fish are cruelly caught in a net,

and birds are caught in snares.

Similarly, people experience disasters

at times when they do not expect them to happen.

¹³ Once I saw here on this earth something that a wise man did that impressed me.

¹⁴ There was a small town, where only a few people lived. The army of a great king came to that town and surrounded it. They built dirt ramps up against the walls in order to climb up and attack the town. ¹⁵ In that town there was someone who was poor but very wise. Because of what that person suggested, the town was saved, but people soon forgot about him. ¹⁶ So I realized that although being wise is better than being strong, if you are poor, no one will appreciate what you do, and people will soon forget what you said.

¹⁷ A wise man who speaks quietly—people hear him better

than they hear a king who is shouting to a foolish crowd.

¹⁸ Being wise is more useful

than having a lot of weapons;

however, if a person does just one foolish thing,

he might ruin many good things that others have done.

Chapter 10

¹ A few dead flies in a bottle of perfume cause all the perfume to stink.

Similarly, a small amount of acting foolishly can have a greater effect than acting wisely.

² If people think sensibly, it will lead them to do what is right;

if they think foolishly, it causes them to do what is wrong.

³ Even while foolish people walk along the road,

they show that they do not have good sense.

They show everyone that they are not wise.

⁴ Do not quit your job when a ruler is angry with you.

If you remain calm, he will probably stop being angry.

⁵ There is something else that I have seen here on this earth,

something that rulers sometimes do that is wrong:

⁶ they appoint foolish people to have important positions,

while they appoint rich people to have unimportant positions.

⁷ They allow slaves to ride on horses like rich people usually do,

but they force officials to walk like slaves usually do.

⁸ It is possible that those who dig pits will fall into one of those pits.

It is possible that someone who tears down a wall

will be bitten by a snake that is in that wall.

⁹ If you work in a quarry,

it is possible that a stone will fall on you and injure you.

It is possible that men who split logs

will be injured by one of those logs.

¹⁰ If your axe is not sharp,

you will need to work harder to cut down a tree,

but by using wisdom, you will succeed.

¹¹ If a snake bites someone before the snake is charmed,

then that person's ability to charm snakes will not benefit him.

¹² Wise people say what is sensible, and because of that, people honor them,

but foolish people are destroyed by what they themselves say.

¹³ When foolish people start to talk, they say foolish things,

and they end by saying things that are both wicked and foolish.

¹⁴ They talk too much.

None of us knows what will happen in the future,

or what will happen after we die.

¹⁵ Foolish people become very exhausted by the work that they do,

with the result that they are even unable to find the road to their town.

¹⁶ Terrible things will happen to the people of a nation whose ruler is a foolish young person,

whose leaders continually eat, all during the day, every day.

¹⁷ But how fortunate is a nation if its ruler comes from a noble family,

if its leaders feast only at the proper times,

and if they eat and drink only to be strong, not to become drunk.

¹⁸ Some men are very lazy and do not repair the beams of their roof,

with the result that the roof sags and collapses.

If they do not repair the roof,

water will leak into the house when it rains.

¹⁹ Eating food and drinking wine makes us laugh and be happy.

If you have enough money, you can buy everything you need.

²⁰ Do not even think about cursing the king,

or about cursing rich people, even when you are alone in your bedroom.

It is always possible that a little bird will hear what you are saying

and tell those people what you said about them.

Chapter 11

¹ Give generously to others some of the money that you have;

if you do that, later you will get back an equal amount.

² Share some of what you have with seven or eight others,

because you do not know when you will experience a disaster and will need their help.

³ It is true that when clouds are full of water,

they pour rain on the earth.

Similarly, wherever a tree falls on the ground,

that is where it will remain.

⁴ If farmers see in what direction the wind is blowing,

they will know whether it is wise at that time to plant things or not.

It is also true that if farmers look at the clouds and see that they are blowing from the west and will bring rain,

they will not try to harvest their crops on that day.

⁵ We do not know where the wind comes from or where it goes,

and we do not know how bodies are formed in a woman's womb.

Similarly, God is the one who makes everything,

and we cannot fully understand what he does.

⁶ Start planting your seeds in the morning,

and do not stop planting them until the evening,

because you do not know which ones will grow better,

the ones you plant in the morning or the ones you plant later in the day,

or whether both will grow well.

⁷ It is very delightful to be alive

and see the sun rise every morning.

⁸ Even if people live for many years,

they should enjoy all of them.

But they should not forget that some day they will die

and then they will never be able to see any light again,

and they do not know what will happen to them after they die.

⁹ You young people, be happy while you are still young.

Enjoy doing the things that you want to do.

But do not forget that God will judge you one day

concerning all the things that you do.

¹⁰ So when you are young, do not worry about anything,

and do not pay attention to the pains that you have in your body,

because we will not remain young and strong forever.

Chapter 12

¹ While you are still young, keep thinking about God, who created you.

Do that before you are old and you experience many troubles,

during the years when you say,

"I no longer enjoy being alive."

² When you become old, the light from the sun and moon and stars will seem dim to you,

and it will seem that the rain clouds always return quickly after it rains.

³ Then your arms that you use to protect yourself,

and your legs that support your body will become weak.

Many of the teeth that you use to grind your food will fall out,

and your eyes that you use to look out of windows will not see clearly.

⁴ Your ears will no longer hear the noise in the streets,

and you will no longer be able to hear clearly the sound of people grinding grain with millstones.

You will be awakened in the morning by hearing the birds singing,

but you will not be able to hear well the songs that the birds sing.

⁵ You will be afraid to be in high places and afraid of dangers on the roads that you walk on.

Your hair will become white like the flowers of almond trees.

When you try to walk, you will drag yourself along like grasshoppers,

and you will no longer desire a woman at all.

Then you will die and go to your eternal home,

and the people who will mourn for you will be in the streets.

⁶ Think much about God now, because soon our lives will end,

like silver chains or golden bowls that break easily,

or like pitchers that are broken at the water fountain,

or like broken pulleys at a well.

⁷ Then our corpses will decay and become dirt again,

and our spirits will return to God, the one who gave us our spirits.

⁸ So I, the Teacher, say again that everything is temporary and useless.

⁹ I, the Teacher, was considered to be a very wise man, and I taught the people many things. I assembled and wrote down many proverbs, and I carefully thought about them and put them in order. ¹⁰ I searched for words that would be pleasing to hear, and what I have written is reliable and true.

¹¹ The things that I and other wise people say give directions, and they are like nails that fix things together and last a long time. When people follow clear and understandable directions, they know what is right, and, so then they can do it. The sayings of the wise are like our shepherd who guides us where we need to go. ¹²

So, my son, pay careful attention to what I have written, and choose carefully what you read that others have written. This work of writing many books is endless.

Trying to study them all will be an endless task.

¹³ Now you have heard all that I have told you,

and here is the conclusion:

Revere God, and obey his commandments,

because those commandments summarize everything that people should do.

¹⁴ And do not forget that God will judge everything that we do,

good things and bad things,

even things that we do secretly.

SONG OF SONGS

Chapter 1

¹ This is King Solomon's most beautiful song. The young woman speaking to herself

² I wish he would kiss me on my lips,
The woman speaks to her lover

because your love for me is more
delightful than wine.

³ The fragrance of the perfume on your
skin is very sweet.

And your honor is very great and is
spreading,

like the fragrance of the special oil
that you have put on your skin.

That is why the other young women are
attracted to you.

⁴ Take me quickly;
take me to your home. The woman
speaking to herself

He is like a king to me;

he has brought me into his bedroom.
The woman speaking to her lover

I am very happy about you;

my love for you is better than wine.

It is not surprising that the other young
women adore you. The woman speaking
to the other women

⁵ You women of Jerusalem,

I am dark but beautiful;

my dark skin is like the tents in Kedar,
or like the beautiful curtains in
Solomon's palace.

⁶ But do not stare at me because the sun
has made my skin dark.

my brothers were angry with me,

so they forced me to work out in the
sunshine in the vineyards,

so I was not able to take good care
of my body. The woman speaking to her
lover

⁷ You whom I love, where will you take
your flock of sheep today?

Where will you allow them to rest at
noontime?

I want to know because it is not right
for me to wander around like a prostitute

looking for you among the flocks that
belong to your friends. Her lover answer-
ing her

⁸ You who are the most beautiful of all
the women,

if you search for me and do not know
where I will take my sheep,

follow the tracks of the sheep.

Then allow your young goats to graze
near the shepherds' tents.

⁹ You are beautiful, my darling, like one
of the young female horses

that pull the chariots belonging to the
king of Egypt.

¹⁰ Your earrings are decorations for your
cheeks,

and there are strings of beads around
your neck.

¹¹ I will make for you some gold earrings
that are decorated with silver. The
woman speaking to herself

¹² While the king was on his couch,
the smell of my perfume spread
around the room.

¹³ The man who loves me stays between
my breasts during the night like a bag of
perfume tied around my neck.

¹⁴ He is like a bunch of flowers from the vineyards at En Gedi. Her lover speaking to her

¹⁵ You whom I love, you are beautiful;
you are very beautiful!

Your eyes are as delightful as doves.
The woman speaking to her lover

¹⁶ You who love me, you are very delightful,

you are wonderful!

This green grass in the countryside will be like a couch where we can lie down.

¹⁷ Branches of cedar trees will shade us;
the fir branches overhead are like a roof for us.

Chapter 2

The woman speaking to her lover

¹ I am like an insignificant flower in the plains,

like an insignificant lily growing in a valley. The man speaking to her

² Among all the other young women,
you, the one whom I love, are like a lily growing among thorns! The woman speaking to herself

³ Among all the other men, this man is the one who loves me; he is like a tree that grows in the forest.

Under his shade I am safe from the sun.

When he is close to me, it is like eating sweet fruit.

⁴ He led me to the room where I feasted on his love,

where he made love to me as if he were covering me with his love. The woman speaking to her lover

⁵ Refresh me and strengthen me with your lovemaking.

It is like eating raisins and other fruit,
because I want you to love me even more. The woman speaking to herself

⁶ I hope he puts his left arm under my head

and holds me close with his right arm.
The woman speaking to the other women

⁷ You young women of Jerusalem,

I want you to take an oath, while the does and gazelles are listening, that you will not

cause us to desire love

until the right time comes. The woman speaking to herself

⁸ I hear the voice of the man who loves me.

It is as though he is leaping over the mountains

and skipping over the hills

⁹ like a deer or a gazelle.

Now he is standing outside the wall of our house,

looking in the window,

and peering through the lattice.

¹⁰ He spoke to me and said,

"You whom I love, get up;

my beautiful one, come with me!

¹¹ Look, the winter has ended;

the rain has stopped.

¹² The flowers are blooming throughout the country.

It is now time to sing;

we hear the pigeons cooing.

¹³ There are young figs on the fig trees,
and there are blossoms on the
grapevines
and their fragrance fills the air.
You whom I love, get up;
my beautiful one, come with me!

¹⁴ You are like a dove hiding in the rocky
cliff.

Show me your face,
and allow me to hear your voice,
because your voice is sounds sweet,
and your face is lovely." The woman
speaking to the man

¹⁵ There are other men who ruin women
as wild dogs ruin vineyards;
do not allow those men to attack me.

¹⁶ This man whom I love—I belong to
him, and he belongs to me.

He takes great pleasure in kissing my
lips,

as sheep love to graze in pastures. The
woman speaking to her lover

¹⁷ You whom I love, you must go away
before dawn, when the darkness disap-
pears.

Go away quickly, like a gazelle or like
a young deer running on the high hills.

Chapter 3

The woman speaking to herself

¹ During the entire night while I lay on
my bed,

I was longing to see the one I love
with all my heart.

I wanted him to come,

but he did not.

² So I said to myself,

"I will get up now and walk around the
city,

through the streets and plazas,
to search for the one whom I love with
all my heart."

So I got up and went out to look for him,
but I could not find him.

³ The city watchmen saw me
while they were patrolling in the city.
I asked them,

"Have you seen the one whom I love
with all my heart?"

⁴ As soon as I walked past them,
I found the one whom I love with all
my heart.

I clung to him and would not let him go
until I brought him to my mother's
house,

to the room where my mother had
conceived me. The woman speaking to
the other women

⁵ You women of Jerusalem,
solemnly promise me, while the
does and gazelles are listening, that you
will not

disturb us while we are making love
until we are ready to stop. The young
woman speaking to herself

⁶ What is that I see coming from the
wilderness,

something that is stirring up dust like
a column of smoke

like smoke from burning myrrh and in-
cense

made from spices imported by mer-
chants?

⁷ It is Solomon's litter carried by servants and

surrounded by sixty bodyguards
chosen from the strongest soldiers in Israel.

⁸ They all have swords
and they all are trained to use them.

Each one has his sword strapped to his side

and is prepared for dangers that can happen during the night or day.

⁹ King Solomon commanded his servants to make that litter for him;

it was made with wood from Lebanon.

¹⁰ The canopy that covered it was held up by silver posts,

and the back of the litter was embroidered with gold.

The seat was covered with purple cloth
lovingly made by the women of Jerusalem.

¹¹ You women of Jerusalem,

come and look at King Solomon

wearing the headdress that his mother put on his head

on the day when he was married,
the happiest day of his life.

Chapter 4

The woman's lover speaking to her

¹ My darling, you are beautiful,
you are very beautiful!

Underneath your veil, your eyes are as gentle as doves.

Your long black hair moves from side to side like a flock of black goats

moving down the slopes of Mount Gilead.

² Your teeth are very white,

as white as sheep whose wool people have just cut,

as white as sheep that people have just washed in a stream.

You have all of your teeth on both sides;
none of them is missing.

³ Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon,
and your mouth is lovely.

Beneath your veil,

your cheeks are round and rosy like the halves of a pomegranate.

⁴ Your long neck is beautiful, like the tower of King David

that was built using layers of stone.

The ornaments on the necklaces around your neck are like a thousand shields hanging on the walls of a tower;

each one belongs to a warrior.

⁵ Your breasts are as delicate as two young twin deer

eating grass among lilies.

⁶ Until dawn tomorrow morning,

when the nighttime shadows disappear,

I will lie close to your breasts,

because they are like two hills that smell like sweet spices.

⁷ My darling, you are completely beautiful;

your body is perfectly formed!

⁸ My darling, it is as though you were in Lebanon

far away, where I cannot reach you.

Come back to me.

It is as though you were on the top of
Mount Hermon

or the nearby peaks, where I cannot
go to you.

Come from the mountains, where the
lions have their dens

and where the leopards live on the
mountains.

⁹ You who are most dear to me, when I
see you,

you force me to love you

when I see you look at me, when I see a
little of the jewelry that you wear around
your neck.

¹⁰ My bride, your love for me is delight-
ful!

It more delightful than wine!

The fragrance of your perfume

is more pleasing than any spice!

¹¹ When you kiss me, it is better than
when I eat honey.

Your kisses are as sweet as milk mixed
with honey.

The aroma of your clothes

is like the aroma of cedar trees in
Lebanon.

¹² You who are most dear to me, you are
like a garden that the owner keeps locked

in order that other men cannot enter
it;

you are like a spring that is covered

in order that others may not drink
from it.

¹³ You are like an orchard of
pomegranate trees

full of delicious fruit,

and plenty of plants that produce
henna and nard spices,

¹⁴ saffron and calamus and cinnamon
and many other kinds of incense,

myrrh and aloes

and many other fine spices.

¹⁵ You are like a fountain in a garden,

like a spring of clear water

that flows down from the mountains
of Lebanon. The young woman speaking
to her lover

¹⁶ I want the north wind and the south
wind to come,

and blow on my garden,

in order that the fragrance of the spices
will spread through the air.

Similarly, I want the one who loves me
to come and enjoy being close to me

like someone comes into a garden and
enjoys eating the fruit that grows there.

Chapter 5

The woman's lover speaking to her

¹ You who are most dear to me,

I have come to be next to you.

It will be as though I am gathering
myrrh with my other spices,

eating my honey and honeycomb,

and drinking my wine and my milk.

The woman's lover speaking to her

Friends, enjoy making love;

fully enjoy all that you do with each
other. The young woman speaking to her-
self

² I was asleep, and I had a dream.

In it I heard my lover knocking at the
door.

He said, "You who are dearer to me than my sister, my darling, my dear friend, my perfect one, my dove,

open the door for me!

My hair is wet from the dew,
from the mist that has fallen during the night."

³ But I had already taken off my robe;

I did not want to put it on again to open the door.

I had already washed my feet;

I did not want them to get dirty again.

⁴ The one who loves me put his hand through the opening in the door,

and I was thrilled in my inner being that he was there.

⁵ I got up to open the door for him,

but first I put a lot of myrrh on my hands.

It was dripping from my fingers

while I unlatched the bolt.

⁶ I opened the door for the man who loves me,

but he left.

He had turned away and was gone!

I was very disappointed.

I searched for him, but I could not find him;

I called him, but he did not answer.

⁷ The city watchmen saw me while they were walking around the city.

They beat me and wounded me

because they thought I was a prostitute;

those men who were guarding the city walls took my robe. The young woman speaking to the women of the city

⁸ You young women of Jerusalem,

I want you to take an oath

that if you see the man who loves me,

you will tell him that I want him so much that I feel sick. The women of the city speaking to the young woman

⁹ You who are the fairest among women,

why do you think that the one who loves you is better than other men?

In what way is he better than other men?

Why do you want us to swear that we will tell him that? The young woman speaking to the women of the city

¹⁰ It is because the man who loves me is handsome and healthy,

outstanding among other men.

¹¹ His head is beautiful, like purest gold;

his hair is wavy

and as black as a raven.

¹² His eyes as gentle as doves

along the streams;

the white parts of his eyes are as white as milk,

with what resembles jewels inlaid in them.

¹³ His cheeks are like a garden full of spice trees

that produce sweet-smelling perfume.

His lips are like lilies

that have myrrh dripping from them.

¹⁴ His arms are like gold rods that have rounded ends,

and that are decorated with precious stones.

His body is like ivory

that is decorated with sapphires.

¹⁵ His legs are like marble columns

that are set in bases made of pure gold.

He is majestic, like the mountains of Lebanon,

like delightful cedar trees.

¹⁶ His kisses are very sweet;

he is completely attractive.

You young women of Jerusalem,

this is why the man who loves me is better than all other men.

Chapter 6

The women of Jerusalem speaking to the young woman

¹ You who are the most beautiful of the women,

where has the one who loves you gone?

If you tell us which direction he went,

we will go with you to search for him.

The young woman speaking to herself

² The one who loves me has come to me, I, who am like his garden,

He has come to enjoy my charms,

to enjoy cuddling embracing me

and kissing my lips, which are like lilies.

³ I belong to the one who loves me, and the one who loves me belongs to me.

He has pleasure in kissing my lips,

like sheep enjoy grazing. The woman's lover speaking to her

⁴ My darling, you are beautiful,

as Tirzah the capital city of Israel and Jerusalem the capital city of Judah are beautiful;

you make me tremble, just as if I had seen a great army approach.

⁵ Stop looking at me like that,

because your eyes excite me very much.

Your long black hair moves from side to side like a flock of black goats

moving down the slopes of Mount Gilead.

⁶ Your teeth are very white

like a flock of sheep whose wool has just been shorn

and have come up from being washed in a stream.

You have all of your teeth on both sides;

none of them is missing.

⁷ Beneath your veil,

your cheeks are like the halves of a pomegranate. The woman's lover speaking to himself

⁸ Even if a king had 60 queens and 80 concubines

and more young women than anyone can count,

⁹ none of them would be like my dove, who is perfect,

you who are your mother's only daughter,

whom your mother considers to be very precious.

Other young women who see you say that you are fortunate,

and the queens and concubines recognize that you are very beautiful. What the queens and the concubines said

¹⁰ Who is this who looks like the dawn,

who is as beautiful to look at as the moon,

who is an endless mystery? The woman's lover speaking to himself

¹¹ I went down to some walnut trees

to look at the new plants that were growing in the valley.

I wanted to see if the grapevines had budded

and if the pomegranate trees were blooming.

¹² I was as happy as if

I were riding in a chariot belonging to a prince. The woman's lover speaking to her

¹³ You who are the perfect one,

come back to us, in order that I may see you! The young woman speaking to her lover

Why do you want to look at me, the one who is perfect,

dancing between two rows of dancers?

Chapter 7

The woman's lover speaking to her

¹ You, the daughter of a prince,

have lovely feet in your sandals.

Your curved hips are like jewels

that have been made by a skilled craftsman.

² Your navel is like a round bowl

that I hope will always be full of wine mixed with spices.

Your waist is like a pile of wheat

with lilies growing around it.

³ Your breasts are as delicate as two young twin deer.

⁴ Your neck is like a tower made of ivory.

Your eyes sparkle the pools in the city of Heshbon,

near the Bath Rabbim Gate.

Your nose is long, like the tower in Lebanon

that faces Damascus.

⁵ Your head is majestic like Mount Carmel.

Your long hair is shiny and black;

it is as though I, your king, am captured by your tresses.

⁶ My love, you are so beautiful and lovely

with all your delights.

⁷ You are stately like a palm tree,

and your breasts are like grape clusters.

⁸ I said to myself, "I will climb that palm tree

and take hold of those clusters of dates."

I want your breasts to be also like clusters of grapes that I can feel;

I want your breath to be like the sweet fragrance of apricots.

⁹ I want your kisses to be like very good wine.

When I kiss you, the woman who loves me,

I want it to be as if it was wine flowing over our mouths and teeth. The young woman speaking to her lover

¹⁰ I belong to the man who loves me,

and he desires me.

¹¹ You who love me, let us go to the countryside,

and sleep in a village somewhere.

¹² And let us go early to the vineyards
to see if the grapevines have budded
and if there are blossoms on them
that have opened,
and see if the pomegranate trees are
blooming,
and there I will allow you to make
love to me.
¹³ The mandrake plants are producing
a fragrant odor,
and we are surrounded by delightful
pleasures,
new ones and old ones,
pleasures that I have been saving to
give to you, the man who loves me.

Chapter 8

The young woman speaking to her lover

¹ I wish that everyone knew that we
love each other, just as they all know that
I have a brother,

my own brother, who nursed at my
mother's breasts.

Then whenever I met you outside, I
could kiss you,

and no one would criticize me.

² No one would object if I led you to our
mother's house,

to where our mother, who taught me
so many things, lives.

I would like to take you to our mother's
house so I could make love to you there.

That would be as delightful as juice
squeezed from pomegranates, as wine
mixed with spices. The young woman
speaking to herself

³ Oh yes! He will put his left arm under
my head,

and he will hold me close with his
right arm. The woman speaking to the
other women

⁴ I want you to promise me, you women
of Jerusalem,

that you will not disturb us while we
are making love

until we are ready to stop." The
women of Jerusalem speaking

⁵ Who is that woman who is coming up
from the wilderness,

the woman who is leaning on the man
who loves her? The young woman speak-
ing to her lover

I woke you up when you were under
the apricot tree

at the place where your mother con-
ceived you,

the place where she gave birth to you.

⁶ Keep me close to you,

like a seal on your heart,

or like a bracelet on your arm.

Our love for each other is as powerful
as death;

it is as strong as the grave.

It is as though our love for each other
bursts into flames

and burns like a hot fire.

⁷ Nothing can stop us from loving each
other,

not even a flood.

If a man tried to cause a woman to
love him by saying he would give her ev-
erything that is in his house,

she would refuse. The young woman's
brothers speaking among themselves

⁸ We have a younger sister,
and her breasts are not large yet.

So this is what we should do for her on
the day that we promise some young man
that he can marry her:

⁹ If her chest is as flat as a wall,
we will decorate it by putting silver
jewels that are like towers on her.

If she is as flat as a door,
we will decorate her with bits of cedar
wood. The young woman speaking to her-
self

¹⁰ My chest was previously flat like a
wall,
but now my breasts are big like tow-
ers.

So I am delightful to my beloved. The
young woman speaking to himself

¹¹ King Solomon had a vineyard at Baal
Hamon,
and he rented it to people for them to
farm it.

He required each one to pay him one
thousand pieces of silver each year for the
grapes that they harvested.

¹² But my body is like my own vineyard,
and you, my lover whom I call
“Solomon,” I am giving it to you.

You do not need to pay me a thousand
pieces of silver to enjoy my body,

but I will give two hundred pieces of
silver to those who take care of me. The
woman’s lover speaking to her

¹³ You are staying in the gardens,
my friends are listening to your voice;
so allow me to hear it, too! The young
woman speaking to her lover

¹⁴ You who love me, come to me quickly;

run to me like a gazelle or young deer,
because I am as delightful as hills of
spices.

ISAIAH

Chapter 1

¹ The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz, that Yahweh showed him about Judah and Jerusalem during the years of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

² Hear, O heavens, and listen, O earth, because this is what Yahweh said:

“I have raised people since they were born,

but they have rebelled against me.

³ Oxen know their owners,

and donkeys know who feeds them,
but Israel does not know;

Israel does not understand.”

⁴ Terrible things will happen to this sinful nation, this people group weighted down by their sin,

these children of people who do evil things,

these sons who are unjust.

They have left Yahweh,

the Holy One of Israel.

They have turned away from him.

⁵ Why do you do things for which Yahweh should punish you?

Why do you continue to rebel against him?

You are like someone whose

whole mind and heart are sick.

⁶ From the bottom of the foot to the top of the head,

nothing is healthy.

There are open wounds, cuts, and sores
that have not been cleaned or bandaged,

and no one has put oil on them to heal them.

⁷ Enemies have ruined your country;

they have burned your towns, and
there is no one left.

Foreigners plunder the crops in your fields while you watch;

they destroy everything that they see.

⁸ The city of Jerusalem has become as small as a shepherd's hut.

It is like a shelter in a vineyard;

it is like a watchman's hut in a field of melons.

It is a city surrounded by its enemies who are waiting to attack it.

⁹ If Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, had not allowed a few of his people to survive,

we would have all been destroyed,

like the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed.

¹⁰ Listen to what Yahweh has to say to you, you rulers of Sodom!

Listen to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah!

¹¹ “What do your many sacrifices mean to me?” says Yahweh;

“I do not want any more burnt offerings of rams, or the fat of bulls.

The blood of bulls, lambs, or goats does not make me happy.

¹² When you come to my temple to worship me,

who has told you to tramp around in my courtyard while you perform all those rituals?

¹³ Stop bringing to me those offerings,
because they are useless to me;

I am disgusted with the incense that
the priests burn!

And your feasts to celebrate the new
moon each month and your Sabbath days
and your other festivals—

I hate them because of the wicked
things that you do!

¹⁴ I hate all your celebrations of the new
moon and the other festivals that you cel-
ebrate.

They are like a heavy burden that I
am tired of carrying.

¹⁵ So when you lift up your hands to
pray to me,

I will not look at you.

Even if you pray to me often,

I will not listen to you,

because it is as though your hands are
covered with the blood of people whom
you have killed.

¹⁶ Wash your hearts and become clean!
Get rid of your evil behavior!

Stop doing things that are wrong!

¹⁷ Learn to do deeds that are good and
try to cause people to do what is just.

Stop people from mistreating others,
and defend orphans and widows when
people take them to court.”

¹⁸ Yahweh says, “You need to think about
what you do.

Even though your sins are like scarlet
red,

they will be as white as snow;

though your sins are like crimson red,
they will be as white as sheeps’ wool.

¹⁹ If you are willing to obey me,
you will eat good food from the land.

²⁰ But if you turn away from me and
rebel against me,

your enemies will slaughter you.”

That will happen because Yahweh said
it.

²¹ At one time you people of Jerusalem
faithfully worshiped only Yahweh,

but now you have become like prosti-
tutes who are not faithful to any husband.

The people there always acted justly
and righteously,

but now your city is full of murderers.

²² Your silver is no longer pure,

and your wine has become mixed
with water.

²³ Your leaders are rebels;

they are friends of thieves.

They all want to get money

and make others to give them gifts
in order to decide cases in court in their
favor.

They do not defend orphans in court,

and they do not help widows to get
what they should receive.

²⁴ Therefore Yahweh, commander of
the angel armies, the mighty God of Israel,
says,

“I will get revenge against those who
are against me,

and avenge myself on my enemies.

²⁵ I will raise my fist to strike you,

and I will punish you severely,

as though you were silver and I needed
to heat you very greatly to melt you and
get rid of the impurities.

²⁶ After that happens, I will give you good judges like you had in the past.

You will have wise counselors like you had long ago.

Then people will call your city a city where people act righteously,

a faithful city.”

²⁷ Because the people of Jerusalem will do what is fair,

Yahweh will restore their city,

and he will save those who repent

because of their righteousness.

²⁸ But he will crush rebels and sinners,

and those who forsake him will disappear.

²⁹ “You will be ashamed because you worshiped idols under the oak trees that you thought were sacred,

and you will be disgraced because you worshiped idols in the gardens that you loved so much.

³⁰ You will be like a very large tree that has withered leaves,

like a garden that has dried up because it has no water.

³¹ Those among you who are very strong will become like dry wood,

and the work they do will be like a spark.

Both they and the evil things that they do will burn up,

and no one will be able to put out the fire.”

Chapter 2

¹ This is a message that Yahweh gave to Isaiah son of Amoz, in a vision about Judah and Jerusalem.

² In the future, the hill on which Yahweh’s temple is built

will be the most important place on the earth.

It will be as though it is the highest mountain,

as though it has been raised up above all other hills,

and people from all over the world will come there.

³ People from many people groups will say to each other,

”Come, let us go up to the hill,

to the temple of Yahweh,

to worship the God whom Jacob worshiped.

There he will teach us what he desires us to know,

in order that our behavior will please him.”

They will teach us in Jerusalem;

we will learn there what Yahweh desires to tell us.

⁴ Yahweh will listen to the disputes between nations,

and he will settle their arguments.

Then, instead of fighting against each other, they will hammer their swords into plow blades,

and they will hammer their spears into pruning knives.

The armies of the nations will no longer fight against each other,

and they will not even train men to fight in battles.

⁵ You descendants of Jacob,

let us behave in the way that we should because Yahweh is with us!

⁶ Yahweh, you have abandoned us, your people

who are descendants of Jacob,

because everywhere your people practice the customs of people who live east of Israel.

They also perform rituals to find out what will happen in the future, like the people in Philistia do.

They make agreements with foreigners who do not know Yahweh.

⁷ Israel is full of silver and gold;

there are very many treasures here.

The land is full of war horses

and war chariots.

⁸ But the land is also full of idols;

the people worship things that they have made with their own hands.

⁹ So now they will be humbled;

Yahweh will disgrace them.

Yahweh, do not forgive them!

¹⁰ All you people should crawl into the caves in the rock cliffs!

You should hide in pits in the ground

because you will be afraid of Yahweh

and of his glorious and awesome power.

¹¹ Yahweh will cause you people to no longer be arrogant

and he will stop you from being proud.

On that day people will praise and honor only Yahweh.

¹² Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has chosen a day

when he will judge those who are proud, every one of them,

and he will humble them.

¹³ He will get rid of all those who think others should admire them, like the tall cedar trees in Lebanon,

and like all the great oak trees in the region of Bashan.

¹⁴ He will get rid of all those who think they are as great as all the high hills,

as great as the high mountains.

¹⁵ He will get rid of all those who think that they are like high towers

and high strong walls inside of which they are safe.

¹⁶ He will destroy all those who are rich because they own big ships that carry goods to other countries

and own other beautiful ships, too.

¹⁷ He will cause people to no longer be arrogant,

and he will cause them to stop being proud.

On that day people will praise and honor only Yahweh.

¹⁸ All idols will disappear then.

¹⁹ When Yahweh comes to terrify the people on the earth,

they will run to hide in caves in rock cliffs

and in holes in the ground,

because they are afraid of Yahweh

and of his glorious and awesome power.

²⁰ On that day, people will get rid of all their gold and silver idols

that they made to worship,

and they will throw them to the bats and rats.

²¹ Then they will crawl into caves

and hide in holes in the cliffs.

They will try to escape from Yahweh,
who is coming to punish them;

They will fear what he will do because
he is glorious and awesome,

when he comes to come to terrify the
people on the earth.

²² So do not trust that people will save
you,

because they are as powerless as a
person's breath.

People certainly cannot help you!

Chapter 3

¹ Yahweh, commander of the an-
gel armies, is about to take away from
Jerusalem and other places in Judah

everything that you depend on—

all food and water.

² He will take away heroes and other
soldiers,

judges and prophets,

people who do rituals to find out what
will happen in the future and the elders,

³ army officers and other important peo-
ple,

advisors, skilled craftsmen, and those
who perform rituals of magic.

⁴ Yahweh says, "I will appoint boys to
be leaders;

young children will rule.

⁵ People will treat each other cruelly:

people will fight against their neigh-
bors.

Young people will say shameful things
against older people,

and vulgar people will sneer at people
whom others usually honor.

⁶ At that time, someone will grab one of
his brothers in his father's house and say
to him,

'You still have a coat; people respect
you for that.

So you be our leader!

You rule this city, which is now a pile
of ruins.'

⁷ But his brother will reply,

'No, I cannot help you,

because I do not have any extra food or
clothes in this house.

So do not make me your leader!'"

⁸ The people in Jerusalem and the other
towns in Judah have disobeyed God,

because everything that the people
do and say there opposes Yahweh,

the powerful and glorious one,

and they refuse to obey him.

They rebel against him.

⁹ They even show on their faces that
they oppose Yahweh.

They are proud about their sins,

like the people of Sodom were long
ago;

they do not try to hide their sins; they
talk about them.

Because of their sins, terrible things will
certainly happen to them.

¹⁰ You people must tell the righteous peo-
ple that good things will happen to them;

they will enjoy the blessings that they
will receive for their good deeds.

¹¹ But terrible things will happen to
wicked people;

Yahweh will pay them back for the
evil things that they have done.

¹² Youths who have become leaders treat
my people cruelly,

and women rule over my people.

My people, your leaders are misleading you;

they are causing you to do all kinds of evil things.

¹³ It is as though Yahweh had taken his place in a courtroom

and were ready to accuse his people of breaking the covenant between themselves and him.

¹⁴ He will stand up to declare why he should punish the elders and rulers of his people;

he says, "The people of Israel are like a vineyard that I planted,

but you leaders have made unable to bear any fruit.

Your houses are full of things that you have stolen from poor people.

¹⁵ You should stop making my people suffer.

It is as though you were pushing the faces of poor people into the ground."

That is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says.

¹⁶ Yahweh says this:

"The women of Jerusalem are haughty; they walk around sticking their chins out,

and flirting with men with their eyes.

They walk with tiny steps

with bracelets on their ankles that jingle."

¹⁷ So the Lord will cause sores to be on their heads,

and he will cause those beautiful women in Jerusalem to become bald.

¹⁸ At the time that the Lord does that, he will also cause others to take away

from the women of Jerusalem all of the beautiful things they like to wear—the ornaments on their ankles and their headbands, their crescent necklaces, ¹⁹ their earrings and bracelets and veils, ²⁰ their scarves and ankle bracelets and sashes, their perfumes and charms. ²¹ He will cause others to remove the women's finger rings and nose rings, ²² their nice robes and capes and veils and purses, ²³ their mirrors and nice linen clothes, the ornaments for their heads, and the shawls.

²⁴ Instead of smelling nice from perfume, they will stink;

instead of beautiful sashes, they will have ropes around their waists.

Instead of having fancy hairdos, they will be bald.

Instead of fancy robes, they will wear rough sackcloth,

Instead of beauty, scars of branding.

²⁵ Your men will die by their enemies' swords,

and your soldiers will also die in battle.

²⁶ People will mourn and cry at the gates of the city.

The city will be like a woman who sits on the ground because all her friends have deserted her.

Chapter 4

¹ When that happens, there will be very few unmarried men.

So seven unmarried women will grab one man and say,

"Allow us all to marry you!

We will provide our own food and clothing.

All that we want is to no longer be disgraced because of not being married.”

² But some day, Israel will be very beautiful and great. The people of Israel who will still be there will be very proud of the wonderful crops that will grow in their land. ³ All the people who will remain in Jerusalem, who did not die when the enemy destroyed Jerusalem, will belong to the Lord—all those whose names are listed among those who live there. ⁴ That will happen when the Lord washes away the guilt of the women of Jerusalem, and when he stops the violence on the streets of Jerusalem by punishing the people of Jerusalem. When he does that, it will be like a fire that burns up all the impure things. ⁵ Then Yahweh will send a cloud of smoke during the days and a flaming fire during the nights to cover Jerusalem and all those who gather there; it will be like a canopy over God’s glorious presence in the city. ⁶ It will shelter the people from the sun during the daytime and protect them when there are windstorms and rain.

Chapter 5

¹ Now I will sing a song about Yahweh, my dear friend,

and about his vineyard.

The vineyard was on a very fertile hillside.

² My friend plowed the ground and cleared away the stones.

Then he planted very good grapevines on that ground.

In the middle of the vineyard, he built a watchtower,

and he dug a winepress.

Then he waited each year to harvest some good grapes,

but the vines produced only sour grapes.

³ Now this is what my friend Yahweh says:

”You people of Jerusalem and other places in Judah,

You are like my vineyard;

so you judge which of us has done what is right.

⁴ What more could I have done for you than what I have already done?

I expected you to be doing good deeds, so it is disgusting that you were doing only evil deeds

like the vineyard that produced only sour grapes!

⁵ So, I will now tell you what I will do to Judah, the place that is like my vineyard.

I will cut down the hedges,

and my vineyard will become a pasture.

I will tear down the walls of the cities and allow wild animals to trample the land.

⁶ I will cause it to become a wasteland

where the vines are not pruned and the ground is not hoed.

It will be a place where briars and thorns grow.

And I will command that no rain will fall on it.”

⁷ The nation of Israel is like the vineyard of Yahweh who is commander of the angel armies.

The people of Judah are like the garden that was pleasing to him.

He expected them to be doing what is just,

but instead, what he saw was people murdering others.

He expected that they would be doing righteous deeds,

but instead, he heard people shouting for someone to help them, because others were attacking them.

⁸ Terrible things will happen to those who keep acquiring houses and fields

without paying attention to the laws about who owns the land.

You use your riches to gain more and more property,

and soon there is no more property for others to buy,

and you would be the only land owners there are in that place.

⁹ But I heard Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, solemnly declare this:

"Some day, many houses will have no one to live in them,

even the large and beautiful homes will be empty.

¹⁰ The land that grows vines in this place should require ten pairs of oxen to work them,

but this land would not produce enough grapes to make even twenty liters of wine.

When ten baskets of seed are sown on that land,

that land will only produce one basket of grain at harvest time."

¹¹ Terrible things will happen to those who get up early each morning

to begin drinking alcoholic drinks,

and who stay awake until late at night drinking a lot more wine

until they are completely drunk.

¹² They have big parties and provide lots of wine.

At their parties, there are people playing harps and lyres and tambourines and flutes,

but they never think about what Yahweh does

or appreciate what he has created.

¹³ So my people will be exiled far away because they do not know about me.

Those who are now very important and honored will starve,

and the other people will die from thirst.

¹⁴ It is as though the place where the dead people are is eagerly looking for more Israelite people,

opening its mouth to swallow them, and a huge number of people will be thrown into that place,

including their leaders as well as a noisy crowd of people who enjoy living in Jerusalem.

¹⁵ Yahweh will humble everyone;

he will humble everyone who is proud.

¹⁶ But everyone will honor Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the Holy One, because he has acted justly.

God will show that he is holy by doing righteous deeds.

¹⁷ Then sheep and lambs will be able to find good grass to eat;

they will pass through the ruined places to eat the grass.

¹⁸ Some people who are working hard to sin,

working as hard as if they were dragging behind them the wrong and useless things that they are doing.

Terrible things will happen to them!

¹⁹ They make fun of God and say to him,

“Quickly do something to punish us!

We want to see what you will do.

You, the Holy One of Israel, should do what you are planning to do,

because we want to know what it is.”

²⁰ Terrible things will happen to those who say

that evil is good, and that good is evil,

that darkness is light and that light is darkness,

that what is bitter is sweet and what is sweet is bitter.

²¹ Terrible things will happen to those who think that they are wise

and that they are very clever.

²² Terrible things will happen to those who think that they are heroes

because they are able to drink lots of wine,

and who boast about being able to mix good alcoholic drinks.

²³ If people offer these corrupt judges money so they will not punish the wicked,

they accept that money.

These same judges punish innocent people.

²⁴ Therefore, just like fires burn up stubble

and dry grass shrivels up and quickly burns in flames,

it will be as though those people have roots that will rot

and have flowers that will wither.

That will happen because they rejected the laws of Yahweh, commander of the angel armies;

they have despised the messages of the Holy One of Israel.

²⁵ That is why Yahweh is extremely angry with his people;

it is as though his hand is raised and he is ready to smash them.

When he does that, the mountains will shake,

and the corpses of people will be scattered in the streets like manure.

But even when that happens, Yahweh will still be very angry;

he will be ready to punish his people again.

²⁶ Yahweh will send a signal to summon armies of nations far away;

it is as though he will whistle to those soldiers who are in very remote places on the earth.

They will come very swiftly toward Jerusalem.

²⁷ They will not get tired or stumble.

They will not stop to rest or to sleep.

None of their belts will be loose,

and none of them will have sandals with broken straps,

so they will all be ready to fight in battles.

²⁸ Their arrows will be sharp,

and their bows will be ready to shoot those arrows in a battle.

Because their horses pull the chariots fast, sparks will shoot out from their hooves,

and the wheels of the chariots will spin like whirlwinds.

²⁹ They will roar like fierce lions
that growl and then pounce on the
animals they want to kill;

they will carry them off,
and no one will be able to rescue them.

³⁰ Similarly, your enemies will roar over
the people they are about to kill,
like the sea roars.

On that day, if someone looks across the
land,

he will see only people who are in
darkness and distress;

it will be as though even the sunlight
is hidden by dark clouds.

Chapter 6

¹ During the year that King Uzziah died,
Yahweh showed me a vision. In the vision,
I saw Yahweh sitting on a throne, high
above everyone else. He was wearing a
very long robe that covered the floor of
the temple. ² Above him were hovering
several winged creatures. Each of them
had six wings. They covered their faces
with two of their wings, they covered their
feet with two of their wings, and they flew
using two of their wings. ³ They were call-
ing to each other, saying,

"Yahweh, commander of the angel
armies, is holy;

he is completely holy!

The entire earth is filled with his glory."

⁴ When they spoke, the sound of their cries
caused the foundation beneath the door-
posts of the temple to shake, and the tem-
ple was filled with smoke.

⁵ Then I said, "Terrible things will hap-
pen to me, because everything that I say
is sinful, and I live among people who

constantly say sinful things. I will be de-
stroyed because I have seen Yahweh, com-
mander of the angel armies!"

⁶ Then one of the winged creatures took
a hot coal from the altar, using a pair of
tongs. He flew to me ⁷ and touched my lips
with the coal. Then he said, "Look, this
coal has touched your lips. Now your guilt
is ended, and your sins are forgiven."

⁸ Then I heard Yahweh asking, "Whom
shall I send to be a messenger to my peo-
ple? Who will go and speak for us?" I
replied, "I am here. Send me!"

⁹ Then he said,

"You will go and say to the people of
Israel,

'Listen carefully to what I say, but you
will not understand it.

You will look very carefully,

but you will not understand.'

¹⁰ I will cause you people to be unable
to care;

and I will cause you people to not be
able to hear,

and I will cause you people to not be
able to see.

Otherwise you would see with your
eyes and you would recognize what it is
you are looking at,

and you would hear with your ears
and be able to understand what you have
heard,

and you would care deeply and with
understanding,

and you would turn to me so I might
save you and not punish you."

¹¹ Then I said, "How long do you want me
to continue to do that?"

He replied, "Do it until their cities are
ruined by their enemies,

until no one is living in their houses,
do it until all the crops are stolen from
their fields

and the fields are ruined.

¹² Do it until Yahweh has exiled every-
one far away,

and the whole land of Israel is de-
serted.

¹³ If even one tenth of the people survive
and stay there,

their enemies will invade the land
again and burn everything.

But just like when they cut down an oak
tree and leave a stump, and new shoots
grow from that,

the people who remain in this land
will be a group that is set apart for me.”

Chapter 7

¹ Ahaz was the son of Jotham and grand-
son of Uzziah. During the time that Ahaz
was the king of Judah, King Rezin of Aram
and King Pekah of Israel marched with
their armies to attack Jerusalem. But they
could not conquer it.

² Before they attacked, everyone in the
palace in Jerusalem heard news that
Aram and Israel were now allies. So King
Ahaz and the people over whom he ruled
were extremely afraid; they were shaking
like trees shake in a windstorm.

³ Then Yahweh said to me, “Take your
son Shear-Jashub, and go to talk with King
Ahaz. He is at the end of the aqueduct
that brings water into the upper reservoir,
near the road to the place where women
wash clothes. ⁴ Tell Ahaz to stop worrying.
Tell him that he does not need to be afraid
of those two kings, Rezin and Pekah. They
are very angry with Judah, but they are

unable to harm his country any more than
completely burned-out coals could harm
him. ⁵ Yes, they are planning against him
and saying, ⁶ ‘We will attack Judah and
conquer it. Then we will appoint Tabeel’s
son to be the king of Judah.’ ⁷ But this is
what Yahweh, the Lord, says:

‘It will not happen;

They will not conquer Jerusalem!

⁸ The capital of Aram is Damascus,

but Damascus is ruled only by its
unimportant King Rezin.

And as for Israel, within sixty-five years
it will be conquered and completely de-
stroyed.

⁹ Israel’s capital is Samaria, and
Samaria is ruled only by its insignificant
King Pekah.

So you do not need to be afraid of
those two countries!

But you must trust me, because if you
do not trust me firmly,

you will be defeated.”

¹⁰ Later, Yahweh gave me another mes-
sage to tell to King Ahaz. ¹¹ He said to tell
him, “Request me, Yahweh your God, to do
something that will enable you to be sure
that I will help you. What you request can
be in a place that is as high as the sky or
as low as the place where the dead people
are.”

¹² But when I told that to the king, he re-
fused. He said, “No, I will not ask Yahweh
to do something to prove that he will help
us.”

¹³ Then I said to him, “You people who
are descendants of King David, listen! You
are causing me to be tired of being patient.
Are you also going to cause my God to stop
being patient with you? ¹⁴ Yahweh him-
self will do something for you to prove
that he will help you. Listen to this: A

young woman will become pregnant and give birth to a son. She will name him Immanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’

¹⁵ By the time that child is old enough to eat curds and honey, he will be able to reject what is evil and choose what is good.

¹⁶ And before that child is old enough to do that, the lands of the two kings that you are very afraid of will be deserted. ¹⁷

But then Yahweh will cause you and your family and your entire nation to experience terrible disasters. Those disasters will be worse than any disasters that have occurred since the country of Israel separated from Judah. Yahweh will cause the army of the king of Assyria to attack you!”

¹⁸ At that time, it will be as though Yahweh will whistle to summon the army from the south of Egypt as well as the army of Assyria. They will come and surround your country like flies and bees. ¹⁹ They will all come and settle everywhere—in the narrow valleys and caves in the rock cliffs, on land where there are thornbushes as well as on the fertile land. ²⁰ At that time Yahweh will hire the king of Assyria to come with his army from east of the Euphrates River. They will get rid of everything in your land—the crops and the people. They will destroy everything thoroughly; it will be like a barber shaving not only a man’s hair but his beard and the hair on his legs. ²¹ When that happens, a farmer will be able to keep alive only one young cow and two goats. ²² However, those animals will give plenty of milk, with the result that the farmer will have curds to eat. And because there will not be many people left in the land, all the people who remain there will have plenty of milk and honey. ²³ Now there are many areas where there are vineyards that are worth one thousand pieces of silver, but at that time there will be only briars and thorns in those fields. ²⁴ There will be only briars and thorns in the entire land, and wild an-

imals, with the result that men will take their bows and arrows and go there to hunt and kill animals. ²⁵ No one will go to where there previously were gardens on fertile hillsides, because briars and thorns will cover those hillsides. They will be areas where only a few cattle and sheep and goats wander around searching for something to eat.

Chapter 8

¹ Then Yahweh said to me, “Make a large signboard. And write clearly on it, ‘Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz’ which means ‘quickly plunder and steal everything’.” ² So I requested Uriah the high priest and Jerebiah’s son Zechariah, men who were both honest witnesses, to watch me as I was doing that.

³ Then I slept with my wife, who was a prophetess, and she became pregnant and then gave birth to a son. Then Yahweh said to me, “Give him the name Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, ⁴ because before he is old enough to say ‘papa’ or ‘mama’, the king of Assyria will come with his army and take away all the valuable things in Damascus and in Samaria.”

⁵ Yahweh spoke to me again and said, “Tell the people of Judah:

⁶ I have taken good care of you people, but you have rejected that, thinking that my help was very small,

like the small canal through which water flows from the spring of Gihon into Jerusalem.

Instead, you have been happy to request help from King Rezin and King Pekah.

⁷ Therefore, I, the Lord, will soon cause the powerful army of the king of Assyria,

which will be like a great flood from the Euphrates River, to attack the people of Judah.

Their soldiers will be everywhere in your country, like a river that overflows all its banks.

⁸ Those soldiers will go all over Judah, like a river whose water rises as high as a person's neck.

Their army will spread over the land quickly, like an eagle,

and they will cover your entire land!

But I, your God, will be with you!"

⁹ Listen, all you people in distant countries!

You can prepare to attack Judah.

You can prepare for battle, and shout your war cries,

but your armies will be crushed!

¹⁰ You can prepare for what you will do to attack Judah,

but what you plan to do will be useless!

You will not succeed,

because God is with us!

¹¹ Yahweh strongly warned me not to act like the other people in Judah did. He said to me,

¹² "Do not say that everything that people do is conspiring against the government,

like other people say,

and do not be afraid of the things that other people are afraid of.

¹³ I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, am the one you should consider to be holy.

I am the one you should fear,

the one you must give an account to.

¹⁴ Yahweh will protect you.

But as for the other people in Israel and Judah,

Yahweh will be like a stone that causes people to stumble,

like a rock that causes them to fall down.

And as for the people of Jerusalem,

he will be like a trap or a snare.

¹⁵ Many people will stumble and fall down

and never get up again.

They will experience great troubles;

they will be captured by their enemies."

¹⁶ So I say to you who are my disciples, seal up this scroll

on which I have written the messages that God has given to me,

and give his instructions to others who have accompanied me.

¹⁷ I will wait to see what Yahweh will do.

He has rejected the descendants of Jacob,

but I will confidently expect him to help me.

¹⁸ I and the children that Yahweh has given to me are like signs to warn the people of Israel;

we are warnings from Yahweh, commander of the angel armies,

the one who lives in his temple on Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

¹⁹ Some people may urge you to consult those who talk with the spirits of dead people or with those who say that they receive

messages from those spirits. They whisper and mutter about what we should do in the future. But God is the one whom we should ask to guide us! It is ridiculous for people who are alive to request spirits of dead people to tell us what we should do! ²⁰ Pay attention to God's instructions and teaching! If people do not say things that agree with what God teaches us, what they say is worthless. It is as though those people are in darkness. ²¹ They will wander through the land, worried and hungry. And when they become very hungry, they will become very angry. They will look up toward heaven and curse God and will also curse their king. ²² They will look around the land and see only trouble and darkness and things that cause them to despair. And then they will be thrown into very black darkness.

Chapter 9

¹ However, those in Judah who were distressed will not continue to suffer. Previously, Yahweh humbled the people in the land where the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali live. But in the future he will honor the people who live in the region of Galilee, along the road between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, where many foreigners live.

² Some day in the future, it will be as though the people who walked in darkness have seen a bright light.

Yes, a bright light will shine on those who live in a land where they now have great troubles.

³ Yahweh, you will cause us people in Israel to rejoice;

we will become very happy.

We will rejoice about what you have done

like people rejoice when they harvest their crops,

or like soldiers rejoice

when they divide up among themselves the things that they have captured in battle.

⁴ You will cause us to no longer be slaves of those who captured us;

you will lift the heavy burdens from our shoulders.

It will be as though you have broken the weapons of those who oppressed us,

like you did when you destroyed the army of the Midian people group.

⁵ The boots that the enemy soldiers wore and their clothing which has stains of blood on them

will all be burned up;

they will be fuel for a big fire.

⁶ Another reason that we will rejoice is that a special child will be born for us, a woman will give birth to a son, and he will be our ruler.

And his names will be 'Wonderful Counselor,' 'Mighty God,' 'Our Everlasting Father,' and 'King who causes us to have Peace.'

⁷ His rule and the peace that he brings will never end.

He will rule fairly and justly, like his ancestor King David did.

This will happen because Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, greatly desires that it happen.

⁸ The Lord has warned the descendants of Jacob;

he has said that he will punish Israel.

⁹⁻¹⁰ And all the people in Samaria and other places in Israel will know that,

but they are now very proud and arrogant.

They said, "Our city has been destroyed,

but we will take away the broken bricks from the ruins

and replace them with carefully cut stones.

Our sycamore fig trees have been cut down by our enemies,

but we will plant cedar trees in their place."

¹¹ But Yahweh will bring the armies of Assyria, the enemies of King Rezin of Aram, to fight against Israel

and incite other nations to attack Israel.

¹² The army of Aram will come from the east,

and the army of Philistia will come from the west,

and they will destroy Israel

like a wild animal tears another animal apart and devours it.

But even after that happened, Yahweh will still be very angry with them.

He will be ready to strike them with his fist again.

¹³ But even though Yahweh will punish his people like that,

they still will not return to him and worship him.

They still will not request Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, to assist them.

¹⁴ Therefore, in one day Yahweh will get rid of those who are like Israel's head and those who are like its tail;

the ones who are like the top of the palm tree and the ones who are like the bottom.

¹⁵ The leaders of Israel are the head, and the prophets who tell lies are the tail.

¹⁶ The leaders of the people have misled them;

they have caused the people that they are ruling to be confused.

¹⁷ For that reason, Yahweh is not pleased with the young men of Israel,

and he does not even act mercifully toward the widows and orphans,

because they are all ungodly and wicked,

and they all say things that are foolish.

But Yahweh still is angry with them;

he is ready to strike them with his fist again.

¹⁸ When people do wicked things,

it is like a brush fire that spreads rapidly.

It burns up not only briars and thorns;

it starts a big fire in the forests

from which clouds of smoke will rise.

¹⁹ It is as though the whole land is burned black

because Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, is extremely angry with the Israelite people.

They will become like fuel for that great fire,

and no one will try to rescue even his own brother from that fire.

²⁰ The Israelite people will attack their neighbors who live in houses at the right to get food from them,

but they will still be hungry.

They will kill and eat the flesh of those who live in houses at the left,

but their stomachs will still not be full.

²¹ Israelites of the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim will attack each other,

and then they will both attack the people of Judah.

But even after that happens, Yahweh will still be very angry with them;

He will be ready to strike them with his fist again.

Chapter 10

¹ Terrible things will happen to you judges who are unjust

and who make unfair laws.

² You refuse to help poor people,

and you do not allow them to get the things that they should get.

You allow people to steal things from widows

and do unfair things to children without fathers.

³ When I punish you

by sending people from distant lands to cause you disasters,

to whom will you run to get help?

Your valuable possessions will certainly not be safe anywhere.

⁴ You will be able only to stumble along as your enemies take you away with other prisoners,

or else your corpses will lie on the ground with others who have been killed.

But even after that happens,

Yahweh will still be very angry with you.

He will still be ready to strike you again with his fist.

⁵ Yahweh says, "Terrible things will happen to Assyria.

It is true that their army is like a rod or a club with which I punish other nations

because I am very angry with those nations.

⁶ Sometimes I send the Assyrians to attack a godless nation,

to fight against other people who have caused me to be angry.

I send them to capture people and to seize and take away their possessions,

and to trample them like people walk on mud in the streets.

⁷ But the king of Assyria does not understand;

he does not realize that he is only like a weapon in my hand.

He only wants to destroy people,

to get rid of many nations.

⁸ He says, 'All of my army commanders will soon be kings of these nations that I conquer!

⁹ We destroyed the city of Kalno as we destroyed the city of Carchemish.

We destroyed the city of Hamath as we destroyed the city of Arpad;

we destroyed Samaria just like we destroyed Damascus.

¹⁰ We were able to destroy all those kingdoms that were full of the images of their gods,

kingdoms whose gods were stronger than the gods in Jerusalem and Samaria.

¹¹ So we will defeat Jerusalem and destroy the images of gods that are there,

just as we destroyed Samaria and the images that were there!

¹² But I am the Lord, and after I have used Assyria to finish what I want to do to punish the people in Jerusalem, I will punish the king of Assyria because he has been very proud and arrogant.

¹³ He says, 'By my own great power I have done these things.

I have been able to do them because I am very wise and very intelligent.

My army removed the barriers at the borders of nations

and carried away all their valuable things.

My mighty army has humiliated all their people.

¹⁴ Like someone who reaches into a bird's nest to take away the eggs,

we have taken away the treasures of other countries.

The people were not like birds that would have flapped their wings or chirp loudly to protest about their eggs being stolen;

the people did not object at all to their treasures being stolen.'

¹⁵ But I am Yahweh, and I say that an ax certainly cannot boast about being stronger than the person who uses it,

and a saw is not greater than the person who uses it.

A rod cannot control the one who holds it,

and a wooden club cannot lift up a person.

So the king of Assyria should not boast that he has done these things with his own wisdom and strength.

¹⁶ I am the Lord Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, who will send a plague among the best soldiers of Assyria;

it will be like a fire that will kill them and get rid of their glory.

¹⁷ Yahweh is like a light for the people of Israel, like a fire;

the Holy One who rules Israel is like a flame.

The soldiers of Assyria are like thorns and briers,

and Yahweh will burn them up in one day.

¹⁸ There are glorious forests and fertile farmlands in Assyria, but Yahweh will completely destroy them;

they will be like a very sick person who shrivels up and then dies.

¹⁹ There will be very few trees left in those forests;

even a child will be able to count them."

²⁰ In the future there will be only a few people left in Israel;

not many descendants of Jacob will still be alive.

But they will no longer rely on the king of Assyria,

the king of the nation that tried to destroy them.

Instead, they will faithfully trust in Yahweh, the Holy One who rules Israel.

²¹ Those Israelites will return to their mighty God.

²² Now, the people of Israel are as numerous as the grains of sand on the seashore,

but only a few of them will return from the countries to which they will be exiled.

Yahweh has decided to destroy most of the Israelites,

and that is what he must do because he is completely just.

²³ Yes, the Lord Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has already decided to destroy the entire land of Israel.

²⁴ This is what the Lord Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says:

"My people in Jerusalem, do not be afraid of the army of Assyria when they beat you with rods and clubs,

like the men of Egypt did to your ancestors long ago.

²⁵ Soon I will no longer be angry with you,

and then I will be angry with the people of Assyria and destroy them!"

²⁶ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will strike them with his whip.

He will do to them as he did when he defeated the army of the Midian people group,

and as he did when he caused the army of Egypt to drown in the Sea of Reeds.

²⁷ One day in the future, Yahweh will cause the army of Assyria to stop oppressing you, his people;

he will end your suffering and your being slaves of the people of Assyria;

you will become too strong for them.

²⁸ One day in the future this will be the situation: The army of Assyria has entered northern Judah near Aiath;

they have gone through Migron

and stored their supplies at Micmash, north of Jerusalem.

²⁹ They have crossed through a mountain pass

and set up their tents at Geba.

People in Ramah will tremble because of they are afraid.

The people of Gibeah, where King Saul was born, have all run away.

³⁰ You people of Gallim will cry out for help!

They will shout to the people of the city of Laish near Jerusalem to warn them!

The people of Anathoth will suffer a lot.

³¹ The people of Madmenah north of Jerusalem are all running away,

and the people of Gebim close to Jerusalem are trying to hide.

³² The soldiers of Assyria will stop at the city of Nob outside Jerusalem.

They will shake their fists

as they threaten the people on Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

³³ But listen to this! Yahweh, commander of the angel armies,

with his great power will destroy the mighty army of Assyria.

It is as though they are a huge tree that he will cut down.

³⁴ He will destroy the soldiers of Assyria

as men use big axes to cut down the tall trees in the forests of Lebanon.

Chapter 11

¹ Like a new branch often grows from the stump of a tree,

there will be a descendant of King David who will be a new king.

² The Spirit of Yahweh will always be with him.

The Spirit will enable him to be wise and to understand many things;

The Spirit will enable him to decide what is good to do and will give him great power.

The Spirit will enable him to know Yahweh and to revere him.

³ He will be glad to obey Yahweh.

He will not decide whether someone is righteous or not only by seeing what that person looks like,

or by listening to what others say about that person.

⁴ He will judge the cases of needy people fairly;

and he will act justly toward poor people.

He will punish evil people as a result of what he decides;

he will get rid of wicked people because of the evil things they have done.

⁵ He will always act righteously;

the good things he does will be like a belt around his waist.

He will always speak what is true;

the true words he speaks will be like a sash around his waist.

⁶ When he becomes king, wolves and lambs will live together peacefully;

leopards, instead of killing baby goats, will lie down with them.

Similarly, fat, healthy calves and lions will eat food together;

and a young child will take care of them.

⁷ Cows and bears will eat together;

bear cubs and calves will lie down together.

Lions will not eat other animals;

instead, they will eat hay like cows do.

⁸ Babies will play safely near the holes where cobra snakes live;

small children will even put their hands into nests of poisonous snakes,

and the snakes will not harm them.

⁹ No creatures will harm or kill other creatures on Mount Zion, my holy hill;

and the earth will be filled with people who know me,

as the seas are full of water.

¹⁰ At that time, a descendant of King David will hold up a flag

to signal to the people of all people groups that they should gather around him;

they will come to him to get his advice,

and the place where he lives will be glorious.

¹¹ At that time, Yahweh will reach out his hand as he did long ago;

he will enable those who had been exiled from Israel to return home,

from Assyria, from northern Egypt, from southern Egypt,

from Ethiopia, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath, and from all the distant countries near the sea.

¹² Yahweh will raise his flag among all the people groups,

and he will gather together the people of Israel who were exiled long ago.

He will gather from very distant places on the earth

the people of Judah whom he had scattered to those places.

¹³ Then, the people of Israel and the people of Judah will not be jealous of each other any longer,

and they will no longer be enemies of each other.

¹⁴ Their armies will join together to attack the people of Philistia to the west.

And together they will attack nations to the east;

they will defeat those nations and take away all their valuable possessions.

They will capture the areas of Edom and Moab,

and they will rule the people of the Ammon people group.

¹⁵ Yahweh will make a dry road through the sea near Egypt.

It will be as though he will wave his hand over the Euphrates River

and send a strong wind to cause it to divide into seven streams,

with the result that people will be able to walk across those streams.

¹⁶ Because he will make a highway for his people who are living in Assyria,

they will be able to return to their own land,

just like long ago he made a path for the people of Israel

so that they could go through the water

when they left Egypt.

Previously, you were angry with us, but you are not angry now

and you have comforted us.

² Amazingly, you have come to save us, so we will trust in you and not be afraid.

Yahweh our God, you enable us to be strong;

you are the one about whom we sing;

you have rescued us from our enemies.”

³ You, his people, will greatly rejoice because he has rescued you,

like you enjoy drinking water from a fountain.

⁴ At that time you will say,

”We should thank Yahweh! We should praise him !

We should tell the people of all the people groups what he has done;

we should enable them to know that he is very great!

⁵ We should sing to Yahweh, because he has done wonderful things.

We should enable everyone in the world to know it!

⁶ You people of Jerusalem, shout joyfully to praise Yahweh,

because he is the great Holy One whom we Israelite people worship,

and he lives among us!”

Chapter 12

¹ At that time, you people of Jerusalem will sing this song:

”Yahweh, we praise you!

Chapter 13

¹ I, Isaiah son of Amoz, received from Yahweh this message about the city of Babylon:

² Lift up a flag on the bare top of a hill,

to signal that an army should come to attack Babylon.

Shout to them and wave your hand to signal to them

that they should march through the city gates into the palaces of the proud rulers of Babylon!

³ Yahweh says, "I have commanded those who are set apart to do this work for me—

I have summoned the warriors whom I have chosen to punish the people of Babylon because I am very angry with them,

and those soldiers will be very proud when they do that."

⁴ Listen to the noise on the mountains, which is the noise of a huge army marching!

It is the noise made by people of many people groups shouting.

Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has summoned this army to gather together.

⁵ They come from countries that are far away,

from the most remote places on the earth.

They are like weapons that Yahweh will use to punish the people with whom he is very angry,

and to destroy the entire country of Babylonia.

⁶ You people of Babylon will scream because you will be terrified,

because it will be the time that Yahweh has determined,

the time for the all-powerful God to destroy your city.

⁷ Because that will happen, all of your people will be very afraid,

with the result that they will be unable even to lift their arms.

⁸ All of you will be terrified.

You will have severe pains

like a woman has when she is giving birth to a baby.

You will look at each other helplessly, and it will show on your faces that you feel horror.

⁹ Listen to this, you people of Babylon: The day that Yahweh has chosen to act in is near,

the day on which he will furiously and fiercely punish you because he is very angry with you.

He will cause your land of Babylonia to be desolate,

and he will destroy all the sinners in it.

¹⁰ When that happens, none of the stars will shine.

When the sun rises, it will be dark, and there will be no light from the moon at night.

¹¹ Yahweh says, "I will punish everyone in the world for the evil things that they do;

I will punish the wicked people for the sins that they have committed.

I will stop arrogant people from being proud,

and I will stop cruel people from being so arrogant.

¹² And because I will cause most people to die,

people will be harder to find than gold,

harder to find than fine gold from Ophir in Arabia.

¹³ I will shake the sky,
and the earth will also move out of its place.

That will happen when I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, punish wicked people,

when I show them that I am extremely angry with them.

¹⁴ All the foreigners in Babylon will run around like deer that are being hunted,
like sheep that do not have a shepherd.

They will try to find other people from their countries,

and then they will escape from Babylon and return to their own countries.

¹⁵ Anyone who is captured in Babylon will be killed by their enemies' swords.

¹⁶ Their little children will be dashed to pieces on the rocks while their parents watch;

their enemies will steal everything valuable from their houses and will force their wives to sleep with them.

¹⁷ Look! I am going to incite the people of Media to attack Babylon.

The army of Media will attack Babylon, even if they are offered silver or gold if they promise to not attack it.

¹⁸ With their arrows, the soldiers of Media will shoot the young men of Babylon;

they will not even act mercifully toward infants or children!"

¹⁹ Babylon has been a very beautiful city;

all the people of Babylonia have been very proud of Babylon, their capital city;

but God will destroy Babylon,

like he destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.

²⁰ No one will ever live in Babylon again.

It will be deserted forever.

Nomads will refuse to set up their tents there;

shepherds will not bring their flocks of sheep to rest there.

²¹ Animals that live in the desert will be there;

jackals will live in the ruins of the houses.

Owls will live in the ruins,

and ostriches and wild goats will romp around there.

²² Hyenas will howl in the ruined towers,

and jackals will make their dens in the ruins of the palaces that were previously very beautiful.

The time when Babylon will be destroyed is very near;

Babylon will not exist much longer.

Chapter 14

¹ But Yahweh will act mercifully toward the Israelite people; he will choose the people of Israel to be his people again, and he will allow them to return here and live in their own land again. Then people from many other countries will come here and unite with the Israelite people. ² People of other nations will help them to return to their own land, and those who come from other countries will work for the Israelite people. Those who captured people of Israel will be captured by Israelite soldiers, and the people of Israel will rule over the people who previously oppressed them.

³ Some day Yahweh will free you Israelite people from suffering and trouble and

from being afraid, and from being cruelly treated as slaves. ⁴ When that happens, you will make fun of the king of Babylon by singing a song like this:

"You treated us cruelly, but that has ended!

You insulted others and made them suffer, but you can do this no longer!

⁵ You evil ruler, Yahweh has destroyed your power,

and you will oppress people no longer!

⁶ You attacked people many times because you were very angry with them,

and you subdued other nations

by causing them to suffer without stopping.

⁷ But soon everything will be quiet and peaceful on the earth.

Everyone will sing again!

⁸ It will be as though even the trees in the forests will joyfully sing this song,

the cyprus trees and the cedar trees in Lebanon will sing it:

'You have been overthrown,

and now no one comes to chop us down.'

⁹ The dead people are all eagerly waiting for you to go to the place where they are.

The spirits of the world leaders

will be delighted to welcome you;

those who were kings of many nations before they died

will stand up to welcome you.

¹⁰ They will all shout to you together,

'Now you are as weak as we are!'

¹¹ You were very proud and powerful,

but all that ended when you died, along with the sounds of harps being played in your palace.

Now in your grave maggots will be under you like a sheet,

and worms will cover you like a blanket.'

¹² You have disappeared from the earth like a star that fell from the sky;

you were very well known,

like the morning star is seen by everyone;

you destroyed many nations,

but now you have been destroyed.

¹³ You proudly said to yourself, 'I will ascend to heaven, to my throne above God's stars.

I will rule on the mountain where the gods gather together, far in the north.

¹⁴ I will ascend above the clouds and become like God himself!'

¹⁵ But you were not able to do that;

Instead, you were carried down to your grave,

and you went to the place where the dead people are.

¹⁶ The other dead people there stare at you;

they wonder what happened to you.

They say, 'Is this the man who caused the earth to shake

and caused the people in many kingdoms to tremble?

¹⁷ Is this the man who tried to cause the world to become a desert,

who conquered its cities and did not allow the people whom he captured to return to their homes?'

¹⁸ All the kings of the earth who have died were greatly honored when they were buried.

¹⁹ Someone will cast you aside, but not into a grave, like a branch that they throw away.

The dead cover you like a garment, those pierced by the sword, who go down to be among the stones where the dead rest.

²⁰ Your dead body will not be buried with them

because you have destroyed your land
and have caused your own people to be killed.

The descendants of wicked people like you will never be spoken of again."

²¹ People will say, "Slaughter this man's children

because of the sins that their ancestors committed!

Do not allow them to become rulers, and conquer all the nations in the world,

and fill the world with the cities that they rule!"

²² This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says:

"I myself will cause Babylon to be conquered.

I will get rid of Babylon and its people and their descendants.

²³ I will cause Babylon to be a place where owls live,

a place full of swamps;

I will destroy it completely

as though I were sweeping it with a broom.

That is what I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, say."

²⁴ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has also solemnly promised this:

"The things that I have planned will surely happen.

²⁵ When the army of Assyria is in my land of Israel,

I will crush them.

It will be as though I had trampled them on my mountains.

My people will no longer be the slaves of the people of Assyria;

It will be as though I had taken away the burdens that were on their shoulders.

²⁶ There is a plan for everyone on the earth,

a plan to show the power of Yahweh to punish all the nations.

²⁷ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has spoken,

and no one can change his mind.

When Yahweh raises his fist to strike Assyria,

no one will be able to stop him."

²⁸ I received this message from Yahweh during the year that King Ahaz died:

²⁹ Do not rejoice, all you people of Philistia, that the enemy army that attacked you has been defeated

and that their king is dead.

He was as dangerous as a snake,

but there will be another king,

who will be more dangerous than a cobra;

he will be like a quick-moving poisonous snake.

³⁰ Those of my people who are very poor will take care of their flocks of sheep,

and the needy people will lie down safely,

but I will cause you people of Philistia
who are still alive

to die from famine.

³¹ So, you people of Philistia, wail at the
gates of your cities!

You should be extremely afraid,

because a very powerful army will come
from the north to attack you;

their chariots will stir up the dust like
a cloud of smoke.

Each of their soldiers is ready to fight.

³² If messengers from Philistia come to
us Israelite people,

this is what we must tell them:

"Yahweh has created Jerusalem, not
Philistia,

and his people who are oppressed will
be safe inside the walls of Jerusalem."

Chapter 15

¹ Isaiah received this message from Yah-
weh about the Moab people group:

In one night two important cities in
Moab, Ar and Kir, will be destroyed.

² The people of Dibon, the capital city,
will go to their temple to mourn;

they will go to their high places set on
the hilltops, and there they will weep.

They will wail because of what hap-
pened to Nebo and Medeba in the south;

they will all shave the hair of
their heads, and the men will cut off their
beards to show that they are grieving.

³ In the streets people will wear rough
sackcloth,

and on their flat rooftops and in the
city plazas all people will wail

with tears streaming down their faces.

⁴ The people of the city of Heshbon and
the towns of Elealeh in the north of Moab
will cry out;

people as far away as the town of
Jahaz in the south will hear them wailing.

Therefore the soldiers of Moab will
tremble and cry out,

and they will be very afraid.

⁵ Yahweh feels very sorry for the people
of Moab;

they will flee to the towns of Zoar and
Eglath Shelishiyah in the far south.

They will cry as they walk up to the
town of Luhith.

All along the road to the town of Horon-
aim people will mourn

because their country has been de-
stroyed.

⁶ The water in the Valley of Nimrim will
dry up.

The grass there will be withered;

the green plants will all be gone,

and there will be nothing left that is
green.

⁷ The people will pick up their posses-
sions

and carry them across the brook of
the Willows.

⁸ Throughout the country of Moab, peo-
ple will be crying;

people as far away as Eglaim in the
south and Beer Elim in the north will hear
them wailing.

⁹ The stream near Dibon will become
red from the blood of people who have
been killed,

but I will cause the people of Moab to
experience even more trouble:

lions will attack those who are trying to escape from Moab

and will also attack the people who remain in that country.

Chapter 16

¹ The rulers of Moab will say to each other,

"We must send some lambs from the city of Sela as a gift to the ruler of Judah to persuade him to not allow his army to attack us anymore.

We should send them through the desert to the king in Jerusalem."

² The women of Moab will be left alone at the fords of the Arnon River;

they will be like birds that have been pushed out of their nests.

³ They will cry out, "Help us!

Tell us what we should do!

Protect us completely,

we who are running away from our enemies,

and do not betray us.

⁴ Allow those of us who are fleeing from Moab to stay with you;

hide us from our enemies who want to destroy us!

Some day there will be no one to oppress us,

and our enemies will stop destroying our land."

⁵ Then Yahweh will appoint someone to be king

who will be a descendant of King David.

As this man rules, he will be merciful and truthful.

He will always do what is fair and quickly do what is righteous.

⁶ We people of Judah have heard about the people of Moab;

we have heard that they are very proud and conceited;

they are insolent,

but what they say about themselves is not true.

⁷ Some day all the people in Moab will weep.

They will all mourn,

because there will be no more raisin cakes in the city of Kir Hareseth.

But more than the cakes, they mourn for the people who lived there, who were all killed.

⁸ The crops in the fields of Heshbon will wither,

and the vineyards of Sibmah will wither also.

The armies of other nations will destroy Moab,

which is like a beautiful grapevine whose branches spread north to Jazer, and east to the desert.

Its branches spread very far west, to the west side of the Dead Sea.

⁹ So I will weep for Jazer and for the grapevines of Sibmah.

I will shed tears for all of you.

I will cry because people will no longer shout joyfully, like they usually do

when they gather the fruit that ripens in the summer and the other crops.

¹⁰ People will no longer be glad at harvest time.

No one will sing in the vineyards;

no one will shout joyfully.

No one will tread on grapes to get grape juice for wine;

there will be nothing to shout about joyfully.

¹¹ I cry in my inner being for Moab;

my groaning is like a sad song played on a harp.

I am sad in my inner being for Kir Hareseth.

¹² The people of Moab will go and pray at their high places,

but that will not help them.

They will cry out to their gods in their temples,

but no one will be able to rescue them.

¹³ Yahweh has already spoken those things about Moab. ¹⁴ But now he says that exactly three years from now, he will destroy all the things that the people of Moab have been proud of. Even though they have a huge number of people in Moab now, only a few people will remain alive, and they will be weak.

Chapter 17

¹ Isaiah received this message from Yahweh about Damascus, the capital of Aram:

"Listen carefully! Damascus will no longer be a city;

it will be only a heap of ruins!

² The towns near the city of Aroer will be abandoned.

Flocks of sheep will eat grass in the streets and lie down there,

and there will be no one to chase them away.

³ The cities in Israel will not have walls around them to protect them.

The power of the kingdom of Damascus will be ended,

and the few people who will remain in Aram will be disgraced like the people in Israel were disgraced."

That is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says.

⁴ "At that time, Israel will become insignificant.

It will be like a fat person who has become very thin.

⁵ The entire land will be like a field where the harvesters have cut all the grain;

there will be nothing left,

like the fields in the Valley of Rephaim after all the crops have been harvested.

⁶ Only a few of the Israelite people will remain,

like the few olives that remain on the top of a tree after the workers have shaken all the other olives to the ground.

There will be only two or three olives in the top branches,

or four or five olives on the other branches."

That is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says.

⁷ Then at that time, you people of Israel will trust in God, your creator,

the Holy One of Israel.

⁸ You will no longer seek to get help from your idols

or worship the idols that you have made with your own hands.

You will never again bow down in front of the poles where you worshiped the goddess Asherah.

You will never again worship at the high places that you have built to burn incense to idols.

⁹ The largest cities in Israel will be abandoned, like the land that the Hiv and Amor people groups abandoned when the Israelites attacked them long ago. No people will live there.

¹⁰ That will happen because you have stopped worshiping God,

who is like a huge rock on top of which you can be safe.

You have forgotten that he is the one who can hide you.

So now you plant very nice grapevines and even unusual ones that come from other countries.

¹¹ But even if they sprout leaves on the day you plant them,

and even if they produce blossoms on that same morning,

at harvest time, there will not be any grapes for you to pick.

All that you will get is much of agony and suffering.

¹² Listen! The armies of many nations will roar like the sea roars.

It will sound like noise of crashing waves.

¹³ But even though their loud roaring will be like the sound of crashing waves,

when Yahweh rebukes them, they will run far away.

They will flee like chaff on the hills scatters when the wind blows,

like tumbleweeds scatter when a wind-storm blows.

¹⁴ And even though you people of Israel will be terrified,

in the morning your enemies will all be gone.

That is what will happen to those who invade our land and steal our possessions.

Chapter 18

¹ Terrible things will happen to you people of Ethiopia!

In your land there are many boats at the upper part of the Nile River.

² Your rulers send ambassadors that sail quickly down the river in papyrus boats.

Tell your messengers to go quickly!

Go to people who are tall and who have smooth skins.

People everywhere are afraid of those people,

because they conquer and destroy other nations;

they are people who live in a land that rivers divide.

³ You messengers must tell to the people of the world,

to all people everywhere,

"Look when the battle flag is lifted on top of the mountain,

and listen when the ram's horn blows

to signal that the battle is about to begin." ⁴ Listen because Yahweh has told me this:

"I will watch quietly from where I live.

I will watch quietly like the heat that shimmers as it rises on a summer day.

I will work effectively like the cloud of mist that settles during the heat of harvest. ⁵ Before the harvest, the farmer sees

the grapevines making blossoms and the flowers growing into grapes,

and he knows that the time is right to cut off the new growth and spreading branches that keep the tree from growing strong.

In the same way I know when the time is right to take action against that nation, and I will send an army to attack it.

⁶ All the soldiers in that nation's army will be killed,

and their corpses will lie in the fields for vultures to eat their flesh in the summer.

Then wild animals will chew on their bones all during the winter."

⁷ At that time, the people of the nation that rivers divide will take gifts to Yahweh in Jerusalem.

Those people are tall and have smooth skins; people everywhere are afraid of those people,

because they conquer and destroy other nations,

will take gifts to Jerusalem, the city where Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, lives.

Chapter 19

¹ Isaiah received this message from Yahweh about Egypt:

Listen to this! I, Yahweh, am coming toward Egypt,

riding on a fast-moving cloud.

The idols in Egypt will tremble when I appear,

and the people of Egypt will be extremely afraid.

² I will cause the people of Egypt to fight against each other:

men will fight against their brothers,
neighbors will fight against each other,
people of one city will fight against the people of another city,

people of one province will fight against the people of another province.

³ The people of Egypt will become very discouraged,

and I will cause their plans to not be successful.

They will plead with idols and sorcerers and those who talk with spirits of dead people

to tell them what they should do.

⁴ Then I will enable someone who will treat them very cruelly to become their king.

That is what I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, say.

⁵ Some day the water in the Nile River will dry up,

and the riverbed will become very dry.

⁶ The branches of the river will all dry up.

The canals along the river will stink

because of the withering and rotting reeds and bulrushes.

⁷ All the plants along the river and all the crops in the fields bordering the river will dry up;

then they will blow away and disappear.

⁸ The fishermen will throw into the river lines with hooks on them and nets,

and then they will groan and be very discouraged;

they will be sad because there will be no fish in the river.

⁹ Those who weave cloth from flax will not know what to do

because there will be no thread for them to weave.

¹⁰ They will all despair

and be very discouraged.

¹¹ The officials in the city of Zoan in northern Egypt are foolish.

The advice that they gave to the king was worthless.

Why do they continue to tell the king that they are wise,

that they are descendants of wise kings who lived long ago ?

¹² King, where are your wise advisors now?

If you had any wise advisors, they could tell you what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has planned to do to Egypt!

¹³ Yes, the officials of Zoan have become foolish,

and the leaders in the city of Memphis in northern Egypt have deceived themselves.

All the leaders of the people have caused their people to do wrong things.

¹⁴ Yahweh has caused them to be very foolish,

with the result that in everything that they do, it is as though the people of Egypt stagger

like a drunken person staggers and slips in his own vomit.

¹⁵ There is no one in Egypt, rich or poor, important or unimportant, who will be able to help them.

¹⁶ At that time, the people of Egypt will be as helpless as women. They will tremble, being terrified because they know that Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has raised his fist, intending to strike them.

¹⁷ The people of Egypt will be afraid of the people of Judah, and anyone who mentions Judah to them will cause them to be terrified, because that will remind them of what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, is planning to do to them.

¹⁸ At that time, people in five cities in Egypt will solemnly declare that they will serve Yahweh. They will learn to speak the Hebrew language. One of those cities will be called "City of the Sun."

¹⁹ At that time, there will be an altar for worshiping Yahweh in the center of Egypt, and there will be a pillar to honor Yahweh at the border between Egypt and Israel. ²⁰ That will be a sign to indicate that Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, is worshiped in the land of Egypt. And when the people cry out to Yahweh to help them because others are oppressing them, he will send to them someone who will defend and rescue them. ²¹ Yahweh will enable the people of Egypt to know who he is. At that time they will admit that he is God. They will worship him and bring to him offerings of grain and other sacrifices. They will solemnly promise to do things for Yahweh, and they will do what they promise. ²² After Yahweh has punished Egypt, he will cause their troubles to end. The people of Egypt will turn to Yahweh, and he will listen when they plead to him for help, and he will cause their troubles to cease.

²³ At that time, there will be a highway between Egypt and Assyria. As a result, the people of Egypt will be able to travel easily to Assyria, and the people of Assyria will be able to travel easily to Egypt. And the people of both countries will worship Yahweh. ²⁴ And Israel will be their

ally. All three nations will be friendly to each other, and the people of Israel will be a blessing to the people of the entire world. ²⁵ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will bless them; he will say, "You people of Egypt are now my people. You people of Assyria, I have established your country. You people of Israel are the people whom I have chosen to belong to me."

Chapter 20

¹ One year King Sargon of Assyria sent the chief commander of his army to take his soldiers to capture the city of Ashdod in Philistia. At that time, ² Yahweh told Isaiah, "Take off the rough sackcloth that you have been wearing and take off your sandals." So Isaiah did that, and then he walked around naked and barefoot for three years.

³ Then Yahweh said this to the people of Judah: "My servant Isaiah has been walking around naked and barefoot for the past three years. That is to show the terrible disasters that I will cause the people of Egypt and Ethiopia to experience. ⁴ What will happen is that the army of the king of Assyria will invade those countries and capture many of the people and take them away as their prisoners. They will force all of them, including both the young ones and the old ones, to walk naked and barefoot. They will also force them to have no clothes around their buttocks, which will cause the people of Egypt to be ashamed. ⁵ Then the people of other countries who trusted that the armies of Egypt and Ethiopia would be able to help them will be very dismayed and afraid. ⁶ They will say, 'We thought that the armies of Egypt and Ethiopia would help us and defend us, but they have been destroyed,

so there is no way that we can escape from being destroyed by the army of the king of Assyria!'"

Chapter 21

¹ Yahweh gave this message about a land soon to become a desert:

An army will soon come from the southern Judean wilderness to invade that land;

they are an army that causes their enemies to be terrified,

an army that will come sweeping through the wilderness from a terrible land.

² Yahweh showed me a terrifying vision:

In the vision I saw an army

that will betray people and steal their possessions after they conquer them.

Yahweh said, "You armies from Elam and Media, surround Babylon and prepare to attack it!

I will cause the groaning and suffering that Babylon caused to cease!"

³ Because of that, my body is full of pain; my pain is like the pain that women who are giving birth experience.

When I hear about and see what God is planning to do,

I am shocked.

⁴ My heart shakes within me, and I tremble with fear.

Early evening is my favorite time of day,

but now terror has taken over and I am afraid.

⁵ In the vision I saw that the leaders of Babylonia were preparing a great feast.

They had spread rugs for people to sit on;

everyone was eating and drinking.

But you should get up and prepare your shields, you princes of Babylon,

because you are about to be attacked!

⁶ Then Yahweh said to me,

"Put a watchman on the wall of Jerusalem,

and tell him to shout what he sees.

⁷ Tell him to watch for chariots pulled by pairs of horses,

and men riding camels and donkeys, coming from Babylon.

Tell the watchman to watch and listen carefully!"

⁸ So I did that, and one day the watchman called out,

"Day after day I have stood on this watchtower,

and I have continued to watch during the day and during the night.

⁹ A man comes riding in a chariot pulled by two horses.

I called out to him, and he answered,

'Babylon has been destroyed!

All the idols in Babylon lie in pieces on the ground!"

¹⁰ My people in Judah, the army of Babylon has caused you to suffer greatly

as though you were grain that was threshed and winnowed.

But now I have told you what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, whom we Israelites worship, told me about Babylon.

¹¹ Yahweh gave this message about Edom: ¹ Yahweh gave this message about

Someone from Edom has been calling to me saying,

"Watchman, how long will it be before the night is over?"

¹² The watchman, replied,

"It will soon be morning, but after that, it will soon be night again.

If you want to ask your question, then ask it now,

and then come back again."

¹³ Yahweh gave this message about Arabia:

Give this message to people traveling in caravans from the town of Dedan in northwest Arabia, travelers who camp in the scrub there.

Tell them to bring water for those who are thirsty.

¹⁴ And you people who live in the city of Tema in northwest Arabia,

must bring food for the refugees who are fleeing from their enemies.

¹⁵ They are fleeing in order not to be killed by their enemies' swords

and not to be shot in battles by arrows.

¹⁶ Yahweh said to me,

"Exactly one year from now,

all the greatness of the region of Kedar in Arabia will end.

¹⁷ Only a few of their soldiers who know well how to shoot arrows will remain alive.

That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it."

Chapter 22

Jerusalem, about the valley where Yahweh showed me this vision.

Why is everyone foolishly running up to their flat rooftops?

² Everyone in the city seems to be shouting.

There are a lot of corpses in the city,

but they were not killed by their enemies' swords.

They did not die in battles;

instead, they died from diseases and hunger.

³ All the leaders of the city fled.

But then they were captured because they did not have bows and arrows to defend themselves.

Your soldiers tried to flee while the enemy army was still far away,

but they also were captured.

⁴ That is why I said, "Allow me to cry alone;

do not try to comfort me about my people being slaughtered."

⁵ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has chosen a time when there will be a great uproar, soldiers marching, and people being terrified

in the valley where I received this vision.

It will be a time when our city walls will be battered down

and the people's cries for help will be heard in the mountains.

⁶ The armies from Elam and Kir in Media will attack,

driving chariots and carrying shields.

⁷ Our beautiful valleys will be filled with our enemies' chariots,

and the men who drive the chariots will stand outside our city gates.

⁸ God will cause the walls that protect the cities in Judah to fall down.

You people of Jerusalem will run to get the weapons that are stored in the building called "the Hall of the Forest."

⁹ You will see that there are many breaks in the walls of Jerusalem.

You will store water in the lower pool in the city.

¹⁰ You will inspect the houses in Jerusalem,

and some of them you will tear down to use the stones to repair the city wall.

¹¹ Between the walls of the city you will build a reservoir to store water from the old pool.

But you will never request help from the one who made the city;

you have never depended on Yahweh, who planned this city long ago.

¹² Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, told you to weep and mourn;

he told you to shave your heads and to wear rough sackcloth

to show that you were sorry for the sins that you had committed.

¹³ But instead of doing that, you were happy and celebrated;

you slaughtered cattle and sheep

in order to cook their meat and eat it and drink wine.

You said, "Let us eat and drink all that we want to,

because it is possible that we will die tomorrow!"

¹⁴ So Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, revealed this to me: "I will never forgive my people for sinning like this!"

¹⁵ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, said this to me: "Go to Shebna, the official who supervises the workers in the palace, and give this message to him:

¹⁶ 'Who do you think you are?

Who gave you the authority to build a beautiful tomb where you will be buried,

chiseling it out of the rocky cliff high above this valley?"

¹⁷ You think that you are a great man, but Yahweh is about to hurl you away.

It will be as though he had seized you,

¹⁸ rolled you into a ball,

and thrown you away in a large distant land.

You will die and be buried there,

and your beautiful chariots will stay there in the hands of your enemies.

And because of what happens to you, your master, the king, will be very ashamed.

¹⁹ Yahweh says, "I will force you to quit working in the palace;

you will be forced out from your important position.

²⁰ Then I will summon Hilkiyah's son Eliakim, who has served me well, to replace you. ²¹ I will make him wear your robe and fasten your sash around him, and I will give to him the authority that you had.

He will be like a father to the people of Jerusalem and all the other towns in Judah. ²² I will give to him authority over what happens in the palace where King David lived; when he decides something, no one will be able to oppose it; when he refuses to do something, no one will be able to force him to do it. ²³ I will cause his family to be greatly respected, because I will put him firmly in his position as supervisor of the workers in the palace, like

a nail that is firmly hammered into a wall.

²⁴ Others will enable him to have much responsibility, with the result that all the members of his family, even the most insignificant ones, will be honored.

²⁵ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, also says, "Shebna is like a peg that is firmly fastened to the wall. But there will be a time when I will remove him from his position; he will lose his power, and everything that he promoted will fail." That will surely happen because Yahweh has said it.

Chapter 23

¹ I, Isaiah, received this message from Yahweh for you, the people in the city of Tyre:

You sailors on ships from Tarshish,

weep, because the harbor of Tyre and all the houses in the city have been destroyed.

The reports that you heard in the Island of Cyprus about Tyre are true.

² You people who live along the coast, you merchants of the city of Sidon, mourn silently.

Your sailors went across the seas to make you rich, there in Tyre.

³ They sailed across deep seas

to buy grain in Egypt, grain from the Valley of Shihor.

This wealth came down the Nile River, and you, Tyre, were the place where the people of all nations traded.

⁴ But now you people in Sidon should be ashamed,

because you trusted in Tyre, which has been a strong fortress on an island in the sea.

Tyre is like a woman who is saying,

"Now it is as though I have not given birth to any children,

or raised any sons or daughters."

⁵ When the people of Egypt hear what has happened to Tyre,

they will grieve very much.

⁶ Sail to Tarshish and tell them what happened;

weep, you people who live along the coast.

⁷ The people in the very old city of Tyre were previously joyful.

Traders from Tyre established colonies in many distant nations.

⁸ People from Tyre appointed kings over other places;

their traders were wealthy;

they were as powerful and wealthy as kings.

Who caused the people of Tyre to experience this disaster?

⁹ It was Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, who did it;

he did it in order to cause you people in Tyre to not be proud anymore,

to humiliate you men who are honored all over the world.

¹⁰ You people of Tarshish, you must grow crops in your land instead of trading;

spread out over your land like the Nile River spreads over the land of Egypt when it floods,

because there is no harbor in Tyre for your ships now.

¹¹ It is as though Yahweh stretched out his hand over the sea

and shook the kingdoms of the earth.

He commanded that in Phoenicia

all its fortresses must be destroyed.

¹² He said to the people of Sidon,

"You will never rejoice again, because you will be crushed;

even if you flee to the island of Cyprus,

you will not escape from troubles; you will have no peace."

¹³ Think about what happened in Babylon:

the people who were in that land have disappeared.

The armies of Assyria have caused that land to become a place where wild animals from the desert live.

They built dirt ramps to the top of the walls of the city of Babylon;

then they entered the city and tore down the palaces

and caused the city to become a heap of rubble.

¹⁴ So wail, you sailors on the ships of Tarshish,

because the harbor in Tyre where your ships stop is destroyed!

¹⁵ For seventy years, which is as long as kings usually live, people will forget about Tyre. But then it will be rebuilt. What will happen there will be like what happened to a prostitute in this song:

¹⁶ You harlot, whom people had forgotten,

play your harp well,

and sing many songs,

in order that people will remember you again.

¹⁷ It is true that after seventy years Yahweh will restore Tyre. Their merchants will again earn a lot of money by buying things from and selling things to many other nations.

¹⁸ But their profits will be given to Yahweh.

The merchants will not hoard their money;

instead, they will give it to Yahweh's people, for they will live in his presence,

in order that they can buy food and nice clothes.

Chapter 24

¹ Some day Yahweh is going to destroy the earth.

He will devastate it and cause it to become a desert,

and he will scatter its people.

² He will scatter everyone:

priests and common people,

servants and their masters,

maids and their mistresses,

buyers and sellers,

lenders and borrowers,

people who owe money and people who are owed money.

³ Nothing that is worth anything will be left on earth;

everything valuable will be destroyed.

That will surely happen because Yahweh has said it.

⁴ Everything on the earth will dry up and die;

its important people will become weak and unimportant.

⁵ The earth has become unacceptable to Yahweh because the people who live on it have disobeyed his laws;

they have rejected the covenant that he intends to last forever.

⁶ Therefore, Yahweh will curse the earth;

the people who live on it must be punished because of the sins that they have committed.

They will be destroyed by fire,

and only a few people will remain alive.

⁷ The grapevines will wither,

and there will be no grapes to make wine.

All the people who were previously happy will now groan and mourn.

⁸ People will no longer play cheerful songs with tambourines,

people will no longer play joyfully on their harps,

and people will no longer shout noisily during their celebrations.

⁹ People will no longer sing while they drink wine,

and all their alcoholic drinks will taste bitter.

¹⁰ Towns and cities will be desolate;

every house will be locked to prevent thieves from entering, for no one will live in them.

¹¹ Mobs will gather in the streets, wanting wine;

no one on the earth will be happy anymore.

¹² Cities will be ruined,

and all their gates will be battered into pieces.

¹³ It will be like that all over the earth:

there will only be a few people still alive,

like what happens when workers beat all the olives off a tree and there are only a few left,

or when they harvest the grapes and there are only a few left on the vines.

¹⁴ Those in the west will sing with great happiness;

they will declare that Yahweh is very great.

¹⁵ Those in the east of Israel will also praise Yahweh;

those along the coastlines of the sea will praise Yahweh, the God the people Israel worship.

¹⁶ We will hear people in the most distant places on the earth singing praise to Yahweh, the truly righteous one.

But now, I am very sad.

Weep for me, because I have become thin and weak.

Terrible things are happening!

Treacherous people still betray others everywhere.

¹⁷ You people all over the earth,

you will be terrified,

and you will fall into deep pits and traps.

¹⁸ Those who try to flee because they are terrified

will fall into deep pits,

and those who climb out of the pits

will be caught by traps.

The sky will split open and torrents of rain will fall;

the foundations of the earth will shake.

¹⁹ The earth will split apart and be shattered;

it will shake violently.

²⁰ It will be as though the earth will stagger like a drunk;

it will shake like a hammock in a windstorm.

It will collapse and not be able to rise again,

because the guilt of the people who rebel against Yahweh is very great.

²¹ At that time, Yahweh will punish the wicked powerful beings in the skies

and the wicked kings on the earth.

²² They will all be gathered together and thrown into a dungeon.

They will be shut in that dungeon, and later they will be punished.

²³ At that time the light of the moon and the sun will be lessened;

it will be as though they are ashamed in the presence of Yahweh,

because he, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will rule gloriously on Mount Zion,

in the presence of all the leaders of his people.

Chapter 25

¹ Yahweh, you are my God;

I will honor you and praise you.

You do wonderful things;

you said long ago that you would do those things,

and now you have done them as you said that you would.

² Sometimes you have caused cities to become heaps of rubble,

cities that had strong walls around them.

You have caused palaces in foreign countries to disappear;

they will never be rebuilt.

³ Therefore, people in powerful nations will declare that you are very great,

and people in nations whose leaders show mercy to no one will revere you.

⁴ Yahweh, you are like a strong tower where poor people can find refuge,

a place where needy people can go when they are distressed.

You are like a place where people can find refuge in a storm

and where they can stay in the shade, out of the hot sun.

People oppress us and show us no mercy,

they are like a storm beating against a wall,

⁵ and like the very strong heat in the dry land.

But you cause the noisy cries of people from foreign nations to be quiet.

Like the air cools when a cloud comes overhead,

you stop merciless people from singing songs about how great they are.

⁶ Here in Jerusalem Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will prepare a wonderful feast for all the people of the world.

It will be a banquet with plenty of good meat and fine well-aged wine.

⁷ People here are sad;

they are so sad that it is like a dark cloud that hangs over them,

like they experience when someone dies.

But Yahweh will enable them to quit being sad.

⁸ He will get rid of death forever!

Yahweh our God will cause people to no longer mourn because someone has died.

And he will stop other people insulting and making fun of his land and us his people.

That will surely happen because Yahweh has said it!

⁹ At that time, people will proclaim,

"Yahweh is our God!

We trusted in him, and he has rescued us!

Yahweh, in whom we trusted, has done it;

we should rejoice because he has saved us!"

¹⁰ Yahweh will protect and bless Jerusalem.

But he will crush the people in the land of Moab;

they will be like straw that is trampled in the manure and left to rot.

¹¹ Yahweh will push down the people of Moab;

they will be like a swimmer who pushes down the water with his hands; they will push their hands through the dung but never get out of it.

He will cause them to cease being proud, and he will show that all the things that they have done are worthless.

¹² He will cause armies to tear down the high walls around the cities of Moab;

they will fall into pieces and lie in the dust.

Chapter 26

¹ Some day, people in Judah will sing this song:

”Our city of Jerusalem is strong!

Yahweh protects our city;

He is like a wall that surrounds it.

² Open the gates of the city for people who are righteous;

allow people who faithfully obey Yahweh to enter the city.

³ Yahweh, those who trust in you,

those who are determined to never doubt you,

you will enable them to be perfectly peaceful in their inner beings.

⁴ So always trust in Yahweh,

because he is forever like a huge rock on top of which we will be safe.

⁵ He humbles proud people

and destroys cities whose people are arrogant.

He causes those cities to collapse into the dust.

⁶ When that happens, poor and oppressed people will trample on the ruins.

⁷ But for the righteous people,

Yahweh, you do what is right;

it is as though you smooth out the paths where they walk.

⁸ Yahweh, by obeying your laws

we show that we trust you to help us;

and what we desire in our inner beings is that you will be honored.

⁹ All during the nights I desire to know you better,

and in the mornings I still want to be with you.

When you come to judge and punish people who live on the earth

they will learn to do what is right.

¹⁰ But your acting kindly toward wicked people does not cause them to do what is good.

Even in places where people do what is right, the wicked people continue to do what is evil,

and they do not realize that you, Yahweh, are great.

¹¹ Yahweh, it is as though your fist was raised up ready to strike them,

but they do not realize that.

Show them that you are very eager to help your people.

If your enemies would realize that, they would be ashamed;

make your fire burn them up because they are your enemies.

¹² Yahweh, we desire that you will allow things to go well for us;

all that we have done is what you have enabled us to do.

¹³ Yahweh, our God, other masters have ruled over us,

but you are the only one whom we honor.

¹⁴ Those who ruled us are now gone; they are dead;

their spirits have left this earth and they will never live again.

You punished those rulers and got rid of them,

and people do not even remember them anymore.

¹⁵ Yahweh, you have enabled our nation to become great;

we are more people now, and we have more land,

so we thank you.

¹⁶ Yahweh, when we were distressed, we asked you to help us;

when you disciplined us, we could barely speak out any prayer to you.

¹⁷ Like pregnant women who writhe and cry out

when they are giving birth,

we suffered very much, too.

¹⁸ We were pregnant and had severe pain,

but nothing good resulted from it.

We have not rescued any people or kept their enemies from conquering them,

and those in the world who were our enemies did not fall in battle.

¹⁹ But Yahweh's people who have died will become alive again,

their corpses will become alive!

You whose bodies lie in graves, rise and shout joyfully!

His light will be like dew that falls on you, his people who have died,

you who are now in the place where the dead people are;

he will cause you to live again.

²⁰ But now, my fellow Israelites, go home

and lock your doors!

Hide for a short time,

until Yahweh is no longer angry.

²¹ Listen to this: Yahweh will come from heaven

to punish all the people on the earth for the sins that they have committed.

People will be able to see the blood of those who have been murdered;

everyone will at last know all the crimes of murder that have been committed."

Chapter 27

¹ At that time, Yahweh will punish Leviathan,

the swift-moving monster,

that coiling serpent that lives in the sea.

Yahweh will kill it with his sharp, huge, and powerful sword.

² At that time, Yahweh will say,

"You Israelite people, who are like a fruitful vineyard, must sing!

³ I will protect you

like a farmer waters his crops carefully in order that they will grow well.

I will guard you day and night, in order that no one harms you.

⁴ I am no longer angry with my people;

if any of your enemies try to injure you like briars and thorns injure people,

I will attack them in battle;

I will get rid of them completely,

⁵ unless they request me to protect them;

I strongly invite them to make peace with me!"

⁶ There will be a time when the descendants of Jacob will prosper like a plant that has good roots;

they will be like trees that bud and blossom and bear a lot of fruit;

what they do will bless all the people in the world.

⁷ Has Yahweh punished us Israelites like he punished our enemies?

Has he punished us as much as he punished them?

⁸ No, he has not done that,

but he did punish us Israelite people and exiled us;

we were taken away from our land

as though we were struck by a wind-storm from the east.

⁹ Yahweh did that in order to punish us for our sins

and remove our guilt.

As a result of our being exiled, all the altars to other gods in Israel will be demolished,

and we will be forgiven for the sins that we have committed.

There will be no more poles for worshipping the goddess Asherah or altars for burning incense to other gods;

they will all be torn down and smashed to bits.

¹⁰ The cities that have strong walls around them will be empty;

like the desert, they will have no one living in them.

The houses will be abandoned,

and the streets will be full of weeds.

Calves will eat grass there and lie down there;

they will chew up all the leaves on the trees.

¹¹ The Israelite people are like dry branches on a tree;

women break them off and use them to make fires under their cooking pots.

Our Israelite people do not have any sense;

so Yahweh, who created them, will not act mercifully toward them

or be kind to them.

¹² However, there will be a time when Yahweh will gather them together again; he will separate them from the people who have conquered them, like people separate wheat from chaff. He will bring them back to Israel, one by one, from the land between the Euphrates River in the northeast and the brook at the border of Egypt in the southwest. ¹³ At that time, a trumpet will be blown very loudly. And those who were exiled to Assyria and Egypt and who almost died there will return to Jerusalem, to worship Yahweh on Zion, his holy hill.

Chapter 28

¹ Terrible things will happen to the city of Samaria, the capital of Israel!

It is on a hill above a fertile valley;

the people who live there, who get drunk by drinking too much wine, are very proud;

it is a beautiful and glorious city,

but some day that beauty will disappear like a flower that wilts and dries up.

² Listen to this: Yahweh will cause a great army to attack it.

Their soldiers will be like a huge hail-storm or a very strong wind;

they will be everywhere, like the water of a huge flood,

and they will smash to the ground the buildings in Samaria.

³ The people of Samaria are proud,

but everything that the drunks who live there think is wonderful will be trampled on by their enemies.

⁴ Yes, Samaria is beautiful, set on a hill above a fertile valley, but that beauty will disappear

like a flower that wilts and dries up.

Whenever someone sees a good fig at the beginning of the season when figs become ripe, he quickly picks and eats it;

similarly, when the enemies of Israel see all the beautiful things in Samaria,

they will quickly conquer the city and take away all those things.

⁵ At that time, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will be like a glorious wreath of flowers for us Israelite people

who are still alive after being exiled.

⁶ He will cause our judges to want to do what is fair

when they decide people's cases.

He will enable the soldiers who stand at the city gates

to strongly defend the city when our enemies attack it.

⁷ But now, our leaders stagger,

and the priests and prophets also stagger

because of drinking a lot of wine and other alcoholic drinks.

They are not able to think right;

they see visions, but they cannot understand what they mean;

they are unable to decide things correctly.

⁸ All their tables are covered with their vomit;

filth is everywhere.

⁹ Who will he teach so that they can learn about knowledge?

Who will listen to him so that he can teach lessons to them so they can learn?

Does he think that we are like little children who no longer drink milk,

and that we are like babies who, not long ago, were weaned?

¹⁰ He continually tells us, 'Do this, do that;'

first he tells us one rule, then another rule,

he tells us only one line at a time."

¹¹ So now, Yahweh will need to force them to listen to Assyrians

speaking to them in a language that they do not understand.

¹² Yahweh told his people long ago,

"This is a place where you can rest;

you are exhausted from all your travels through the desert,

but you will be able to rest in this land."

But they refused to pay attention to what he said.

¹³ So Yahweh continues to tell the people of Samaria,

one line at a time, "Do this, do that,"

first one rule and then another rule.

But because of their ignoring what God said, they will be attacked and defeated;

they will be wounded and snared and captured.

¹⁴ Listen to the word that Yahweh says,

you who rule over the people of Jerusalem,

you who mock and make fun of me!

¹⁵ You boast and say,

"We made a promise with death to ensure that the power of death, when it passes over us, it cannot get to us.

We tried to turn our lying words into a shelter in which we could hide.

¹⁶ Therefore, Yahweh our Lord says this:

"Listen to this! I am going to place in Jerusalem someone who is like a foundation stone,

he is like a stone that has been tested to determine if it is solid.

He will be like a valuable stone on which which it will be safe to build a house;

and whoever trusts in him will never be disappointed.

¹⁷ I will test you people of Jerusalem to find out if you will act justly and righteously,

I will measure your character like a carpenter uses a plumb line to determine if a wall is straight and level.

And then the hail will fall! And it will destroy everything you have.

Your shelter will be destroyed because it is built on a foundation of lies,

and the water from the storm will wash your shelter away.

¹⁸ I will cancel the covenant that you made with death,

and I will bring to an end the covenant you made with the place where the dead dwell.

But when the vast flood comes, it will pour over you;

and day after day it will pass over you.

¹⁹ When the flood comes, it will pass through and over you like the river when it overflows its banks and causes flooding everywhere.

When you finally understand the message of Yahweh, it will cause you to be terrified, not comforted.

For the bed is too short to stretch oneself on, and the covering too narrow to wrap oneself in. ²⁰ You have heard people say, "Your bed is very short; you will not be able to sleep in it;

your blankets are very narrow; they will not cover you!"

²¹ Yahweh will come and cause you to be defeated;

he will do to you like he did to the army of Philistia at Mount Perizim,

and like he did to the Amorites at Gibeon Valley.

What he will do will be very strange and unusual.

²² Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has told me that he is going to destroy the entire land.

So do not ridicule what I say anymore, because if you do that,

he will punish you even more severely.

²³ Listen to what I say;

pay attention carefully.

²⁴ When a farmer plows some ground, does he never plant seeds?

Does he continue to plow it and never plant anything?

²⁵ No, he makes the ground very level, and then he plants seeds—

caraway seed and cumin and wheat and barley.

He plants each kind of seed in the correct manner. He does not plant one kind of seed in the way that is not right for it.

²⁶ He does that because God has taught him the correct way to do it.

²⁷ Moreover, the caraway seed is not threshed with a sledge,

nor is a cartwheel rolled over the cumin;

but caraway is beaten with a stick, and the cumin with a rod.

²⁸ And grain for baking bread is crushed easily,

so the farmers do not continue to pound it for a long time.

They sometimes cause their horses to pull a cart over it to thresh it,

but doing that does not grind the grain.

²⁹ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies,

gives us wonderful advice about how to do things; he gives us great wisdom.

So what the farmers do is very smart, but what your leaders are doing is very stupid.

Chapter 29

¹ This is a message from Yahweh:

Terrible things will happen to Jerusalem, the city where King David lived.

You people continue to celebrate your festivals each year.

² But I will cause you to experience a great disaster,

and when that happens,

people will weep and lament very much.

Your city will become like an altar to me where people are burned as sacrifices.

³ I will cause your enemies to come and camp all around your city;

they will surround it by building towers

and putting in place other things with which to attack you.

⁴ Then you will talk as though you were buried deep in the ground;

it will sound like someone whispering from under the ground,

like a ghost speaking from a grave.

⁵ But suddenly your enemies will be blown away like dust;

their armies will disappear

like chaff that is blown away by the wind.

It will happen very suddenly:

⁶ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will come to help you

with thunder and an earthquake and a very loud noise,

with a strong wind and a big storm and a fire that will burn up everything.

⁷ Then the armies of all the nations that will be attacking Jerusalem will quickly disappear like a dream in the night.

Those who will be attacking Jerusalem will suddenly vanish.

⁸ People who are asleep dream about eating food,

but when they wake up, they are still hungry.

People who are thirsty dream about drinking something,

but when they wake up they are still thirsty.

It will be like that when your enemies
come to attack Mount Zion;

they will dream about conquering
you, but when they wake up,

they will realize that they have not
succeeded.

⁹ You people of Jerusalem, be amazed
and surprised about this!

Do not believe what I have said!

And continue to be blind about what
Yahweh is doing.

You are stupid, but it is not because
you have drunk a lot of wine.

You stagger, but not from drinking
alcoholic drinks.

¹⁰ Because Yahweh has prevented the
prophets from understanding and telling
you his messages,

it is as though he had made you go
fast asleep.

¹¹ Yahweh gave me visions; but for you,
they are only words on a scroll that is
sealed shut. If you give it to those who can
read and request they read it, they will
say, "We cannot read it because the scroll
is sealed." ¹² When you give it to others
who cannot read, they will say, "We can-
not read it because we do not know how
to read."

¹³ So the Lord says, "These people pretend
to worship me.

They say good things to pretend to
honor me,

but they do not think about what I
desire.

When they worship me,

all they do is recite rules that peo-
ple have made and that they have memo-
rized.

¹⁴ Therefore, again I will do something
to amaze these people;

I will perform many miracles.

And I will show that the people who
tell others that they are wise are not really
wise,

and I will show that the people who
tell others that they are intelligent are not
really intelligent.

¹⁵ Terrible things will happen to those
who try to conceal from me, Yahweh,

the evil things that they plan to do;

they do those deeds in the darkness

and they think, 'Yahweh certainly
cannot see us;

he cannot know what we are doing!'

¹⁶ They are extremely foolish!

They act as though they were the
potters and I were the clay!

Something that was created should cer-
tainly never say to the one who made it,

'You did not make me!'

A jar should never say,

'The potter who made me did not
know what he was doing!'

¹⁷ Soon the forests in Lebanon will be-
come fertile fields,

and abundant crops will grow in those
fields,

and that will happen very soon.

¹⁸ At that time, deaf people will be able
to hear;

they will be able to hear when some-
one reads from a book;

and blind people will be able to see;

they will be able to see things when
it is gloomy and even when it is dark.

¹⁹ Yahweh will enable humble people to be very joyful again.

Poor people will rejoice about what the Holy One of Israel has done.

²⁰ There will be no more people who ridicule others

and no more arrogant people.

And those who plan to do evil things will be executed.

²¹ Those who testify falsely in order to persuade judges to punish innocent people will vanish.

Similar things will happen to those who by lying in court persuade the judges to make unjust decisions.

²² That is why Yahweh, who rescued Abraham, says about the people of Israel,

”My people will no longer be ashamed;
no longer will they show on their faces that they are ashamed.

²³ When they see that I have blessed them by giving them many children, and all that I have done for them,

they will honor the holy name of the Holy One of Israel,

and they will revere me, the God to whom they, the descendants of Jacob, belong.

²⁴ When that happens, those who are not able to think well will think clearly,

and those who complain about what I am doing will accept what I am teaching them.”

Chapter 30

¹ Yahweh says, ”Terrible things will happen to you, my people who rebel against me.

You make plans, but what you plan is not what I want.

You have made an alliance with the rulers of Egypt,

but you did not ask my Spirit if that was what you should do.

By doing that, you have increased the number of your sins.

² You went to Egypt to ask their rulers for help,

without asking for my advice.

You have trusted in the army of the king of Egypt to protect you;

you have trusted in them

like people sit in the shade to protect themselves from the sun.

³ But the result of your trusting in the king of Egypt is that you will be disappointed and disgraced;

because you trust in him, you will be humiliated.

⁴ Officials from Judah have gone to the cities of Zoan and Hanes in Egypt to make treaties,

⁵ but all those who trust in the king of Egypt will be humiliated,

because that nation will not be able to help you;

the treaty that you have made requesting help from them will be useless;

instead, the result will be that you will be humiliated and disgraced.”

⁶ Isaiah received from Yahweh this message about the animals in the southern part of Judah, the desert part:

That area is one where people experience a lot of troubles and difficulties,

an area where there are male and female lions

and various kinds of poisonous snakes.

Caravans go through that area

taking donkeys and camels loaded
with valuable goods.

They are taking them to Egypt because
they hope that the army of Egypt will pro-
tect them,

but it will be useless.

⁷ The promises made by the king of
Egypt are worthless;

therefore I call Egypt 'Useless Rahab,
the sea monster that does nothing.'

⁸ Yahweh told me to write on a scroll a
message,

in order that it would be a witness to
the people of Judah

that would endure forever.

⁹ It would remind them that that they
are deceitful and always rebelling against
Yahweh,

and that they refuse to pay attention
to what he tells them.

¹⁰ They tell the people who see visions
from Yahweh,

"Stop seeing visions!"

They tell the prophets,

"Do not reveal to us what is right!

Tell us pleasant things;

do not tell us visions about things that
are true!

¹¹ Stop doing what you have been doing;

stop telling us what the Holy One of
Israel says to us!"

¹² Therefore, this is what the Holy One of
Israel says:

"You have rejected my message,

and you are relying on those who
oppress and deceive others.

¹³ Therefore, the result of your sin of re-
jecting me will be that you will suddenly
experience disasters;

what will happen to you will be like
a cracked wall that suddenly collapses on
you."

¹⁴ You will be smashed like a clay jar is
smashed when it is dropped

and shatters completely, with the result
that there is not one piece big enough

to sweep out cinders from a stove

or to carry a little bit of water from a
well.

¹⁵ Yahweh, our God, the Holy One of Israel,
also says this:

"I will rescue you from your enemies
only if you repent and trust in what I will
do for you;

you will be strong only if you quit
worrying and trust in me.

But you do not want to do that.

¹⁶ You said, 'No, we will escape on horses
that the army of Egypt will give us!'

So you will try to escape.

You said, 'We will escape from the army
of Assyria by riding on swift horses!'

But those who pursue you will also
ride swiftly.

¹⁷ As a result, a thousand of you will flee
when only one of them pursues you!

When five of their soldiers threaten to
kill you,

all of you will flee.

Only a few of you will be left, like a sin-
gle flagpole on top of a mountain,

or like one single signal flag on a
hilltop."

¹⁸ But Yahweh wants to act kindly to-
ward you;

he is great because he desires to act mercifully.

Do not forget he is a God who acts justly;

Yahweh is pleased with those who patiently trust in him.

¹⁹ You people who live in Jerusalem, some day you will not cry anymore. Yahweh will be kind to you when you call out to him for help. He will answer you as soon as he hears you call. ²⁰ Although now Yahweh has brought poverty on you, he, your teacher, will not hide himself from you. He will teach you many things clearly. ²¹ And you will hear him speak to you to guide you. Right behind you he will say, "This is the road on which you should walk; walk on this road!" ²² When that happens, you will destroy all your idols that are covered with silver or gold. You will throw them away like you throw away a filthy rag, and you will say to them, "We do not need you anymore!"

²³ If you do that, Yahweh will bless you by giving you good rain at the time that you plant your crops. You will have good harvests and plenty of big fields with grass for your cattle to eat. ²⁴ After the wind blows away the chaff, the oxen and donkeys that pull the plow over your ground will have good grain to eat. ²⁵ At that time, when your enemies have been slaughtered and their towers have collapsed, there will be streams flowing down every hill and mountain in Judah. ²⁶ The moon will seem to shine as brightly as the sun, and the sun will seem to shine seven times as brightly as previously. That is what it will be like when Yahweh causes the suffering of his people to cease; it will be as though he is putting bandages on their wounds and healing them.

²⁷ It is as though we see Yahweh coming from far away;

he is extremely angry,

and there are thick clouds of smoke around him.

By what he says he shows that he is angry;

what he says is like a devastating fire.

²⁸ His breath is like a flood that covers his enemies up to their necks.

He will separate the nations in order to destroy some of them;

it is as though he will put horses' bridles on them so he can lead them away to destruction.

²⁹ But his people will sing joyfully

like they sing during the nights when they celebrate a holy festival.

They will be very joyful,

like a large group of his people are joyful when they go up to Mount Zion in Jerusalem,

along with men playing flutes

when they are all going there to worship Yahweh.

He is like a huge rock on top of which we Israelite people are safe.

³⁰ And Yahweh will enable us to hear him speaking powerfully.

He will show us that he is very powerful.

We will see him smash his enemies.

Being very angry, he will descend with a big rainstorm and thunder and hail to punish them.

³¹ The soldiers of Assyria will be terrified when they hear the voice of Yahweh

and when he strikes them with his rod.

³² And while Yahweh strikes them to punish them,

his people will celebrate by playing tambourines and harps.

It will be as though Yahweh will lift up his powerful hand and defeat the Assyrian army in battle.

³³ The Valley of Topheth outside Jerusalem has been prepared for a long time;

it is ready for the king of Assyria;

the funeral pyre for burning his body is wide and high,

and it will be as though Yahweh will light the fire with his breath,

which will come out like a stream of burning sulfur.

Chapter 31

¹ Terrible things will happen to those who rely on Egypt to help them,

trusting in their soldiers' horses and their many chariots and their many chariot drivers,

instead of trusting that Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, will help them.

² Yahweh is very wise,

but he also causes people to experience disaster!

And when he decides to do that,

he does not change his mind!

He will strike the wicked people

and all those who help them.

³ The soldiers of Egypt that you people of Judah are relying on are humans, not God!

And their horses are only horses; they are not powerful spirits!

So when Yahweh raises his fist

to strike the soldiers of Egypt whom you thought would help you,

he will also strike you who thought that you would be helped,

and you and they will stumble and fall down;

all of you will die together.

⁴ But this is what Yahweh said to me:

"When a lion stands and growls over the body of a sheep that he has killed,

even if a large group of shepherds comes to chase away the lion,

even if they shout loudly,

the lion will not be afraid and will not leave.

Similarly, I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will come down

to fight my enemies on Mount Zion,

and nothing will stop me.

⁵ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will protect Jerusalem

like a mother bird hovers over the baby birds in her nest.

He will defend the city

and rescue it from its enemies."

⁶ My people, even though you have greatly rebelled against Yahweh, return to him. ⁷ When you do that, each of you will throw away the idols that you have made in sin, idols that are covered with silver and gold.

⁸ The Assyrian soldiers will be killed,

but not by swords that men use.

They will be destroyed by the sword of God;

and those who are not killed will panic and flee.

And some of them will be captured and forced to become slaves.

⁹ Even their very strong soldiers will be terrified;

their leaders will abandon all hope and run away from Yahweh's power!

Yahweh's presence on Mount Zion is like a fire,

like a furnace that blazes in Jerusalem.

This is what Yahweh says about the Assyrian army!

Chapter 32

¹ Listen to this! Some day there will be a righteous king,

and his officials will help him to rule justly.

² Each of them will be like a shelter from the wind

and a refuge from the storm.

They will be like streams of water in the desert,

like the shade under a huge rock in a very hot and dry land.

³ When that happens, those leaders will enable people who have not understood God's truth to understand it,

and they will enable those who have not paid attention to God's truth to pay attention to it.

⁴ Even those who act very hastily will have good sense,

and those who cannot speak well will speak fluently and clearly.

⁵ At that time, people who are foolish will no longer be admired,

and scoundrels will no longer be respected.

⁶ Foolish people say things that are foolish,

and they plan to do evil things.

Their behavior is disgraceful,

and they say things about Yahweh that are false.

They do not give food to those who are hungry,

and they do not give water to those who are thirsty.

⁷ Scoundrels do things that are evil and that deceive people;

they plan to do evil things;

by telling lies in court they cause poor people to have trouble,

even when what the poor people are requesting is fair.

⁸ But honorable people plan to do honorable things,

and they do those honorable things, so they succeed.

⁹ You women of Jerusalem who think that you are very secure

and think that everything is going well,

listen to what I say!

¹⁰ After one year is ended, you who now are not worried about anything will tremble,

because there will be no grapes for you to harvest

and no other crops to harvest.

¹¹ So tremble now, you women who are not worried about anything!

Take off your fancy clothes and put rough sackcloth around your waists.

¹² You will wail because you are grieving about what will happen in your fertile fields and to your fruitful grapevines,

¹³ because only thorns and thistles will grow in your soil.

Your houses where you had joyful parties and your city where you have been happy will be gone.

¹⁴ The king's palace will be empty;

there will be no people in the city that now is very noisy.

Wild donkeys will walk around and flocks of sheep will eat grass

in the empty forts and watchtowers.

¹⁵ It will be like that until God pours his Spirit out on us from heaven.

When that happens, the deserts will become fertile fields,

and abundant crops will grow in those fertile fields.

¹⁶ People will act justly in those desert areas,

and people will act righteously in those fertile fields.

¹⁷ The result of their acting righteously will be that there will be peace,

the land will be tranquil, and people will be secure forever.

¹⁸ My people will live in their homes peacefully, and safely, and calmly,

in places of rest.

¹⁹ Even if a severe hailstorm knocks down the trees in the forest,

and all the buildings in the city are blown down,

²⁰ Yahweh will greatly bless you;

you will plant seeds in fields alongside the streams

and there will be abundant crops.

Your donkeys and cattle will easily find grass to eat when you send them out into pasture.

Chapter 33

¹ Terrible things will happen to you people of Assyria!

You have destroyed others,

but you have not been destroyed yet.

You have betrayed others,

but you have not been betrayed yet.

When you stop destroying others,

others will destroy you.

When you stop betraying others,

others will betray you.

² Yahweh, act kindly toward us,

because we have patiently waited for you to help us.

Enable us to be strong every day,

and rescue us when we have troubles.

³ Our enemies run away when they hear your voice.

When you stand up and show that you are powerful, the people of all nations flee.

⁴ And after our enemies have been defeated,

we, your people, will take away all our enemies' possessions,

like caterpillars and locusts strip off all the leaves of plants.

⁵ Yahweh is greater than anyone else, and he lives in heaven,

and he will rule justly and righteously in Jerusalem.

⁶ When that happens, he will enable you to live securely;

he will fully protect your possessions,

he will enable you to be wise and to know all that you need to know;

and revering Yahweh will be like a valuable treasure that he will give to you.

⁷ But now, look, our messengers are crying out in the streets;

our ambassadors have gone to other countries to make peace treaties,

but they will cry bitterly because they will not succeed.

⁸ No one travels on our roads.

The leaders of Assyria have broken their peace treaty with us;

they despise the people who made those treaties,

and they do not respect anyone.

⁹ The land of Judah is dry and barren.

The cedar trees in Lebanon are drying up and decaying.

The Plain of Sharon along the coast is now a desert plain.

There are no more leaves on the trees in the areas of Bashan and Carmel.

¹⁰ Yahweh says, "Now I will arise and show that I deserve for everyone to honor me.

¹¹ You people of Assyria make plans that are as useless as chaff and straw.

Your breath will become a fire that will burn you up.

¹² Your people will be burned until only ashes remain,

like thornbushes are cut down and burned up.

¹³ You people who live far away and you people who live nearby,

pay attention to what I have done and realize that I am very powerful."

¹⁴ The sinners in Jerusalem will tremble because they are very afraid;

godless people will be terrified.

They say, "None of us can remain alive because this fire is burning everything;

it is like the fire on Yahweh's altar that will burn forever!"

¹⁵ Those who act honestly and say what is right,

those who do not try to become rich by forcing money from people,

those who do not try to get bribes,

those who refuse to listen to people who are planning to murder someone,

those who do not join others who urge them to do what is wrong,

¹⁶ they are the people who will live safely;

they will find places to be safe in the caves in the mountains.

They will have plenty of food

and water.

¹⁷ You people of Judah will see the king wearing all his beautiful robes,

and you will see that he rules a land that extends far away.

¹⁸ When you see that, you will think about when you were previously terrified,

and you will say, "The officers of Assyria who counted the tax money that we were forced to pay to them have disappeared!

Those men who counted our towers are gone!

¹⁹ Those arrogant people who spoke a language that we could not understand are no longer here!"

²⁰ At that time, you will see Mount Zion, the place where we celebrate our festivals;

You will see that Jerusalem has become a place that is calm and safe.

It will be secure,
like a tent that cannot be moved because its ropes are tight

and its stakes are firmly in the ground.

²¹ Yahweh will be our mighty God;

he will be like a mighty river that will protect us

because our enemies will not be able to cross it;

no one will be able to row across it

and no warships will be able to sail across it.

²² Yahweh is our judge;

he is the one who gives us laws,
and he is our king.

He will rescue us.

²³ The ropes on our enemies' boats will hang loose,

their masts will not be fastened firmly,
and their sails will not be spread out.

The treasures that they have seized will be divided among us, God's people,

and even lame people among us will get some.

²⁴ And the people in Jerusalem will no longer say, "We are sick,"

because Yahweh will forgive the sins that have been committed by the people who live there.

Chapter 34

¹ You people of all nations, come near and listen;

pay careful attention.

I want the world and everything that is in it to hear what I say.

² Yahweh is angry with the people of all nations;

he is furious with all their armies.

He has decided that they must be destroyed,

and he will slaughter them.

³ Their corpses will not be buried,

and as a result their bodies will stink,
and the mountains will collapse because of their blood.

⁴ The sky will disappear like a scroll that is rolled up and thrown away.

Stars will fall from the sky

like withered leaves fall from grapevines,

or like shriveled figs fall from fig trees.

⁵ When Yahweh has finished his work of destroying objects in the sky,

he will punish the people of Edom,
the people group that he has said must be destroyed.

⁶ It is as though Yahweh will have a sword that is covered with blood and fat—the blood of lambs and goats

and the fat of the kidneys of rams to be sacrificed.

It is as though Yahweh will offer a sacrifice in Bozrah

and kill many people in other cities in Edom.

⁷ Even wild oxen will be killed,

as well as young calves and big bulls.

The ground will be soaked with blood,

and the dirt will be covered with the fat of those animals.

⁸ That will be the time when Yahweh gets revenge

for what those people did to the people of Judah.

⁹ The streams in Edom will be full of burning pitch,

and the ground will be covered with burning sulfur and burning pitch.

¹⁰ Yahweh will never finish punishing Edom with fire;

the smoke will rise forever.

No one will ever live in that land,

and no one will even travel through it.

¹¹ Ravens and various kinds of owls and small animals will live there.

Yahweh will measure that land carefully;

he will measure it to decide where to cause chaos and destruction.

¹² There will be no more princes;

the people who have authority will have no kingdom to rule; the princes will disappear.

¹³ The deserted palaces and fortified buildings will be full of thorns and thistles.

The ruins will be places for jackals and ostriches to live.

¹⁴ Animals that live in the desert and hyenas will be there,

and wild goats will bleat to each other.

There will also be creatures that roam around at night and rest there.

¹⁵ Owls will make their nests there and lay their eggs in the nests;

and when the eggs hatch, the mother birds will cover them with their wings.

There will also be hawks there,
each with its mate.

¹⁶ If you read what is written in the book that contains messages from Yahweh, you will find out what he will do to Edom.

All of those animals and birds will be there,

and each one will have a mate,

because that is what Yahweh has promised,

and his spirit will cause them all to gather there.

¹⁷ He has decided what parts of the land of Edom each will live in,

and those are the places where each bird or animal will live.

Their descendants will possess those areas forever,

throughout all generations.

Chapter 35

¹ Some day, it will be as though the desert and other very dry areas are glad;

the desert will rejoice and flowers will blossom.

Like the rose,

² the desert will produce flowers abundantly;

it will be as though everything is rejoicing and singing!

The deserts will become as beautiful as the trees in Lebanon,

as fertile as the plains of the Sharon and the area of Carmel.

There people will see the glory of Yahweh;

they will see that he is magnificent.

³ So encourage those who are tired and weak.

⁴ Say to those who are afraid,

”Be strong and do not be afraid,

because our God is going to come to get revenge on his enemies;

he will pay them back for what they have done,

and he will rescue you.”

⁵ When he does that, he will enable blind people to see

and enable deaf people to hear.

⁶ Lame people will leap like deer,

and those who have been unable to speak will sing joyfully.

Water will gush out from springs in the desert,

and streams will flow in the desert.

⁷ The very hot and dry ground will become a pool of water,

and springs will provide water for the dry land.

Grass and reeds and papyrus will grow in places where the jackals lived previously.

⁸ There will be a highway through that land;

it will be called ‘the Holy Highway.’

People who are not acceptable to God will not walk on that road;

it will be only for those who conduct their lives as God wants them to,

and no wicked fools will walk on that road.

⁹ There will not be any lions there

or any other dangerous animals along that road.

Only those whom Yahweh has set free will walk on it.

¹⁰ Those whom Yahweh has freed will return to Jerusalem;

they will sing as they enter the city,

and they will be extremely joyful forever.

No longer will they be sad or mourn;

they will be completely joyful and glad.

Chapter 36

¹ When King Hezekiah had been ruling Judah for almost fourteen years, King Sennacherib of Assyria came with his army to attack the cities in Judah that had walls around them. They did not conquer Jerusalem, but they conquered all the other cities. ² Then the king of Assyria sent a large army with some of his important officials from the city of Lachish to persuade King Hezekiah to surrender. When they arrived at Jerusalem, they stood alongside the aqueduct in which water flows into the upper pool into Jerusalem, near the road to the field where the women wash clothes. ³ The Israelite officials who went out of the city to talk with them were Hilkiah’s son Eliakim, the palace administrator, Shebna the king’s secretary, and Asaph’s son Joah, who wrote down the government decisions.

⁴ Then one of Sennacherib’s important officials told them to take a message to Hezekiah

from the king of Assyria, the great king. In the message, the king said to the people of Jerusalem, ”What are you trusting in to rescue you? ⁵ You say that you have weapons to fight us and that some other

nation has promised to help you, but that is only talk. Who do you think will help you to rebel against my soldiers from Assyria? ⁶ Listen to me! You are relying on the army of Egypt. But that is like when a man tries to walk while leaning on a broken reed for a walking stick. But it would pierce the hand of anyone who would lean on it! That is what the king of Egypt is like for anyone who relies on him for help. ⁷ But perhaps you will say to me that you are relying on Yahweh your God to help you. In that case, I would answer that Yahweh is the one whom Hezekiah insulted by tearing down his high places and altars and forcing everyone in Jerusalem and other places in Judah to worship only in front of the altar in Jerusalem.”

⁸ The Assyrian official talking in front of the city continued: “So I suggest that you make a deal with my master, the king of Assyria. I will give you two thousand horses, but I do not think that you can find two thousand of your own men who can ride on them! ⁹ You are expecting the king of Egypt to send chariots and men riding horses to assist you. But they certainly would not be able to resist even the most insignificant official in the army of Assyria! ¹⁰ Furthermore, do not think that we have come here to attack and destroy this land without Yahweh’s orders! It is Yahweh himself who told us to come here and destroy this land!”

¹¹ Then Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah said to the official from Assyria, “Please speak to us in your Aramaic language, because we understand it. Do not speak to us in our Hebrew language, because the people who are standing on the wall will understand it and become frightened.”

¹² But the official replied, “Do you think that my master sent me to say these things only to you, and not to the people standing on the wall? If you reject this message,

the people in this city will soon need to eat their own dung and drink their own urine, just as you will, because you will have nothing else to eat.”

¹³ Then the official stood up and shouted in the Hebrew language to the people sitting on the wall. He said, “Listen to this message from the great king, the king of Assyria! ¹⁴ He says, ‘Do not allow Hezekiah to deceive you! He will not be able to rescue you! ¹⁵ Do not allow him to persuade you to trust in Yahweh, saying that Yahweh will rescue you, and that the army of the king of Assyria will never capture this city!

¹⁶ Do not pay attention to what Hezekiah says! This is what the king of Assyria says: “Come out of the city and surrender to me. If you do that, I will arrange for each of you to drink the wine from your own grapevines and to eat figs from your own trees, and to drink water from your own well. ¹⁷ You will be able to do that until we come and take you to a land that is like your land—a land where there is grain to make bread and vineyards to produce grapes for making new wine and, where we make plenty of bread.”

¹⁸ Do not allow Hezekiah to trick you by saying, “Yahweh will rescue us.” The gods that people of other nations worship have never rescued any of them from the power of the king of Assyria! ¹⁹ Why were the gods of Hamath and Arpad cities, and the gods of Sepharvaim unable to rescue Samaria from my power? ²⁰ No, no god of any nation which our armies have attacked has been able to rescue their people from me. So why do you think that Yahweh will rescue you people of Jerusalem from my power?”

²¹ But the Hebrew soldiers who were listening were silent. No one said anything, because King Hezekiah had commanded them, “When the official from Assyria

talks to you, do not answer him.”

²² Then Eliakim and Shebna and Joah returned to Hezekiah with their clothes torn because they were extremely distressed. They told him what the official from Assyria had said.

Chapter 37

¹ When King Hezekiah heard what they reported, he tore his clothes and put on clothes made of rough sackcloth because he was very distressed. Then he went into the temple of Yahweh and prayed. ² Then he sent Eliakim, Shebna, and the older priests, who were also wearing clothes made of rough sackcloth, to talk to Isaiah the prophet, son of Amoz. ³ They told him, “Say this to Isaiah: ‘King Hezekiah says that this is a day when we have great distress. Other nations are insulting and shaming us. We are like a woman who is about to give birth to a baby, but she does not have the strength that she needs to do it. ⁴ But perhaps Yahweh our God has heard what the official from Assyria said. Perhaps God knows that the king of Assyria has sent his official to insult him, the all-powerful God. Perhaps Yahweh will punish the king of Assyria for what he said. And I, Hezekiah, request that you pray for the few of us who are still alive here in Jerusalem.’”

⁵ After those men gave Isaiah that message, ⁶ he told them to say to the king that Yahweh says: “Those lackeys from the king of Assyria have said evil things about me. But do not let them worry you. ⁷ Listen to this: I will make Sennacherib hear some news from his own country that will worry him very much. So he will go back there, and I will make other men to assassinate him with their swords.”

⁸ The official from Assyria learned that his

king and the army of Assyria had left the city of Lachish and were now attacking Libnah, a nearby city. So the official left Jerusalem and went to Libnah to report to the king what had happened in Jerusalem.

⁹ Soon after that, King Sennacherib received a report that King Tirhakah of Ethiopia was leading his army to attack them. So he sent other messengers to Hezekiah with a letter. In the letter he wrote this to Hezekiah:

¹⁰ “Do not allow your god, on whom you are relying, to deceive you by promising that he will keep my army from capturing Jerusalem.” ¹¹ You have certainly heard what the armies of the kings of Assyria before me did to all the other countries; our armies destroyed them completely. So you really do not think that you will escape from me, do you? ¹² Did the gods of those nations rescue them? Did they rescue the region of Gozan, or the cities of Haran and Rezeph in northern Aram, or the people of the region of Eden in the city of Tel Assar? ¹³ What happened to the king of Hamath and the king of Arpad? What happened to the kings of the cities of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah? Did their gods rescue them?”

¹⁴ Hezekiah received the letter that the messengers gave him, and he read it. Then he went up to the temple and spread out the letter in front of Yahweh. ¹⁵ Then Hezekiah prayed this: ¹⁶ “Yahweh, Commander of the angel armies, the God to whom we Israelites belong, you are seated on your throne above the statues of the cherubim, above the sacred chest. Only you are truly God. You rule all the kingdoms on this earth. You are the one who created everything on the earth and in the sky. ¹⁷ So, Yahweh, please listen to what I am saying, and look at what is happening! And listen to what Sennacherib has said to insult you, the all-powerful God!

¹⁸ Yahweh, it is true that the armies of the kings of Assyria have completely destroyed many nations and ruined their land. ¹⁹ And they have thrown all the idols of those nations into fires and burned them. But they were not really gods. They were only idols made of wood and stone, and that is why they were able to be destroyed. ²⁰ So now, Yahweh our God, please rescue us from the power of the king of Assyria, in order that the people in all the kingdoms of the world may know that you, Yahweh, are the only one who is truly God."

²¹ Then Isaiah sent a message to tell Hezekiah that Yahweh, whom the Israelites worshiped, said this to him: "Because you prayed about what King Sennacherib of Assyria said, ²² this is what I say to him:

'The people of Jerusalem despise you and make fun of you.

They will wag their heads to mock you while you flee from here.

²³ Who do you think you have been despising and ridiculing?

Who do you think you were shouting at?

Who do you think you were looking at very proudly?

It was I, the Holy One whom the Israelites worship!

²⁴ The messengers whom you sent made fun of me.

You said, "With my many chariots I have gone to the highest mountains,

to the highest mountains in Lebanon.

We have cut down its tallest cedar trees
and its nicest pine trees.

We have been to the most distant peaks
and to its densest forests.

²⁵ We have dug wells in many countries and drunk water from them.

And by marching through the streams of Egypt,

we dried them all up!"

²⁶ But I reply to him, 'Have you never heard that long ago I determined those things;

I planned it long ago,

and now I have been causing it to occur.

I planned that your army would destroy cities

and cause them to become piles of rubble.

²⁷ The people in those cities have no power,

and as a result they are dismayed and discouraged.

They are as frail as grass and plants in the fields,

as frail as grass that grows on the roofs of houses

and is scorched by the hot east wind.

²⁸ But I know everything about you;

I know when you are in your house and when you go outside;

I also know that you are raging against me.

²⁹ So because you have raged against me

and because I have heard you speak very proudly,

it will be as though I will put a hook in your nose

and an iron bit in your mouth in order that I can take you where I wish,

and I will force you to return to your own country,

on the same road on which you came here, without conquering Jerusalem.”

³⁰ “This will prove to you, Hezekiah that it is I, Yahweh, who will make all this happen:

This year, you will eat only the crops that grow by themselves,

and next year the same thing will happen.

But in the third year you will plant crops and harvest them;

you will take care of your vineyards and eat the grapes.

³¹ You people who are still here in Judah, will be strong and prosper again.

³² A small number of my people will survive,

and they will spread out from Jerusalem.

That will happen because Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, is desiring very much to accomplish it.”

³³ “This is what Yahweh says about the king of Assyria:

‘His armies will not enter Jerusalem;

they will not even shoot a single arrow into it.

His soldiers will not bring one shield up to Jerusalem,

and they will not build high mounds of dirt against the walls of the city

to enable them to attack the city.

³⁴ Instead, their king will return to his own country

on the same road on which he came here.

He will not enter this city!

That will happen because I, Yahweh, have said it!

³⁵ For the sake of my own reputation and because of what I promised King David, who served me well,

I will defend this city and prevent it from being destroyed.”

³⁶ That night, an angel from Yahweh went out to where the army of Assyria had set up their tents and killed 185,000 of their soldiers. When the rest of the soldiers woke up the next morning, they saw that there were corpses everywhere. ³⁷ Then King Sennacherib left and returned home to Nineveh in Assyria and stayed there.

³⁸ One day, when he was worshiping in the temple of his god Nisrok, his two sons, Adrammelek and Sharezer, killed him with their swords. Then they escaped and went to the region of Ararat northwest of Nineveh. And another of Sennacherib’s sons, Esarhaddon, became the king of Assyria.

Chapter 38

¹ About that time, Hezekiah became very ill and was close to dying. So Isaiah went to see him and gave him this message: “This is what Yahweh says: ‘You should tell the people in your palace what you want them to do after you die because you will not recover from this illness. You are going to die’”

² Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed this: ³ “Yahweh, do not forget that I have always served you faithfully with all my inner being, and I have done things that pleased you!” Then Hezekiah started to cry loudly.

⁴ Then Yahweh gave Isaiah this message:

⁵ “Go back to Hezekiah and tell him that this is what I, the God to whom your ancestor King David belonged, say: ‘I have heard what you prayed, and I have seen

you crying. So listen: I will enable you to live fifteen years more. ⁶ And I will rescue and this city from the power of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city.

⁷ And this is what I will do to prove that I will do what I have just now promised. ⁸ I will cause the shadow of the sun to move ten steps backward on the stairs that were built by King Ahaz.” So the shadow of the sun on the stairs moved backward ten steps.

⁹ When King Hezekiah was almost well again, he wrote this:

¹⁰ I said to myself, “In the middle of my life I am about to walk through the gates of death, and Yahweh is taking from me the rest of my years.

¹¹ I said, “I will not see Yahweh again in this world where people are alive. I will not see my friends again, or be with others who now are alive in this world.

¹² It is as if my life had been taken away like a tent whose pegs have been pulled up by a shepherd and taken away. I have to roll up my life like a weaver, like a piece of cloth that a weaver cuts and rolls up, Yahweh has cut off my life.”

Between morning and evening he will kill me off.

¹³ I waited patiently all during the night, but my pain was as though I were being torn apart by lions.

Between morning and evening he will kill me off.

¹⁴ I was delirious; I chirped like a swift or a swallow

and moaned like a dove.

My eyes became tired looking up toward heaven for help.

I cried out, ‘Yahweh, help me, because I am distressed!’

¹⁵ But there was really nothing that I could say and ask him to reply to me,

because it was Yahweh who sent this illness.

So now I will live humbly during my remaining years

because I am very anguished within myself.

¹⁶ Yahweh, the sufferings that you give are good,

because what you do and what you say bring new life and health to me.

And you have restored me

and allowed me to continue to live!

¹⁷ Truly, my suffering was good for me; you loved me,

and as a result you have rescued me from dying

and have also forgiven all my sins.

¹⁸ Dead people cannot praise you; they cannot sing to praise you.

Those who have descended to their graves

cannot expect you to faithfully do things for them.

¹⁹ Only people who are still alive, like I am, can praise you.

Fathers tell their children how you are faithful,

and if I remain alive, I will do the same thing.

²⁰ Yahweh will fully heal me,

so we will sing praise to him

while others praise him playing musical instruments.

We will do that every day of our lives in the temple of Yahweh.”

²¹ Isaiah had previously said to Hezekiah’s servants, “Prepare an ointment from mashed figs, and spread it on his boil, and then he will recover.” So they did that, and Hezekiah recovered.

²² And Hezekiah had previously asked, “What will Yahweh do to prove that I will recover and be able to go to his temple?”

Chapter 39

¹ Soon after that, Baladan’s son Marduk-Baladan, the king of Babylon, heard a report that Hezekiah had been very sick but that he had recovered. So he wrote some letters and gave them to some messengers to take to Hezekiah, along with a gift. ² When the messengers arrived, Hezekiah welcomed them gladly. Then he showed them everything that was in his treasure houses—the silver, the gold, the spices, and the nice-smelling olive oil. He also took them to see the place where they kept their soldiers’ weapons, and he showed them the other valuable things that were in the storehouses. Hezekiah showed them everything that was in the palace or in other places.

³ Then Isaiah went to King Hezekiah and asked him, “Where did those men come from, and what did they want?”

He replied, “They came from the far away land of Babylon.”

⁴ Isaiah asked him, “What did they see in your palace?”

Hezekiah replied, “They saw everything. I showed them absolutely everything that I own—all my valuable things.”

⁵ Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Listen to this message from Yahweh, commander

of the angel armies: ⁶ There will be a time when everything in your palace, all the valuable things that your ancestors stored there up until the present time, will be carried away to Babylon. Yahweh says that there will be nothing left. ⁷ Furthermore, some of your sons will be forced to go to Babylon. They will be castrated in order that they can become servants in the palace of the king of Babylon.”

⁸ Then Hezekiah replied to Isaiah, “The message from Yahweh that you have given to me is good.” He said that because he was thinking, “Even if that happens, there will be peace and safety here during the time that I am alive.”

Chapter 40

¹ Our God says, “Encourage my people! Encourage them!”

² Speak kindly to the people of Jerusalem;

tell them that their suffering is ended

Yahweh has forgiven them for the sins that they have committed.

He has fully punished them for their sins.”

³ Someone is shouting,

“In the desert plain make the way straight for Yahweh to come to you;

make a smooth road for our God.

⁴ Fill in the valleys;

flatten every hill and every mountain.

Make the uneven ground smooth,

and make the rough places smooth.

⁵ If you do that, it will become known that Yahweh is glorious,

and all people will realize it at the same time.

Those things will surely happen because it is Yahweh who has said it."

⁶ Someone said to me, "Shout!"

I replied, "What should I shout?"

He replied, "Shout that people are like grass;

their faithfulness fades as quickly as flowers in the field.

⁷ Grass withers and flowers dry up

when Yahweh causes a hot wind from the desert to blow on them.

And all people are like that.

⁸ The grass withers and the flowers dry up,

but what our God promises will last forever."

⁹ All of you who bring good news to Zion,

shout it from the high mountain!

Every one of you who brings good news to the people who live in Jerusalem,

shout out loud the message you have to tell!

Shout it out! Do not be afraid!

Say to the people living in the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!

¹⁰ Yahweh your God will be coming with power,

he will rule powerfully.

When he comes, he will bring with him the people whom he has freed from being slaves in Babylonia.

¹¹ He will take care of his people

like a shepherd takes care of his sheep, and carries the young lambs in his arms.

He carries them close to his chest

and he gently leads the female sheep that are nursing their young lambs.

¹² There is no one like Yahweh!

Who else has measured the water in the oceans in the palm of his hand?

Who else has measured the sky?

Who else knows how much soil is in the earth?

Who else has weighed the mountains and hills on scales?

¹³ And who else can advise Yahweh?

Who can teach him or advise him what he should do?

¹⁴ Has Yahweh ever consulted anyone else to get advice?

Does he need someone to tell him what is right to do and how to act justly?

¹⁵ Yahweh considers that the nations are as insignificant as one drop from a bucket full of water.

They are as insignificant as dust on scales.

He is able to weigh islands

as though they weighed no more than specks of dust.

¹⁶ There would be not enough wood from all the trees in Lebanon

to make a suitable fire for sacrificing animals to him,

and there are not enough animals in Lebanon to offer as sacrifices to him.

¹⁷ The nations of the world are completely insignificant to him;

he considers that they are worthless and less than nothing.

¹⁸ So to whom can you compare God?

What image resembles him?

¹⁹ Can you compare him to an idol that is made in a mold,

and then is covered with a thin sheet
of gold

and decorated with silver chains?

²⁰ A man who is poor cannot buy silver
or gold for his idol;

so he selects a piece of wood that will
not rot,

and he gives it to a craftsman

to carve an idol that will not fall over!

²¹ Have you not heard this?

Do you not understand it?

Are you unable to hear what God said
long ago—

messages that he gave before he cre-
ated the earth?

²² God sits on his throne above the earth,

and the people on the earth below
seem to be as small as grasshoppers.

He spreads out the sky like a curtain;

it is like a tent for him to live in.

²³ He causes kings to have no more
power,

and he causes the rulers to be worth
nothing.

²⁴ They start to rule, like small plants
start to grow and form roots;

but then he gets rid of them

as though they withered when he
blew on them,

like chaff that is blown away by the
wind.

²⁵ The Holy One asks,

"To whom will you compare me?

Is anyone equal to me?"

²⁶ Look up toward the sky:

consider who created all the stars.

Yahweh created them, and at night he
causes them to appear;

he calls each one by its name.

Because he is extremely powerful,

all of the stars are there when he calls
out their names.

²⁷ You people of Israel, why do you com-
plain that Yahweh does not see the trou-
bles that you are experiencing?

Why do you say that he does not act
fairly toward you?

²⁸ Have you never heard

and have you never understood

that Yahweh is the everlasting God?

He is the one who created the earth,
even the most distant places on the earth.

He never becomes weak or weary,

and no one can find out how much
he understands.

²⁹ He strengthens those who feel weak
and tired.

³⁰ Even youths become faint and weary,

and young men will fall when they
are exhausted.

³¹ But those who trust in Yahweh will
become strong again;

it will be as though they will soar as
eagles do.

They will run for a long time and not
become weary;

they will walk long distances and not
faint.

Chapter 41

¹ Yahweh says, "You people who live on
islands in the ocean,

be silent in front of me while I ask you some questions!

Then you can be courageous and talk to me.

We will meet together and decide which one of us is right.

² Who has raised up this king to come from the east?

He is the one who does what is right with every step. He hands nations over to him and he defeats them,

and he tramples their kings under his feet.

He cuts their enemies and they are destroyed so they are like the dust,

and his army shoots them with bows and arrows so that they are like the chaff when the wind blows.

³ Even though they in danger, they go very swiftly as

they pursue their enemies, and nothing stops them.

⁴ Who has enabled rulers to do mighty deeds like that?

Who has done that throughout all generations?

It is I, Yahweh!

I was the first one to do things like that, and I will be the last one to do them.

⁵ People who live on islands in the ocean are afraid while they watch.

People in remote areas tremble and gather together.

⁶ They encourage each other and say to each other,

‘Be strong!’

⁷ The woodworkers encourage those who make things from gold,

and the men who flatten metal encourage those who hammer it on an anvil.

They all say, ‘The idol has been well made!’

Then they carefully nail down the idol in order that it will not topple over!”

⁸ Yahweh continues to say, “You people of Israel are my servants;

you are descendants of Jacob, whom I chose;

you are descendants of Abraham, who I said was my friend.

⁹ I summoned you from very distant places on the earth,

and I said, ‘I want you to serve me.’

I have chosen you,

and I will not reject you.

¹⁰ Do not be afraid,

because I will be with you.

Do not be discouraged, because I am your God.

I will enable you to be strong, and I will help you;

I will hold you up with my powerful arm by which I will rescue you, and I will be completely right to do so!

¹¹ It is certain that all those who are angry with you Israelite people will be disgraced.

Those who oppose you will be wiped out;

they will all die.

¹² If you search for those who tried to conquer you,

you will not find them,

because they will all disappear.

Those who attacked you

will not exist anymore,

¹³ because it will be as though I will hold you up by your right hand.

I am Yahweh, your God,
and I say to you, 'Do not be afraid,
because I will help you.'

¹⁴ Although others have treated you people of Israel like worms,

do not be afraid of your enemies,
because I will help you!"

This is what Yahweh solemnly says—the one who rescues you,

the Holy One of Israel.

¹⁵ He continues to say, "I will cause you to be like a new threshing sledge, very sharp and two-edged.

You will tear your enemies to bits

causing them to be like bits of chaff on the mountains.

¹⁶ You will toss them up into the air,
and a strong wind will blow them away.

When that happens, you will rejoice about what I have done for you;

you will praise me, Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel.

¹⁷ When poor and needy people need water and they have no water,

and their tongues are very dry because they are very thirsty,

I, Yahweh, will come and help them.

I, the God to whom you Israelite people belong, will never abandon them.

¹⁸ I will cause rivers to flow for them on the barren hills.

I will give them fountains in the valleys.

I will fill the desert with pools of water.

Water from springs will flow into rivers,

and the rivers will flow across the dry ground.

¹⁹ I will plant cedars, acacia, and myrtle, in the wilderness—

and olive trees I will plant in the desert plain— cypresses, pines, and boxtrees all together.

²⁰ I will do that in order that people who see it will think about it, and they will know and understand

that it is I, Yahweh, who has done it;

it is what I, the Holy One of Israel, have done.

²¹ I, Yahweh, the king of Israel am speaking to you nations:

Come and tell me what your idols can do for you! Argue your best in defense of them.

²² Bring them here to tell us what is going to happen!

Ask them to tell us what things happened long ago,

in order that we may think about those things,

and learn if those things that they predicted really happened.

Or ask them to tell us about the future,

in order for us to know what will happen.

²³ Yes, those idols should tell us what will happen in the future.

If they do that, we will know that they are really gods.

Tell them to do something—either something good or something bad!

Tell them to do something that will cause us to be amazed and afraid!

²⁴ But that is impossible, because idols are absolutely worthless;

they can do nothing,

and I detest those who decide to worship idols.”

²⁵ ”But I have incited a ruler who will come with his army from the north.

I have summoned him to come from his country, which is east of Israel,

and he will call on me for help.

I will enable his army to conquer other rulers;

they will trample those leaders like a man who makes clay pots first tramples the clay.

²⁶ Who told you people long ago that this would happen?

Who predicted it, with the result that we can say, “What he predicted was correct!”?

No one else said that it would happen.

²⁷ I was the first one to say to the people of Jerusalem:

‘Listen to this! I have appointed a messenger to tell good news to you!’

²⁸ None of your idols told you that.

And when I asked them questions, none of them was able to give me any answers.

²⁹ Think about it: Those idols are all useless, worthless things.

They are as meaningless as the wind.”

Chapter 42

¹ Yahweh says, ”I want you people to know about my servant, whom I encourage.

I have chosen him, and I am pleased with him.

I have given him my Spirit,

and he will make certain that all the people groups do what is right.

² He will not show his power by shouting

or by talking very loudly.

³ He will not get rid of anyone who is weak like a smashed reed,

and he will not end the life of anyone who is helpless, like an oil lamp about to stop burning.

He will faithfully make sure that judges decide cases justly.

⁴ He will not become exhausted or discouraged all during the time that he is causing things to be done justly throughout the earth.

Even people living on the islands in the oceans will confidently wait for him to teach them his laws.”

⁵ Yahweh our God created the sky

and spread it out.

He also created the earth and everything on it.

He gives breath to all the people on the earth and causes them to live.

And he is the one who says to his special servant,

⁶ ”I, Yahweh, have chosen you

to show people that I always act righteously.

I will grasp your hand and protect you, and I will present you to my Israelite people

to be the one who will put into effect my covenant with them.

You will be like a light to the other nations.

⁷ For you will enable blind people to see,
you will free those who are in prison
and release those who are in dark
dungeons.

⁸ I am Yahweh; that is my name.

I will not allow anyone else to receive
the honor that only I deserve.

And I will not allow others to praise
idols, for they should praise only me.

⁹ Everything that I have prophesied has
happened,

and now I will tell about other things
that will happen.

I will tell you things that will happen
before they happen."

¹⁰ Sing a new song to Yahweh!

Sing to praise him throughout the
world!

All you people who sail across the
oceans, and all you creatures that live in
the oceans,

and all you people who live on islands
far away, sing!

¹¹ You people who live in towns in the
desert, sing loudly!

You people who live in the region of
Kedar in the north of Arabia, you rejoice
also!

You people in the city of Sela in Edom,
you also should sing joyfully;

shout to praise him from the tops of
your mountains!

¹² Even people who live on distant is-
lands should honor Yahweh

and sing to praise him.

¹³ It will be as though Yahweh will
march out like a mighty soldier;

he will show that he is very angry.

He will shout a battle cry,

and then he will defeat all his ene-
mies.

¹⁴ He will say, "I have remained silent
for a long time;

I have restrained myself from doing
what I need to do.

But now, like a woman who is giving
birth to a baby, I will cry out and gasp and
pant.

¹⁵ I will level off the hills and mountains,
and I will cause all the plants and
trees to dry up.

I will cause the rivers to become small
streams, and little islands will appear in
them,

and I will cause all the pools to become
dry.

¹⁶ My people who have been taken into
exile are like blind people,

but I will lead them along a road on
which they have not walked before,

on a road that they have not seen before.

They have felt very helpless, as though
they were walking in the darkness,

but I will take away that darkness

and I will make smooth the road that
is in front of them.

Those are the things that I will do for
them;

I will not abandon them.

¹⁷ But those who trust in carved idols,
and say to images, 'You are our gods,'
will be completely humiliated."

¹⁸ You Israelite people who have acted to-
ward God like deaf people, listen to what
Yahweh says!

"You who have been like blind people, look!

¹⁹ No people are as blind as my people, who should have been serving me.

No people are as much like deaf people as the Israelites, who should have been my messengers.

No people are as much like blind people as those whom I chose to serve me in a covenant.

²⁰ You see and know what are the right things to do, but you do not do them.

You hear what I say to you, but you do not pay attention."

²¹ Because Yahweh is righteous,

he has honored his glorious laws.

²² But armies have destroyed Jerusalem and have completely plundered all the valuable things,

and they have captured Yahweh's people

and taken them away and put them in prison.

They have been captured easily,

because there was no one to protect them;

there was no one to say that they should be allowed to return home.

²³ Who among you will listen carefully to these things?

Who will pay attention from now on?

²⁴ Who allowed the valuable possessions of the people of Israel to be stolen?

It was Yahweh, because he is the one against whom we had sinned;

we did not conduct our lives like he wanted us to,

and we did not obey his laws.

²⁵ Therefore he was extremely angry with us,

and he caused our soldiers to be destroyed in battles.

It was as though he had lit a fire around us,

but we did not understand what he was trying to tell us.

His anger with us was like a fire that would burn us up,

but we did not pay attention.

Chapter 43

¹ But now, you people of Israel, listen to Yahweh, the one who established your nation.

The one who caused you to become a nation says this:

"Do not be afraid,

because I have rescued you.

I have called you by your name, in order that you may belong to me. Now you are mine.

² When you experience dangerous situations,

and you have hardships as terrible as deep rivers to cross,

I will be with you.

When you have very painful troubles, as painful as fire,

you will be able to endure them, and they will not hurt you,

³ because I am Yahweh, your God,

the Holy One of Israel, the one who rescues you.

I will sacrifice Egypt in your place;

and Ethiopia and Seba exchange for you.

⁴ I will cause other countries to be conquered instead of your country;

I will trade them for you,
in order that you will not be killed,
because you are very precious to me
and because I love you.

⁵ Do not be afraid, because I am with you.

Some day I will gather your descendants from the east and from the west.

⁶ I will command the rulers of the nations to the north and to the south,

'Allow all the people of Israel to return to their country,

from the most distant places on the earth.

⁷ Allow all those who belong to me to return,

because I have caused them to become a nation in order that they would honor me;

I am the one who has done that.'

⁸ Summon the people who have eyes but act as though they were blind;

summon those who have ears but act as though they were deaf.

⁹ Gather people of all nations together, ones from all people groups,

and ask them this: 'Has any of their idols foretold the things that are happening now?

And can any of them predict what will happen in the future?'

Then bring people who will testify and say 'I heard them predict things,

and what they predicted was what happened,'

but they will be lying."

¹⁰ But Yahweh says, "You people of Israel are my witnesses,

and you are the ones who serve me.

I chose you in order that you would know me, believe in me,

and understand that I am the only one who is truly God.

There is no other true God.

There was no other true God previously,

and there will never be another true God.

¹¹ I, only I, am Yahweh,

and there is no other one who can save you.

¹² I said that I would rescue your ancestors,

and then I rescued them, and I proclaimed that I had done it.

No foreign god among you did that!

And you are witnesses that only I, Yahweh, am God.

¹³ I am God, the one who has existed forever and who will exist forever;

no one can snatch people from my hand,
and no one can change what I have done."

¹⁴ Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, is the one who rescues you, and this is what he says:

"For your sake, I will send an army to attack Babylon.

They will force the people of the city to run away from their city, and to wail in song instead of rejoice in song.

¹⁵ I am Yahweh, your Holy One,

the one who caused Israel to become a nation, and the one who is really your king.

¹⁶ I am Yahweh, the one who opened a path through the water,

making a road through the Sea of Reeds.

¹⁷ Then I summoned the great army of Egypt

to come with all their chariots and horses.

But when they tried to pursue my people,

I caused the waves to flow over them and they drowned;

their lives ended like the light of a candle ends when someone snuffs out the wick.

¹⁸ But do not think only about what happened in the past, long ago.

¹⁹ Instead, consider the new thing that I am going to do.

I have already started to do it;

can you see it?

I am going to make a road through the desert.

And I will cause there to be streams in the wasteland.

²⁰ The jackals and ostriches and other wild creatures will thank me

for giving them water in the desert.

I will cause streams to appear in the dry desert

in order that my people, the ones whom I have chosen, will have water;

²¹ I will do that for the people whom I have created and chosen to belong to me,

so that they will tell others about the wonderful things I have done for them.

²² But now, you descendants of Jacob, you refuse to request my help.

You people of Israel have become tired of worshipping me.

²³ You have not brought to me sheep or goats for offerings to burn up on my altar;

you have not honored me with any sacrifices,

even though the offerings of grain and incense that I asked you to bring to me were not a burden to you.

²⁴ You have not bought for me any fragrant reeds,

and you have not poured out to me the sweet-smelling fat from any animal sacrifices.

But you have burdened me by all the sins that you have committed,

and made me weary because of all your iniquities.

²⁵ I am the one who is able to forgive you for all your sins;

I am the only one who can do that, with the result that I will never think about them again.

²⁶ Tell me what I have done that you do not like.

Do you think that when you state your case, you will prove that you are innocent?

²⁷ No, what has happened is that the first ancestor of you Israelites sinned against me,

and since then, all your leaders have rebelled against me.

²⁸ That is why I will cause your priests to be disgraced;

I will allow others to destroy you people of Israel

and caused you to be despised."

Chapter 44

¹ But now, you people of Israel whom Yahweh has chosen to serve him, listen to me.

² Yahweh, the one who created you, watched over you while you were being born, and helps you, says this:

"You dear people of Israel whom I have chosen,

you who serve me,
do not be afraid.

³ I will pour water on your dry land
and cause streams to flow.

And I will pour out my Spirit on your descendants

and greatly bless them.

⁴ They will grow up like grass grows along the water,

like willow trees grow well along a riverbank.

⁵ Some of them will say, 'I belong to Yahweh,'

and others will say, 'We are descendants of Jacob,'

and others will write on their hands, 'We belong to Yahweh,'

and others will say, 'We are Israelites, and we belong to Yahweh.'"

⁶ Yahweh, the King of Israel, the one who saves us, commander of the angel armies, says this:

"I am the one who begins everything and who ends everything;

there is no other God.

⁷ If there is anyone like me,

he should proclaim it!

He should speak and tell me now!

He should tell what has happened since I caused my people of Israel to become a nation long ago;

he should also explain why events in the past happened the way they did,

and he should predict what will happen in the future.

⁸ My people, do not be afraid.

Long ago I told you things that would happen;

you know that I predicted them, and you can testify that I did that.

There certainly is not any other God.

There is no other God who is able to protect you."

⁹ All those who make idols are foolish,

and the idols that they think highly of are worthless.

And the people who worship those idols—it is as though they were blind,

and they will be ashamed for having worshiped those idols.

¹⁰ Only foolish people would make idols in a mold,

idols that would never help them at all.

¹¹ Those who make idols and those who worship them will be ashamed.

Those who make idols are only human beings,

but they claim that they are making gods!

They should stand in front of God in a courtroom,

and when they hear what he says, they will be terrified,

and they will all be disgraced.

¹² Metalworkers stand in front of hot coals

in order to make idols.

They pound them with hammers and shape them.

Because they work very hard, they become hungry and weak;

they become very thirsty and feel exhausted.

¹³ Then a woodcarver takes a big block of wood and he measures it;

then he marks it to show where he will cut it.

He uses a chisel and other tools

to carve it to resemble a human.

He causes it to become a very beautiful idol,

and then he puts it in a special house, where he will bow down to it.

¹⁴ Before he carves an idol from that block of wood, he has already cut down a cedar tree,

or he has selected a cypress tree or an oak tree

and allowed it to grow tall in the forest.

Or he has planted a pine tree,

and the rain has watered it and caused it to grow tall.

¹⁵ After he uses part of the tree to make an idol,

he uses the other part to make a fire, either to warm himself or to bake bread.

But he uses part of the same tree to make for himself an idol to worship!

He makes an idol, and then he bows down to worship it.

¹⁶ He burns part of the wood of that tree to cook his meat and eats it and becomes full,

and he burns part of it to warm himself,

and he says, "I feel warm while I am watching the flames in the fire."

¹⁷ Then he takes the rest of the wood and makes an idol which is to be his god.

He bows down to it and honors it, and prays to it and says,

"You are my god, so save me!"

¹⁸ Those people are very stupid and ignorant.

It is as though they were blind and unable to see,

as though their minds were closed and unable to think well.

¹⁹ They do not think about what they are doing,

that they are taking a block of wood and burning half of it to warm themselves

and using some of the rest to bake bread and roast some meat!

They do not say to themselves,

"It is stupid to take the rest of the wood to make a detestable idol!

It does not make sense to bow down to a block of wood!"

²⁰ They might as well be eating the ashes from a fire!

They trust in something that cannot save them;

they do not admit, "In my hand I hold something that is not really a god!"

²¹ Yahweh says, "You descendants of Jacob,

you people of Israel who should be serving me,

I created you,

and I will not forget you.

²² I have gotten rid of your sins

like the wind blows away a cloud.

It is as though your transgressions were
a morning mist

that I have blown away.

Return to me

because I have rescued you.”

²³ The sun and moon and stars in the
sky, should sing,

and the very deepest places of the
earth will should joyfully!

All the mountains and forests, and all
you trees,

should sing loudly,

because Yahweh has rescued the de-
scendants of Jacob,

and the people of Israel will praise
him.

²⁴ Yahweh, who saved you and created
you, says this:

”I am Yahweh, the one who created ev-
erything.

I am the only one who stretched out the
sky.

There was no one who was with me

when I created the earth.

²⁵ I show that the false prophets are
liars,

and I show that those who perform
rituals to predict the future are fools.

Some people who falsely think that they
are wise say that they know much,

but I show that they are foolish.

²⁶ But I always cause to happen what
my prophets predict.

I tell them to say to the people of
Jerusalem, ‘Some day people will live here
again.’

And I tell them to say to the people in
other towns in Judah that I, Yahweh, say,

’Your towns will be rebuilt;

I will cause the places that are only
ruins to be rebuilt.’

²⁷ When I say to the rivers, ‘Dry up!’

they will become dry.

²⁸ When I say about King Cyrus, ‘He
will take care of my people like a shepherd
takes care of his sheep,

he will do all that I want him to do,’

he will say about Jerusalem,

‘We must rebuild it!’

and he will also say, ‘We must rebuild
the temple!’”

Chapter 45

¹ Cyrus is the one whom Yahweh has
appointed to be the emperor of Persia

and to whom he will give great power;

Yahweh will enable him to defeat other
nations

and to take away the power of their
kings.

He will cause gates of cities to be
opened,

and no one will ever be able to shut
them.

² This is what Yahweh says to him:

”Cyrus, I will go ahead of you

and level the mountains.

I will smash down bronze gates

and cut through their iron bars.

³ I will give you treasures that people have hidden in dark secret places.

I will do that in order that you will know that I am Yahweh,

the God to whom the Israelites belong,
the God who calls you by your name.

⁴ I have summoned you, calling out your name,

for the sake of the people of Israel whom I have chosen, who serve me.

Even though you do not know me,
I will give you a title that has great honor.

⁵ I am Yahweh, and there is no other God.

Even though you do not know me,
I will give you power to wage war

⁶ in order that everyone in the world, from the east to the west, will know that there is no other God.

I am Yahweh, and there is no other God.

⁷ I created the light and the darkness.

I cause there to be peace and I cause there to be disasters.

I, Yahweh, do all those things."

⁸ Yahweh also says, "Just like the rain falls on the earth to help it,

I will help my people and rescue them; I will cause them to be treated justly.

I, Yahweh, am the one who will cause both of those things to happen.

⁹ Terrible things will happen to those who argue with me, because I am the one who created them.

They are like clay pots who are arguing with the Potter who made them;

they are just like every other clay pot that is made, and yet they argue with the One who made them and formed them out of the clay.

Can a lump of clay say to the potter who made him,

"Why are you making me like this?"

The clay pot cannot say "What do you think you are doing, making me this way?" or "You have no skill and your clay pots are not worth anything!"

¹⁰ And it would be terrible if an unborn baby would say to its father,

"Why are you causing me to be born?"

or if it said to its mother,

"The result of your labor pains will be useless."

¹¹ Yahweh, the Holy One of the Israelite people, the one who created Israel, says this to them:

"Why do you ask questions about what I do for you, my children?

Why do you instruct me about the work that I should do?

¹² I am the one who created the earth and created people to live on it.

I stretched out the sky with my hands, and I put the stars in their places.

¹³ And I have made Cyrus to desire to do things that are right,

and I will enable him to do all those things easily. No one will be able to stop him.

His workers will rebuild my city,

and he will free my people who have been exiled.

And he will do it without my rewarding him!"

This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says.

¹⁴ And this is also what I, Yahweh, say to you, my people:

"You will rule the people of Egypt and Ethiopia,

and the tall people of Seba will become your slaves.

They will come to you bringing all the things that they sell,

and it will all be yours.

They will have chains on their arms as they follow you.

They will bow down in front of you and say,

'God is with you

and he is the only God;

there is no other God.'"

¹⁵ God, although we cannot see you,

you are the one to whom we Israelite people belong, the one who saves us.

¹⁶ All those who make idols will be humiliated.

They will all be disgraced together.

¹⁷ But you, Yahweh, will rescue us, your Israelite people,

and we will be free forever.

Never again, during all the future, will we again be humiliated and disgraced.

¹⁸ Yahweh is God;

he is the one who created the sky

and created and formed the earth.

He did not want it to remain with nothing living on it;

he wanted people to live on it.

He says, "I am Yahweh;

there is no other God.

¹⁹ What I proclaimed, I did not speak secretly;

I did not hide what I was saying by speaking in a dark place.

When I spoke to the descendants of Jacob,

I did not tell them

'It will be useless for you to seek for me!'

I, Yahweh, speak only what is true and what is right.

²⁰ You people who are still alive after experiencing great disasters,

should come and gather together and listen to this:

The people who carry around their wooden idols

and pray to them are foolish, because those idols cannot rescue them!

²¹ Talk among yourselves and decide what you will say to prove that you should pray to idols.

And when you do that, I will ask you, 'Who predicted long ago what has now happened?

Did any idol tell you that those things would happen?'

No, it was only I, Yahweh, who told you, because I am the only God; there is no other God.

I am a God who acts righteously and saves people;

there is no other one who does these things.

²² Everyone in the world should ask me to save them,

because I am the only God who can do that;

there is no other one.

²³ I have solemnly declared, using my own name;

I have spoken what is true,
and I will never change what I have said:

Some day, everyone will bow in front of me,

and they will all solemnly promise to be loyal to me.

²⁴ They will declare,

‘Yahweh is the one who enables us to live righteously and to be strong.’”

And all those who have been angry at Yahweh will come to him,

and they will be ashamed that they were angry with him.

²⁵ Yahweh is the only one who will enable us Israelite people in all future times to defeat our enemies,

and then we will boast about what he has done for us.

Chapter 46

¹ It is as though Bel and Nebo, the statues of the gods of Babylonia,

were bowing down as they are put on animals and carried away!

The statues are heavy burdens and will cause the animals to become tired!

² Gods and animals are all bowed down;
the gods can save neither themselves nor the beasts of burden;

the gods themselves are going into exile!

³ Yahweh says, “You descendants of Jacob who were exiled,

I am not like the gods of Babylonia that must be carried;

instead, it is as though I have carried you

since you first became a nation.

I carried you even before you became a nation.

⁴ I will be your God, and I will carry you for many years,

until it is as though your nation is an old man with gray hair.

I caused you to become a nation,

and I will sustain you and rescue you.

⁵ There is certainly no one to whom I can be compared.

There is no one who is equal to me.

⁶ So it is stupid that some people pour out gold and silver from their bags

and weigh it on a scale.

Then they hire a man who makes things from gold to make an idol from it.

After he makes an idol, they bow down and worship it!

⁷ They lift it up and carry it on their shoulders.

They put it in a special place,

and it stays there.

It cannot move!

And when someone prays to it, it does not answer.

So obviously it cannot rescue anyone from his troubles!

⁸ You people of Judah, do not forget this;
keep thinking about it, you sinful people!

⁹ Think about the things that I did long ago.

Only I am God; I am God, and there is no one like me.

¹⁰ Only I can tell what will happen in the future before it occurs;

I tell it long before it happens.

I will accomplish everything that I plan to accomplish,

and I will do everything that I want to do.

¹¹ So I will summon Cyrus to come from the east like a swift and powerful eagle;

he will come from a distant country.

He will accomplish what I want him to.

He is the one who will do what I have said that I want him to do,

what I have planned.

¹² You stubborn people of Israel,

you who are completely unable to do what is right,

¹³ I will rescue you,

and it will not be a long time before that happens.

I will do it soon.

I will rescue Jerusalem

and show to you Israelite people that I am glorious.”

Chapter 47

¹ Yahweh also says, “You people of Babylon,

you should go and sit in the dust,

because your time to rule other countries is almost ended.

People will never again say that Babylon is beautiful

like a very attractive young woman.

² You will be slaves, so take heavy stones and grind grain like slave women do.

Take off your beautiful veils

and take off your robes as you prepare to cross streams to go where you will be forced to go.

³ You will be naked and very ashamed.

I will have vengeance on you and will not pity you.”

⁴ The one who frees us people of Judah, whom we call ‘Yahweh, Commander of the angel armies,’

is the Holy One of Israel.

⁵ Yahweh says, “You people of Babylon, sit silently in the darkness,

because no one will never again say that your city is like a queen that rules many kingdoms.

⁶ I was angry with the people who belong to me,

and I punished them.

I allowed you people of Babylon to conquer them.

But when you conquered them, you did not act mercifully toward them.

You oppressed even the old people.

⁷ You said, ‘We will rule other nations forever;

it is as though our city will be the queen of the world forever!’

But you did not think about the things that you were doing,

or think about what would result.

⁸ You people of Babylon who enjoy pleasures and who live in luxury,

listen to this:

You act as though you were gods, saying, “I am special, and there is no one better than I am,”

None of our women will never become widows,

and none of our children will never be killed in wars.'

⁹ But both of those things will happen to you suddenly:

many of your women will become widows

and many of your children will die,

even though you perform much sorcery and many kinds of magic to prevent bad things from happening to you.

¹⁰ You felt safe even though you were doing many wicked things,

and you said, 'No one will see what we are doing!'

You thought that you were very wise and knew many things,

and you said, 'We are gods, and there are no others like us,'

but you deceived yourselves.

¹¹ So you will experience terrible things,

and you will not be able to prevent them by working magic.

You will experience disasters,

and you will not be able to pay any magician to keep those things from happening.

A catastrophe will happen to you suddenly,

something that you will not realize is about to happen.

¹² So continue to perform all your magic spells!

Keep doing the many kinds of sorcery that you have been doing for many years!

Perhaps doing those things will enable you to be successful;

perhaps you will be able to cause your enemies to be afraid of you!

¹³ But all that has resulted from your doing all the things that the magicians have told you to do is that you have become tired!

The men who look at the stars, announce every new moon, predict what will happen

should come forward and rescue you from the disasters that you are about to experience.

¹⁴ But they cannot do that, because they are like straw that is burning in a fire;

they cannot save themselves from being burned up in the flames.

They are unable to help you;

they are as useless as stubble that burns, but that fire will burn them up rather than let them enjoy the heat.

¹⁵ And they will disappoint you, those with whom you faithfully worked and with whom you traveled and traded when you were younger,

and yet all of them keep doing their own foolish things;

and when you cry out for help, there is no one who can help you."

Chapter 48

¹ Descendants of Jacob,

who are also descendants of Judah and are now called the people of Israel,

listen to Yahweh!

You make solemn promises using the name of Yahweh,

and you request that the God to whom you Israelite people belong will hear you,

but you do not do it sincerely.

² You say that you live in the holy city of Jerusalem

and you insincerely say that you are relying on the God to whom you people of Israel belong,

the one who is Yahweh, commander of the angel armies.

³ "Long ago I predicted what would happen.

And then suddenly, I caused those things to happen.

⁴ I knew that you people were very stubborn;

I knew that your heads were as hard as iron or brass.

⁵ That is why I told you those things long ago.

Long before they occurred, I announced that they would occur,

in order that when they happened you could not say

'Our idols did it;

our statue carved out of wood or our idol made of metal caused them to happen.'

⁶ You have heard those things that I predicted,

and now you have seen that they have all occurred,

so why do you not admit it?

Now I will tell you new things,

things that you have not known previously.

⁷ I am causing them to happen now;

they are not things I did long ago.

So you cannot say, 'We already knew about those things.'

⁸ I will tell you about things that you have never heard about or understood before.

Even long ago you did not pay attention to me.

I know that you act very deceitfully;

you have rebelled against me since you first became a nation.

⁹ But for my own sake, in order that I will be honored,

I will not punish you immediately

and I will not completely get rid of you.

¹⁰ I have purified you, but not the way people refine silver.

Instead, I have caused you to suffer very much to get rid of your impure behavior,

¹¹ But for my own sake I will delay punishing you more;

I will delay for my own sake,

in order that my reputation will not be damaged.

I will not allow any person or any idol to be honored as I deserve to be honored."

¹² "You descendants of Jacob, you people of Israel whom I have chosen,

listen to me!

Only I am God;

I am the one who begins everything and who causes everything to end.

¹³ I am the one who laid the foundation of the earth.

I stretched out the sky with my hand.

And when I tell the stars to appear,

they all do what I tell them.

¹⁴ All of you, gather together and listen to me.

None of your idols has told this to you:

I, Yahweh, have chosen Cyrus to assist me,

and he will do to Babylon what I want him to do,

and his army will destroy the army of Babylonia.

¹⁵ I have said it;

I have summoned Cyrus.

I have appointed him,

and he will accomplish everything that he attempts to do.

¹⁶ Come close to me and listen to what I say.

Long ago I told you plainly what would happen,

and when those things occurred, I was causing them to happen.”

And now Yahweh the Lord and his Spirit have sent me, the prophet Isaiah, to give you a message.

¹⁷ This is what Yahweh, the one who saves you, the Holy God of us Israelites, says:

”I am Yahweh, your God;

I teach you what is important for you to prosper;

I direct you and lead you to do the things that you should do.

¹⁸ I wish that you had paid attention to my commands!

If you had done that, things would have gone well for you

like a river that flows gently;

you would have been successful again and again,

like waves that come without ceasing.

¹⁹ Your descendants would have been as many as the grains of sand on the seashore

which no one can count.

I would not have needed to destroy them;

the country of Israel would not have been destroyed.

²⁰ However, now I tell you,

leave Babylon!

Flee from being slaves of the people of Babylonia!

Proclaim this message joyfully;

send it to the most remote places on the earth:

‘Yahweh freed the people of Israel from being slaves in Egypt.’

²¹ They were not thirsty when he led them through the desert,

because he split open the rock

and caused water to gush out for them to drink.’

²² But things will not go well like that for wicked people,” says Yahweh.

Chapter 49

¹ All you people who live on islands in the ocean and in other distant areas,

pay attention to what I will say!

Yahweh called me before I was born;

he chose me when I was still in my mother’s womb.

² When I grew up, he caused my messages to be like a sharp sword.

He has protected me by his hand.

He protects me like someone protects sharp arrows in a quiver.

³ He said to me, ”You will serve my Israelite people,

and you will cause people to honor me.”

⁴ I replied, “My work has been useless;

I have used my strength, but I have accomplished nothing worthwhile;

everything that I have done has been in vain.

However, Yahweh can honor me as he pleases;

my God is the one who will reward me as I deserve.”

⁵ Yahweh formed me when I was in my mother’s womb in order that I would serve him;

he appointed me to bring the people of Israel back to himself.

Yahweh has honored me,

and he is the one who has caused me to be strong.

⁶ He says to me,

”It is not enough for you to serve me

by bringing the descendants of Jacob back to worship me again;

I also want you to be like a light for the non-Israelites;

I want you to take my message about how to be saved to people all over the world.”

⁷ Yahweh, the one who saves us,

the Holy God of us Israelite people,

says to the one who was despised and rejected by the people of many nations,

to the one who is the slave of rulers,

”Some day kings will stand up to respect you when they see you,

and princes will bow down before you

because you serve me, Yahweh, the one who faithfully does what I promise.

I am the Holy God to whom you Israelites belong, the one who has chosen you.”

⁸ This is also what Yahweh says:

”At a time when it pleases me, I will answer your prayers.

On the day when I rescue you from your oppressors, I will help you.

I will protect you and enable you to establish an agreement with other nations.

And by what you do, I will re-establish your nation of Israel

and allow you to live again in your land that was abandoned.

⁹ You will say to those who were captured and exiled,

‘Leave Babylonia and return to your own country!’

And you will say to those who are in dark prisons,

‘Come out into the light!’

When that happens, they will again be like sheep

that eat grass in green pastures,

on hills where before there was no grass.

¹⁰ They will not be hungry or thirsty anymore;

the hot sun will not beat upon them again.

I, Yahweh, will act mercifully toward them and lead them;

I will lead them to where there are springs of cool water.

¹¹ And I will cause the mountains to become as though they were level roads,

and I will prepare good highways
for my people to travel on, to return to
Jerusalem.

¹² My people will return from far away;

some will come from the north, some
from the west,

some from southern Egypt.”

¹³ Because of what Yahweh has
promised to do,

everything should shout joyfully—

the sky and the earth and the moun-
tains should sing,

because Yahweh comforts his people,
and he will pity those who are suffer-
ing.

¹⁴ The people of Jerusalem say,

”Yahweh has abandoned us;

he has forgotten about us.”

¹⁵ But Yahweh replies,

”That is not true! Can a woman forget
the infant that she is nursing?

Can she stop acting kindly toward the
child to whom she has given birth?

But even if a woman would do that,

I will not forget you!

¹⁶ Note that I have written your names
on the palms of my hands;

I am always looking at the walls of
your city.

¹⁷ Soon your children will be returning
there,

and all those who destroyed your city
will leave.

¹⁸ You will look around and see

all of your children coming back to
you.

As surely as I live,

they will be with you for you to show
to people

like a bride shows her wedding orna-
ments!

¹⁹ Your land has been ruined and caused
to become desolate,

but some day it will be filled with
people,

and those who conquered you will be
far away.

²⁰ The children who were born while
you were exiled will return to Jerusalem
and say,

’This city is too small for us;

We need more space to live in!’

²¹ Then you will think to yourselves,

’It is amazing that we have all these
children!

Most of our children were dead,

and the rest were exiled.

We were left here alone;

so we do not know where all these chil-
dren have come from!

Who raised them?”

²² This is what Yahweh our God says:

”Watch! It is as though I will lift up
my hand to signal to those who are not Is-
raelites.

And they will carry your little sons
and daughters on their shoulders

and bring them back to you.

²³ Kings will serve you and will tutor
your children,

and their queens will take care of your
young children.

They will prostrate themselves in front
of you

and lick the dust off your feet.

When that happens, you will know that I am Yahweh;

and those who trust in me will never be disappointed.”

²⁴ There is no one who can snatch valuable things from a soldier who has captured those things in a war;

there is no one who can force a tyrant to free the people whom he has captured.

²⁵ But Yahweh says this:

”Some day, those who have been captured will go free,

and the valuable things that tyrants have snatched from others will be returned,

because I will fight against those who fight against you,

and I will rescue your children.

²⁶ And I will cause your enemies to destroy themselves

instead of murdering others.

When that happens, everyone in the world will know that I, Yahweh, am the one who saves you,

the one who rescues you from your enemies;

everyone will know that I am the mighty God to whom you descendants of Jacob belong.”

Chapter 50

¹ This is also what Yahweh says:

”You Israelite people, do not think that I forced your parents to be exiled to Babylonian

like some men send away their wives after giving them a paper

on which they state that they were divorcing them!

I certainly did not get rid of you like a man who sells his children to get money to pay what he owes.

No, the reason that I forced you to be exiled

was to punish you because of the sins that you have committed.

² When I came to you to rescue you,

why did no one answer when I called out to you?

Was there no one there to buy you back and take you home?

Did you think that I do not have the power to rescue you?

Think about this:

I can speak to a sea and cause it to become dry!

I can cause rivers to become deserts

with the result that the fish in the rivers die from thirst and rot.

³ I cause the sky to become dark,

as though it was wearing black clothes because it was mourning because someone had died.”

⁴ Yahweh our God has taught me to speak for him,

in order that I may encourage those who are weary.

Each morning he awakens me,

in order that I may listen to what he teaches me.

⁵ Yahweh our God has spoken to me,

and I have not rejected what he told me;

I have accepted it.

⁶ I allowed people to beat me on my back

and to pull out the whiskers in my beard because they hated me.

I did not turn away from them

when they made fun of me and spat on me.

⁷ But because the Lord Yahweh helps me,

I will never be humiliated.

Therefore I am determined to face difficulties,

and I know that nothing will cause me to be ashamed.

⁸ God is near to me; he will show others that I have been right to trust him,

so if anyone stands in front of me and accuses me in a court,

he will not be able to show that I have done anything that is wrong.

⁹ The Lord Yahweh defends me in court,

so no one will be able to condemn me.

All those who accuse me will disappear

like old clothes that have been eaten by moths.

¹⁰ If you honor Yahweh

and do what his servant tells you to do,

even if you are walking in darkness, and it seems that there is no light,

trust in Yahweh your God to help you; depend on him.

¹¹ But you people who oppose me by lighting your own fires,

and by carrying your own flaming torches:

go ahead and live according to your own knowledge,

according to what you think is best.

Yahweh tells you what will happen to you:

he will make you die in great torment!

Chapter 51

¹ Yahweh says, "You people who desire to act righteously,

who want to do what I want you to do,

listen to me!

Think about Abraham!

It is as though he were a huge rock cliff;

and when you people of Israel became a nation,

it was as though I had cut you like stones from that rocky cliff.

² Think about your ancestor Abraham and his wife Sarah, of whom all of you are descendants.

When I first spoke to Abraham,

he had no children.

But after I blessed him, he had a huge number of descendants.

³ Some day I, Yahweh, will encourage Abraham's descendants again,

and I will comfort all the people who live in the ruins of Jerusalem.

The deserts in that area will become like Eden;

it will be like the garden of Yahweh.

All the people there will be joyful and happy;

they will thank me and sing.

⁴ My people of Judah, listen carefully to me,

because I command you to proclaim my laws;

the right things that I will do will be like a light for the people of all the nations. ⁵ I will soon rescue you and them;

by my power I will rule over the people of the earth and bless them.

The people who live in the most distant lands on earth will wait for me to help them.

⁶ Look up at the sky,

and look at the earth;

see what they are like now,

because some day the sky will disappear like smoke,

and the earth will wear out like old clothes wear out,

and people on the earth will die like flies.

But I will rescue you, and you will remain free forever,

and everyone will know what I do and I will always do what is right.

⁷ You people who know what things are right to do,

and who know in your inner beings what is written in my laws,

listen to me!

Do not be afraid of people who taunt you;

do not be disturbed when people revile you,

⁸ because some day they will be destroyed

like clothing that moths have eaten,

like wool garments that have been eaten by worms.

Everyone will know what I do and I will always do what is right;

and I will save you, and you will be saved forever."

⁹ Yahweh, wake up and do something for us!

Show us how strong you are!

Do mighty things

like you did long ago,

when you stabbed Rahab, the sea monster, and cut it into pieces.

¹⁰ Surely you are the one who dried up the sea,

and made a path through that deep water

in order that your people could cross it!

¹¹ And those whom Yahweh will rescue from being exiled in Babylonia

will similarly return to Jerusalem singing.

Their being joyful forever will be like a crown on their heads.

They will not be sad or mourn anymore;

they will be completely joyful and happy.

¹² Yahweh says,

"I am the one who encourages you.

So why are you afraid of humans

who will wither and disappear like grass?

¹³ You should not have forgotten me, Yahweh, the one who created your nation,

the one who stretched out the sky

and laid the foundations of the earth.

You should not be afraid of those who are angry with you

and want to destroy you.

You should not be afraid of them now,

because those angry people have now disappeared!

¹⁴ Soon you people, whom your enemies have caused to be slaves in Babylonia, will be freed!

You will not remain in prison, and you will not die of hunger,

¹⁵ because I am Yahweh, your God,

the one who stirs up the sea and causes the waves to roar;

I am Yahweh, commander of the angel armies!

¹⁶ I have given you my message to proclaim,

and I have protected you by my hand.

I have done this in order to stretch out the sky

and lay the foundation of the earth.

And I have done this in order to say to you Israelites,

‘You are my people!’”

¹⁷ You people of Jerusalem, wake up!

You have experienced Yahweh severely punishing you.

Yahweh has caused you to suffer much and to experience disaster.

Yahweh gave you this cup to drink, but this was Yahweh’s cup!

He forced you to drink every drop out of that large cup, down to the bottom of the bowl. And that drink made you stagger like you had drunk strong wine. This strong wine represents the anger of God, and you are to drink all of it!

¹⁸ Now you do not have any children

who are able to take your hand and guide you. You cannot help yourself.

¹⁹ You have experienced these disasters:

Your country has become desolate;

your cities have been destroyed;

many people have died from hunger;

many people have been killed by your enemies’ swords.

Now there is no one to weep with you and sympathize with you.

²⁰ Your children have fainted and lie at the corner of every street;

they are as helpless as an antelope that has been caught in a net.

What has happened to them is because Yahweh has been very angry with them;

he has rebuked them severely.

²¹ So now, you people who have suffered much,

you who were acting as if you were drunk because you were drinking from his cup.

But in truth, it is not because you have drunk out of a cup filled with wine, but because of something else that Yahweh will do.

²² Yahweh, your Lord and your God,

the one who argues your case to defend you, he says this:

”I have away taken that cup that holds my anger toward you,

and I made you experience my anger when I made you drink from that cup.

But now I have taken it from you so that you will never drink of it again.

²³ Instead, I will cause those who have tormented you to suffer;

I will severely punish those who said to you,

’Lie down in order that we may walk

on you;

lie down on your stomachs
in order that your backs will be like
streets that we can walk on.”

Chapter 52

¹ You people who live in the holy city of
Jerusalem, wake up!

Be strong again!

Show that your city is beautiful and glo-
rious;

uncircumcised foreigners, those who
do not honor Yahweh, will never again en-
ter your city to attack you.

² People of Jerusalem, get up from
where you have been sitting in the dust,
and sit down properly!

You people who have returned from
being exiled,

take off from your neck the chains that
the Babylonians fastened around your
necks,

³ because this is what Yahweh says:

”When you were sent as captives to
Babylonia,

no one paid to make that happen.

So now you will be brought back,

and no money will be paid to anyone
for your release.”

⁴ Yahweh our Lord also says this:

”Long ago, my people went to Egypt to
live there.

Later the soldiers of Assyria oppressed
them.

⁵ But now think about what is happening:

My people are being forced to be slaves
again, this time by the people of Babylonia.
They have taken my people away, but they

never declared any just reason for taking
them captive.

And the rulers of Babylon boast and
make fun of them (as I, Yahweh, have said
they would do),

and the other people groups in the
world despise the mention of my name.

⁶ But after that, my people will love me
and honor me;

when that happens, they will know
that I am the one who said that this would
happen. I am the one who speaks, and I
say,

‘Yes, this is Yahweh who is speaking
to you.’

⁷ It is a wonderful thing when messen-
gers come from across the mountains and
bring good news,

the news about God giving us peace and
saving us,

the news that the God to whom we Is-
raelite people belong is now showing ev-
eryone his power as king!

⁸ The watchmen who are guarding the
city will shout and sing joyfully,

because while they are watching,
they will all see Yahweh returning to
Jerusalem.

⁹ Jerusalem was ruined,
but the people who are there now
should start to sing joyfully,

because Yahweh will encourage his peo-
ple;

he will set his people free and bring
them back to Jerusalem.

¹⁰ Yahweh will show all the nations that
he is holy and powerful.

People in the most remote places on
earth will know

that he has rescued his people.

¹¹ So leave the places where you were taken to when you were captured,

where everything is unacceptable to God.

You men who are carrying the items used in the temple of Yahweh,

leave there and return to Jerusalem,
and purify yourselves in order to be acceptable to worship God.

¹² But it will not be necessary for you to leave suddenly,

to flee in panic,

because Yahweh will go in front of you;

and he will also protect you from being attacked at the rear while you travel.

¹³ Listen carefully!

My servant will act wisely and do all that Yahweh wants him to do,

and he will be honored more than anyone else.

¹⁴ But many people will be appalled when they see what has happened to him.

Because he was beaten very badly, his appearance will be changed;

people will hardly recognize that he is a human.

¹⁵ But he will purify the people of many nations by sprinkling them clean;

even kings will be silent when they stand in front of him,

because they will see someone that no one had told them about before,

and they will understand things that they had not heard about before.

Who will see what Yahweh does by his great power?

² While God watches, his servant will grow up fragile like a very young tree,

like a weak young plant that shoots up, a stem that is growing in dry ground.

There will be nothing beautiful or majestic about him,

nothing that would cause us to want to look at him.

³ People will despise and reject him.

He will endure much pain, and he will suffer much.

Because his face will be very disfigured, people will not want to look at him; he will not even look human any more;

people will despise him and think that he is not worth paying any attention to.

⁴ But he will be punished for the sicknesses within our lives;

he will endure great pain for us.

But we will think that he is being punished by God,

afflicted for his own sins.

⁵ But people will pierce him through and kill him because of the evil things that we did;

they will wound him because of our sins.

They will beat him in order that things may go well with us;

because they will whip him, we will be healed.

⁶ All of us have gone away from God like sheep who have strayed away from their shepherd.

We have turned away from doing the things that God wants in order to do the things that we want.

Chapter 53

¹ Who will believe what we have heard about God's servant?

We deserve to be punished, but Yahweh will punish him instead for all of our sins.

⁷ He will be abused and caused to suffer,

but he will not say anything to complain.

They will lead him to where they will execute him,

like they lead a lamb to where it will be slaughtered.

And like a sheep does not bleat when the shearer cuts off its wool,

he will not say anything to defend himself when he is killed.

⁸ After he is arrested and put on trial,

he will be taken away and executed.

And no one at that time will think anything more about him.

For he will die;

he will receive all the penalties brought on by the curses against us for the wrong things we have done.

⁹ Although he will never have done any wrong or deceived anyone,

people will place his corpse where wicked people are buried, and in a rich man's grave.

¹⁰ But it will be Yahweh's will that he be afflicted and caused to suffer. When he dies as an offering for your own sin,

he will benefit many, many people, as if they were his children;

he will live a long time after he dies and becomes alive again,

and he will accomplish everything that Yahweh has planned.

¹¹ When he sees all that he will accomplish because of his suffering,

he will be satisfied.

And because of what will have happened to him, Yahweh's righteous servant,

he will cause the guilt of many people to be ended,

because he will bear the guilt for their sins.

¹² So Yahweh will share with many people the spoils he has won from his enemies.

His servant will be like a king who divides the spoils among his soldiers,

because he put himself in danger of dying and did in fact die.

Even though people had considered him to be a sinner,

he removed the guilt of many people,

and he interceded for those who have done things that are wrong.

Chapter 54

¹ Yahweh says, "You people of Jerusalem, start to sing!

You who are like women who have never given birth to children, sing loudly and shout joyfully,

because you, who are like childless women who have been abandoned by their husbands, will soon have more children

than women who have never had any children.

² Make your tents larger;

make them wider,

and fasten them firmly with tent pegs.

³ You will need to make your city much larger

because soon you and your descendants will spread all over the land.

They will force the people of other nations to leave where they are,

and you will live again in the cities that people had previously abandoned.

⁴ Do not be afraid; you will no longer be ashamed.

Previously you were ashamed because your enemies conquered you

and caused your nation to be like a widow,

but soon you will not even remember that.

⁵ I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the Holy One of Israel, who rules over the whole earth,

the one who created you,

will be like a husband to you.

⁶ Your nation was like a woman whose husband left her,

and caused you to be very sad;

you were like a young woman who

got married when she was very young,

and then her husband abandoned her.

⁷ I abandoned you people of Jerusalem for a while,

but now I am saying, 'I will take you back.'

⁸ I was very angry with you for a while,

and I turned away from you.

But I will act mercifully toward you

and I will faithfully love you forever.

That is what I, Yahweh, your rescuer, say to you.

⁹ During the time that Noah lived,

I solemnly promised that I would never again allow a flood to cover the earth.

So now I solemnly promise that I will not be angry with you again and rebuke you.

¹⁰ Even if the mountains and hills shake and collapse,

I will not stop faithfully loving you,

and I will not cancel my covenant

to cause things to go well for you.

That is what I, Yahweh, who acts mercifully, say.

¹¹ You people of Jerusalem, your enemies acted very violently toward you;

it was as though your city had been battered by a severe storm,

and no one helped you.

But now I will cause your city to be rebuilt with stones made of turquoise,

and will cause the foundations of the city to be made of sapphires.

¹² I will cause the towers on the city wall to be made of rubies,

and all the gates and outer walls of the city will be made of other very valuable stones.

¹³ I will be the one who will teach your children

and cause things to go well with you.

¹⁴ Your government will be strong because it will act justly;

no one will oppress you;

you will not be afraid,

because nothing will come near you that will make you fear.

¹⁵ If any army attacks you,

it will not be because I have incited them to do that,

and you will defeat anyone who attacks you.

¹⁶ Think about this:

Blacksmiths fan the coals to make a very hot flame

in order to produce weapons that can be used in battles,

but I am the one who has produced blacksmiths!

And I am also the one who created people who destroy other people and cities.

¹⁷ You will not be defeated by soldiers using weapons

that they have made to attack you,

and when others try to accuse you, you will prove that they are wrong, and you will condemn them to punishment.

That is the reward for the people who serve Yahweh.

I will defend them and show everyone else that they are right to trust me;

that is what I, Yahweh, promise.”

Chapter 55

¹ ”Come here! All you people who are in exile,

and listen to me!

If you are thirsty,

now is the time for you to come to me and get your water!

Now those who had no money,

you can come and buy wine and milk from me, the finest wine and the best milk!

You can get what you need from me,

and you can buy it now!

You can buy it even though you do not have any money,

and even though you could never afford it!

² Why do you spend money to buy things that do not supply what you really need?

Why do you work hard to get money to buy things that do not truly satisfy you?

Pay attention to what I say

and acquire what is really good!

If you come to me, then in your heart you will truly be happy.

³ Listen to me and come to me;

pay attention to me, and if you do that, you will have new life within you.

I will make a covenant with you that will last forever

to faithfully love you like my love for King David.

⁴ By what he did, I showed my power to many people groups;

I caused him to be a leader and commander over the people of many nations.

⁵ And similarly, you will summon people of other nations to come to you,

nations that previously you have not heard about,

and they had not heard about you;

and they will come to you quickly

because they will have heard that I, Yahweh, your God, the Holy One of Israel, have honored you.

⁶ Seek to know Yahweh while it is still possible for you to do that;

call to Yahweh while he is near!

⁷ Wicked people should abandon their wicked behavior,

and evil people should stop thinking what is evil.

They should turn to Yahweh,

and if they do that, he will act mercifully toward them;

they should turn to Yahweh, their God,

because he will fully pardon them for all the wicked things that they have done.

⁸ Yahweh declares that what he thinks is not the same as what you think,

and what he does is very different from what you do.

⁹ Just as you people on the earth can never reach the sky,

the thoughts of Yahweh are that much higher than the way you think.

His ways are always different from what you do.

And so, you can be sure that you can never fully understand the way Yahweh thinks or know the reasons for what Yahweh does.

¹⁰ Yahweh sends the rain and snow down from the sky,

and they water the ground.

When the ground becomes moist, it causes plants to sprout and grow,

with the result that the soil produces seed for the farmer to plant and grain to produce flour to make bread for people to eat.

¹¹ And similarly, the things that I promise to do, I will always cause to happen;

my promises will always come true.

They will accomplish the things for which I spoke them.

¹² This is why you will leave Babylon joyfully;

you will have peace as Yahweh leads you out.

It will be as though the hills and mountains sang joyfully,

and the trees in the fields clapped their hands.

¹³ Instead of thornbushes and briers, pine trees and myrtle trees will grow in your land.

As a result of that, people will honor Yahweh much more;

and what Yahweh does will cause everyone to remember what he has promised, and they will honor him."

Chapter 56

¹ Yahweh says to all the people of Judah,

"Do the things that are fair and right,

because I will soon come to rescue you; I will soon show everyone that you have been right to trust me.

² I will bless those who faithfully obey my laws about the Sabbath days.

I will bless those who keep sacred my Sabbath days,

and who do not do any work on those days,

and who refrain from doing anything that is evil.

³ Foreigners who have believed in me should not say,

'Yahweh will surely not allow me to belong to his people.'

And eunuchs should not say,

'Because I am deformed and unable to have children, I cannot belong to Yahweh;

I am like a tree that has completely withered.'

⁴ They should not say that, because I, Yahweh, say this to the eunuchs

who obey my laws about the Sabbath,

and who choose to do the things that please me,

and who obey all the other laws of the covenant that I made with the Israelite people:

⁵ I will cause people to put inside the walls of my temple a monument to them;

because of that monument, they will be honored more than they would have if they had children;

they will be honored forever.

⁶ I will also bless those who are not Israelites

who join themselves to me,

who serve me and worship and love me,

who obey my laws about the Sabbath,

and who faithfully obey all the other laws of the covenant that I made with the Israelite people.

⁷ I will bring them to my sacred hill in Jerusalem,

and cause them to be very joyful in my temple where people pray to me,

and I will accept the sacrifices that they burn on my altar and other sacrifices that they offer,

because my temple will be a building where people of all nations pray to me.

⁸ I, Yahweh, the Lord, the one who will bring back the people of Israel who have been forced to go to other countries, say this:

I will bring from other countries many more people to join those Israelites whom I have brought back.”

⁹ ”You surrounding nations have armies that are like animals in the forest;

come and attack Israel!

¹⁰ The Israelite leaders should be like watchdogs to protect the people,

but it is as though they were blind.

They understand nothing.

They are all like dogs that cannot bark.

Good watchdogs bark when strangers approach,

but the Israelite leaders do not warn the people that their enemies are coming.

Instead, they just want to lie down and sleep and dream.

¹¹ And they are like greedy dogs;

they never get all that they want.

They are supposed to lead the people, like good shepherds lead their flocks,

but they are ignorant,

and they each do whatever they want to do.

¹² They say to each other, ’Come, let us go and get some wine and other alcoholic drinks,

and let us become drunk!

And tomorrow we will enjoy drinking even more!”

Chapter 57

¹ Righteous people die,

and no one is concerned about it.

Godly people die,

and no one understands why.

God takes them away in order that they will not endure more calamities,

² and now they have peace.

They lived righteously,

and now they rest peacefully in their graves.

³ Yahweh says, ”But you who practice sorcery, come here!

You who worship idols,
listen to me!

⁴ Do you realize whom you are ridiculing,

and whom you are insulting?

Do you realize to whom you are sticking out your tongues?

You are insulting me, Yahweh!

You are always rebelling against me and always lying, just like your ancestors.

⁵ You are eager to sleep together under every tall green tree where you worship your gods.

You kill your children as sacrifices to your idols in the dry riverbeds,

and offer them as sacrifices to your idols in the rocky caves.

⁶ You take big smooth stones from the riverbeds

and worship them as your gods.

You pour out wine to be an offering to them,

and you bring grain to burn for an offering to them.

Do you think that I enjoy all those things?

⁷ You sleep with idols' prostitutes on every hill and mountain,

and you go there to offer sacrifices to your gods.

⁸ You have put charms behind your doors and doorposts,

and you have deserted me.

You have taken off your clothes

and climbed into your bed,

and invited more of your lovers to come to bed with you.

You have paid them to sleep with you,

and you have looked at their private parts.

⁹ You have given fragrant oil and lots of perfume to kings,

and you sent representatives to distant countries to look for other gods to worship;

you even tried to send messengers to the place of the dead to search for new gods.

¹⁰ You became weary because of doing all those things,

but you never said, 'It is useless for us to do that.'

You found new strength for worshipping idols,

so you continued to do so.

¹¹ Was it because you were afraid of those idols more than you were afraid of me that you lied about what you were doing,

and you do not even think about me?

Was it because I did not punish you for a long time that you are not afraid of me?

¹² You think that the things that you have done are right,

but I will tell you the truth:

It will not help you to do any of those things.

¹³ When you cry out for help to your collection of idols,

they will not rescue you.

The wind will blow them away; a single breath will carry them all away.

But those who trust in me will live in the land of Israel,

and they will worship me on Zion, my sacred hill."

¹⁴ Yahweh will say, "Prepare yourselves to receive me,

like people build and prepare a road
for a king to come on.

Get rid of the things that are causing
you to sin.

¹⁵ Because this is what I say—I, Yahweh,
who am holy and honored more than any-
one else, and who live forever:

I live in the highest heaven, where ev-
erything is holy,

but I also am with those who are hum-
ble and who are sorry for the sinful things
that they have done.

I will greatly encourage those who have
repented.

¹⁶ I will not accuse people forever;

I will not always be angry with them,

because if I did that, people would be-
come weak;

all the people whom I created and
caused to live would die.

¹⁷ I was angry with my people because
they sinned by taking with force what be-
longed to others.

Because I was angry, I punished them
and turned away from them,

but they continued sinning.

¹⁸ I have seen the evil things that they
continually do,

but I will restore them and lead them.

I will encourage them.

As for those who are mourning,

¹⁹ I will enable them to sing songs to
praise me.

I will restore all my people, those who
live near Jerusalem and those who live far
away,

and I will cause things to go well for
them.

²⁰ Wicked people do not have peace in
their inner beings;

they are like a sea whose waves are
always churning up mud,

²¹ and I, Yahweh, say that things will
never go well for those who are evil.”

Chapter 58

¹ Yahweh said to me,

”Shout loudly!

Shout like a loud trumpet!

Shout to warn my Israelite people about
their sins!

² They worship me every day;

they come to my temple because
they say that they are eager to know what
I want them to do.

They act as though they were a nation
that does things that are righteous,

that would never abandon the com-
mands of me, their God.

They request me to decide matters
justly,

and they are eager that I should come
to them.

³ They say, ’We have fasted to please
you,

but you did not notice our doing that.

We humbled ourselves,

but you did not pay any attention!’

I will tell you why I did not pay atten-
tion.

It is because when you fast,

you do it only to please yourselves,

and you act cruelly toward all your
workers.

⁴ You fast, but you also quarrel and fight with each other with your fists.

Doing things like that while you fast will certainly not cause me to hear your prayers where I am, high in heaven.

⁵ You bow your heads

like the tops of reeds bend when the wind blows,

and you wear rough clothes and cover your heads with ashes like people do when they are grieving.

That is what you do when you are fasting,

but do you really think that will please me?

⁶ No, that is not the kind of fasting that I desire.

Instead you should seek to free those who have been unjustly put in prison,

and encourage those who are treated cruelly;

and free those who have been oppressed in any way.

⁷ Share your food with those who are hungry

and to allow those who have no houses to stay in your houses.

Give clothes to those who do not have clothes,

and do not hide yourself from your relatives who need help from you.

⁸ If you do those things,

what you do for others will be like a light that shines when it dawns.

The troubles that have been caused by your sins will end quickly.

Others will know about your righteous behavior,

and the glorious presence of Yahweh will protect you from behind

like I protected the Israelite people when they left Egypt.

⁹ Then you will call out to me,

and I will quickly answer and say, 'I am here to help you.'

Stop oppressing people;

stop falsely accusing people;

and stop saying evil things about people.

¹⁰ Give food to those who are hungry,

and give to people who are afflicted the things that they need.

Your doing that will be like a light that shines in the darkness;

instead of doing evil to people, the good things you do for people will be like the sunshine at noontime.

¹¹ Yahweh will guide you continually,

and he will give you good things to satisfy you.

He will enable you to remain strong and healthy.

You will be like a garden that is well watered,

like a spring that never dries up.

¹² Your people will rebuild the cities that were destroyed long ago;

they will build houses on top of the old foundations.

People will say that you are the ones who are repairing the holes in the city walls,

and who are repairing the streets where people live.

¹³ Do not travel on the Sabbath days,

and on Sabbath days do not do only the things that you delight to do.

Enjoy the Sabbath days, and consider them to be delightful.

The Sabbath days are my holy days.

Honor me, Yahweh, in everything that you do on the Sabbath days.

Do not talk about and do things to please yourselves.

If you do all the things that I have just now told you to do; listen, and I will tell you what I will do for you.

¹⁴ I will enable you to be joyful.

I will greatly honor you;

it will be as though you were riding with me above the highest mountains!

I will give to you the blessings that I gave to your ancestor Jacob.

Those things will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.”

Chapter 59

¹ Listen to this! Yahweh’s power is not too little to rescue you.

He has not become deaf; he can still hear you when you call to him for help.

² But you have separated yourselves from your God by the sins that you have committed.

Because of your sins, he has turned away from you,

with the result that he does not pay attention to what you request him to do.

³ You do violent things to others,

with the result that your hands are stained with their blood.

You constantly tell lies,

and you say evil things about others.

⁴ When you accuse someone in court, what you say is not fair and it is not true.

You accuse people falsely; you depend on the lies you tell.

You are constantly planning to cause trouble for others,

and then you do those evil things that you planned.

⁵ What you plan to do to harm people is like the eggs a poisonous snake lays, like a web that a spider catches its victims in.

Cobras will hatch from those eggs,

and insects will fall into the spider’s web.

⁶ You cannot hide the evil deeds that you have done.

You are constantly acting violently.

⁷ You are very quick to go and do evil deeds,

and you hurry to murder people who are innocent.

You are continually thinking about sinning.

Wherever you go, you destroy things and cause people to suffer.

⁸ You do not know how to act peacefully or to treat others fairly.

You always are dishonest,

and those who imitate your behavior never have any peace within themselves.

⁹ Because of that, God does not rescue us from our enemies,

it seems that he is not acting fairly toward us.

We expect God to give us light,

but all he gives us is darkness.

¹⁰ We are like blind people who have to feel along the wall to be able to walk anywhere.

We stumble and trip at noontime like we would when it is dark.

We are like dead people who are among healthy people.

¹¹ We growl like hungry bears;

we continually moan like doves.

We ask God to do what is just,

but nothing happens.

We want God to rescue us,

but it seems that he is far away.

¹² But these things are happening because it is as though our sins are piled high in the presence of God,

and it is they that testify against us.

We cannot deny it;

we know that we have done many wrong things.

¹³ We know that we have rebelled against Yahweh;

we have turned away from him.

We oppress people by what we testify against them;

we do not allow them to get what they have a right to get.

We think about the lies that we can tell,

and then we tell them.

¹⁴ In our courts, the judges do not decide cases fairly;

no one is acting righteously.

In plazas where people gather together, no one tells the truth;

it seems that people are not allowed to say what is true.

¹⁵ No one tells the truth,

and people try to ruin the reputations of those who quit doing evil.

Yahweh looked around, and he saw that no one was doing what is just;

he was very displeased.

¹⁶ He was disgusted when he saw that no one tried to help those who were being treated cruelly.

So he used his own power to rescue them;

it is because he is always righteous that he did that.

¹⁷ It is as though he were a soldier who put on his armor and a helmet;

his continually doing what is right is like his armor, and his ability to rescue people is like his helmet.

His being extremely angry and his being ready to get revenge on those who do evil are like his robes.

¹⁸ He will repay his enemies for the evil things that they have done.

He will severely punish even those who live far from Jerusalem.

¹⁹ When that happens, people everywhere, from the east to the west, will respect and honor Yahweh,

because he will come like a rushing river that is pushed along by the strong wind that Yahweh sent.

²⁰ And Yahweh says that he will come to Jerusalem to free his people;

he will come to rescue those in Judah who have stopped doing sinful things.

²¹ This is what Yahweh says to his people: "This is the covenant that I will make with you: My Spirit will not leave you, and you will always have my message. You will be able to declare it, and your children and grandchildren will be able to declare it forever."

Chapter 60

¹ You people of Jerusalem, stand up!

Yahweh has done glorious things for you,

and he has acted powerfully for you;
so show others that he is very great!

² But spiritual darkness has covered all
the other people groups on the earth,
complete darkness,

but Yahweh will show you how great he
is,

and other people will also see it.

³ People of all people groups will see
that he is very great by seeing what he has
done for you,

and kings will come to see the won-
derful things that have happened to you.

⁴ Yahweh says, "Look around, and you
will see the people who will be returning
from exile!

Your sons will come from distant coun-
tries;

others will carry your little daughters
home.

⁵ When you look at this happening,
you will be very joyful in your inner
beings,

because people will bring valuable
goods to you from all around the world.

They will bring valuable things from
many nations in ships.

⁶ People will also bring valuable goods
to you on herds of camels:

camels from the Midian and Ephah
areas of northern Arabia.

And from Sheba in southern Arabia
they will come, bringing gold and frank-
incense;

they will all come to praise me, Yah-
weh.

⁷ They will bring flocks of sheep and
goats from Kedar in northern Arabia and
give them to you.

They will bring rams from Nebaioth
for you to sacrifice on my altars,
and I will accept them happily.

At that time I will cause my temple to
be very beautifully decorated.

⁸ And what are those things that are
moving swiftly like clouds?

They resemble pigeons returning to
their nests.

⁹ But they are really ships from Tarshish
that are bringing your people back here.

When your people come, they will
bring with them all the valuable posses-
sions that they have acquired,

and they will do that to honor me, Yah-
weh, your God, the Holy One of Israel,

because I will have greatly honored
you.

¹⁰ Foreigners will come and rebuild the
walls of your cities,

and their kings will serve you.

Although I punished you because I
was angry with you,

these things will happen now because
I will act mercifully toward you because I
am kind.

¹¹ The gates of your cities will be open
during the day and also during the night,

in order that people will be able to
bring into your cities valuable things from
many countries,

with their kings being led to you in
the processions.

¹² And the kingdoms and nations whose people refuse to allow you to rule them will be completely destroyed.

¹³ The glorious things in Lebanon will be brought to you—

lumber from cypress trees and fir trees and pine trees—

to be used to make my temple beautiful.

When that is done, my temple will truly be glorious!

¹⁴ The descendants of those who oppressed you will come and bow down to you;

those who despised you will prostrate themselves in front of your feet.

They will say that your city on Mount Zion

is the City of Yahweh,

where the Holy One of Israel lives.

¹⁵ Previously everyone hated you and ignored you,

but now your city will be majestic forever;

and I will cause you to be joyful forever.

¹⁶ People of all nations and their kings will gladly bring their wealth to you.

When that happens, you will realize that I truly am Yahweh,

the one who saves you and rescues you from your enemies,

and that I am the mighty one to whom you Israelite people belong.

¹⁷ Instead of metals that are not valuable, like bronze and iron,

I will bring to you silver and gold.

Instead of wood and stones,

I will bring you bronze and iron for your buildings.

There will be peace in your country, and your rulers will do what is fair.

¹⁸ People in your country will no longer act violently,

and people will no longer destroy your land and drive you out of it.

The people in the city will be safe,

and everyone there will praise me.

¹⁹ And you will no longer need the sun and moon to give you light,

because I, Yahweh, will give you more light than the sun and moon;

I will be a glorious light for you forever.

²⁰ It will seem as though the sun and moon will always be shining,

because I, Yahweh, will be an everlasting light for you.

You will never again be sad because of things that happen to you.

²¹ Your people will all be righteous,

and they will occupy the land forever,

because I myself have put you there like people plant trees

in order that you will show others that I am very great.

²² At that time, the groups that are very small now will become very large clans,

and small clans will become great nations.

All those things will happen because, I, Yahweh, will cause them to happen at the right time.”

Chapter 61

¹ The Spirit of Yahweh our Lord is on me;

he has appointed me to bring good news to those who are oppressed,

to comfort those who are discouraged,
and to free all those who are as though they are chained by the wrong things that they continually do.

² He has sent me to tell those who mourn that now is the time when Yahweh will act kindly toward his people;

now is the time when our God will get revenge on their enemies.

³ To all those in Jerusalem who mourn, he will give beautiful things to wear on their heads

instead of ashes that they put on their heads to show that they were sad;

he will cause them to rejoice instead of being sad;

he will enable them to be happy instead of being discouraged.

They will be called 'people who continually do what is right,

people who are like tall oak trees that Yahweh has planted'

to show others that he is very great.

⁴ Those who return from Babylon will rebuild the cities that the soldiers from Babylon tore down.

Even though those cities have been destroyed and abandoned for many years, they will be restored.

⁵ Foreigners will be the ones who will take care of your flocks of sheep and goats, and plow your fields and take care of your grapevines.

⁶ But you are the ones who will be like the priests to serve Yahweh, to work for God.

You will enjoy valuable goods that are brought from other nations,

and you will be happy that those things have become yours.

⁷ Previously you were shamed and disgraced,

but now you will have great blessings; previously your enemies humbled you,

but now you will have many good things;

you will be happy because you will be in your land again,

and you will rejoice forever.

⁸ "I, Yahweh, am very pleased with those who decide matters fairly;

I hate those who illegally take things from other people.

I will surely repay my people for all that they have suffered in the past.

And I will make an everlasting agreement with them.

⁹ Their descendants will be honored by people of other nations; their children will be honored by all the other nations.

Everyone who sees them will know that they are a nation that I, Yahweh, have blessed."

¹⁰ I greatly rejoice because of what Yahweh has done!

I am happy in all my inner being, because he has saved me and declared that I am righteous;

those blessings are like a robe that he has put on me.

I am as happy as a bridegroom in his wedding clothes,

or a bride wearing jewels.

¹¹ Just as seeds sown in a garden sprout from the soil and grow,

Yahweh our God will cause people of all nations to act righteously,

with the result that they will praise him for doing that.

Chapter 62

¹ Because I am very concerned about the people of Jerusalem,

I will do something to help them.

I will not stop praying for them

until they are rescued from their oppressors,

until that becomes as apparent to everyone as the dawn every morning,

until people can see it as clearly as they see a torch shining brightly at night.

² Some day the people of many nations will know that Yahweh has rescued you, his people.

Their kings will see that your city is very great.

And Yahweh will give your city a new name.

³ It will be as though Yahweh had held you up in his hands in order that everyone can see you.

Under his authority you will be like a crown worn by a king.

⁴ Your city will never again be called 'the deserted city,' and your country will never again be called 'the desolate land';

it will be called 'the land that Yahweh delights in,'

and it will also be called 'married to Yahweh.'

It will be called that because Yahweh will be delighted with you,

and it will be as though you were his bride.

⁵ You people will live in all the country of Judah

like a young man lives with his bride.

And our God will be happy that you belong to him,

like a bridegroom is happy that his bride belongs to him.

⁶ You people of Jerusalem, I have placed watchmen on your walls;

they will earnestly pray to Yahweh day and night.

You watchmen, you must not stop praying

and reminding Yahweh about what he has promised to do.

⁷ And tell Yahweh that he should not rest

until he causes Jerusalem to be a city that is famous and admired throughout the world.

⁸ Yahweh has raised his right hand to solemnly promise to the people of Jerusalem:

"I will use my power and will never again allow your enemies to defeat you;

soldiers from other nations will never come again to take away your grain

and the wine that you worked hard to produce.

⁹ You yourselves will grow the grain,

and you will be the ones who will praise me, Yahweh, while you eat the bread made from the grain.

Inside the courtyards of my temple,

you yourselves will drink the wine made from the grapes that you harvested."

¹⁰ Go out through the city gates!

Prepare the highway on which people will return from other countries!

Cause the road to become smooth;

clear off all the stones;

set up signal flags to help the people groups to see the road to Jerusalem.

¹¹ This is the message that Yahweh has sent to the people of every nation.

Tell the people of Israel, "The one who will rescue you is coming!

Look! He will be bringing to you your reward;

those whom he has rescued will be going ahead of him."

¹² They will be called: "Yahweh's own people,

and ones whom he rescued."

And Jerusalem will be known as: "The city that Yahweh loves,"

and "The city that is no longer abandoned."

Chapter 63

¹ I ask, "Who is this who is coming from the city of Bozrah in Edom,

whose clothes are stained red from blood?

Who is this who is wearing beautiful robes?"

He replies, "It is I, Yahweh, declaring that I have defeated your enemies,

and I am able to rescue you!"

² I ask him, "What are those red spots on your clothes?"

It appears that you have been treading on grapes to make wine."

³ He replies, "I have been treading on my enemies, not on grapes.

I did it myself; no one helped me.

I punished them because I was very angry with them,

and my clothes became stained with their blood.

⁴ I did that because it was time for me to get revenge;

it was time to rescue my people from those who had oppressed them.

⁵ I searched for someone who would enable me to help my people,

but I was amazed that there was no one to help me.

So I defeated their enemies with my own power;

I was able to do that because I was very angry.

⁶ Because I was extremely angry, I punished the nations;

I caused them to stagger like drunk men,

and I caused their blood to pour out on the ground."

⁷ I will tell about all the things that Yahweh has done for his people because of his faithful love for them,

and I will praise him for all that he has done.

Yahweh has done good things for us people of Israel;

he has acted mercifully toward us

and he has steadfastly and faithfully loved us.

⁸ Yahweh said, "These are my people;
they will not deceive me";
so he rescued us.

⁹ When we had many troubles,
he was sad also.

He sent his angel from before his presence to rescue us.

Because he loved us and was merciful to us,

he saved us;

it was as though he had picked our ancestors up and carried them all those years during which they were oppressed in Egypt.

¹⁰ But we rebelled against him,
and we caused his Holy Spirit to be sad.

So he became like an enemy
who fought against us.

¹¹ Then we thought about what happened long ago,

during the time when Moses led our ancestors out of Egypt.

We cried out, "Where is the one who brought our ancestors through the Sea of Reeds

while Moses led them?

Where is the one who sent his Holy Spirit

to be among our ancestors?

¹² Where is the one who showed his glorious power

and caused the water to separate when Moses lifted his arm above it,

with the result that he will be honored forever?

¹³ Where is the one who led our ancestors while they walked through the seabed?

They were like horses that were racing along and never stumbled.

¹⁴ They were like cattle that walk down into a valley to rest,

and the Spirit of Yahweh enabled them to go to a place where they could rest.

Yahweh, you led your people,

and you caused yourself to be praised."

¹⁵ "Yahweh, look down from heaven;

look down on us from your holy and glorious home.

You were previously very concerned about us, and you acted powerfully to help us.

But it seems that you do not act mercifully and zealously for us anymore.

¹⁶ You are our father, even if

Abraham does not know what is happening to us,

and Jacob is not concerned about us, either,

but Yahweh, you are our father;

you rescued us long ago.

¹⁷ Yahweh, why did you cause us to wander away from your road?

Why did you cause us to be stubborn in our inner beings,

with the result that we no longer honor you?

Help us like you did previously,

because we are the people who serve you and belong to you.

¹⁸ We, your holy people, possessed your sacred temple for only a short time,

and now our enemies have destroyed it.

¹⁹ Now it seems as though we never were ruled by you,

as though we never belonged to you.”

Chapter 64

¹ ”Yahweh, I wish that you had come down from the sky;

you would have caused the mountains to shake with fear.

² It would have been like fire burning up dead wood,

or like fire making water to boil.

Come down in order that your enemies will know who you are,

and so that the people of other nations will tremble in your presence.

³ You did awesome things that we were not expecting you to do;

the mountains shook when you came down onto Mount Sinai.

⁴ Since long ago no one has ever seen or heard about a God like you;

you help those who depend on you.

⁵ You help those who joyfully do what is right,

those who conduct their lives as you want them to.

But we did not do that; we continued to sin,

and so you became angry with us.

We have been sinning for a long time.

It is only if we continually do what you want us to do that you will save us.

⁶ We have all become people who are not fit to worship you;

all of the good things that we have done are only like bloodstained rags.

Because of our sins, we are all like leaves that dry up

and are blown away by the wind.

⁷ None of our people worships you,

and no one really tries to persuade you to help him.

You have turned away from us.

It is as though you have abandoned us, so that we keep sinning and become more and more guilty.

⁸ But even so, Yahweh, you are our father.

We are like clay that a potter uses,

and you created us, like a potter creates pottery.

⁹ Yahweh, do not continue to be angry with us;

do not keep thinking about our sins forever.

Do not forget that we are all your people.

¹⁰ All of your towns in Judah have become like the wilderness;

even Jerusalem has been destroyed.

¹¹ Your glorious temple on Mountain Zion, where our ancestors worshiped you,

has been completely burned up.

And all our other beautiful things have been ruined.

¹² Yahweh, you see all those things, but it seems that you refuse to do anything to help us.

It seems that you will cause us to suffer much more.”

Chapter 65

¹ This is what Yahweh said:

"I was ready to reply to my people,
but no one requested me to help them.

I was ready to help even those who did
not call out to me.

I continued to say, 'I am here to help
you!'

² It is as though I had continually held
out my arms to show that I was ready to
help my people who rebelled against me,

and who continually did the evil things
that they wanted to do.

³ They boldly continue to do things that
cause me to be angry:

they offer sacrifices to their idols in
their gardens,

and they burn incense to them on altars
made of bricks and tiles.

⁴ They remain awake at night in ceme-
teries,

talking with the spirits of dead people.

They eat the meat of pigs,

and their pots are full of the broth of
meat that is unacceptable to me.

⁵ Then they say to others,

'Stay away from me; do not come near
me,

because I am very holy,

with the result that you should not
touch me.'

People like that are like smoke in my
nose

from a fire that burns continually.

⁶ I have written a record of all the evil
things that they have done.

And I will not remain silent about all
those things;

I will certainly punish these people

⁷ for the sins that they and their an-
cestors have committed.

They have mocked me by burning in-
cense to their idols on the hilltops.

So I will punish them like they deserve
for doing those things."

⁸ This is also what Yahweh said:

"When there is a cluster of nice grapes
on a vine,

people do not throw them away,

because they know that there is good
juice in those grapes.

Similarly, because there are some peo-
ple in Judah who faithfully serve me,

I will not get rid of all of them.

⁹ I will spare some of the descendants
of Jacob

who are living on the hills of Judah.

I have chosen them, and they will pos-
sess that land;

they will worship me, and they will
live there.

¹⁰ Then all the land from the Plain of
Sharon near the Mediterranean Sea and
as far east as the Valley of Achor near Jeri-
cho will become pastureland,

where their cattle and sheep will rest.

¹¹ But it will be different for you who
have abandoned me,

you who do not worship me on Zion,
my sacred hill,

you who worship Gad and Meni, the
gods who you say will bring you good luck
and good fortune.

¹² It is I, not Meni, who will decide what
will happen to you;

you will all be slaughtered by swords.
That will happen because you did not
answer

when I called out to you.

I spoke to you,

but you did not pay attention.

Instead, you did things that I said are
evil;

you chose to do things that do not
please me.

¹³ I, Yahweh the Lord, will give to those
who worship and obey me things to eat
and drink,

and they will be happy;

but all you evil people will be hungry
and thirsty,

and you will be sad and disgraced.

¹⁴ Those who worship and obey me will
sing joyfully,

but you evil people will wail loudly

because you will be suffering in your
inner beings.

¹⁵ Those whom I have chosen will use
your names when they curse people;

I, Yahweh the Lord, will get rid of you.

But I will give to those who worship
and obey me a new name.

¹⁶ The people in this land have had many
troubles,

but I will cause those troubles to occur
no more.

Therefore those who request me to bless
them and those who solemnly promise to
do something

should never forget that I am God,
who faithfully do what I promise to do.

¹⁷ Note this: Some day I will create a
new heaven and a new earth.

They will be very wonderful, with the
result that you will no longer think about
all the troubles you had previously.

¹⁸ Be glad and always rejoice because of
what I will do:

Jerusalem will be a place where peo-
ple rejoice;

the people who live there will always
be happy.

¹⁹ I will rejoice about Jerusalem,

and I will be delighted with my people.

People will no longer weep or cry be-
cause of being distressed.

²⁰ No child will die when it is still an
infant;

all people will live until they are very
old.

People will consider that anyone who
is a hundred years old is still young;

they will consider that anyone who
dies who is younger than that has been
cursed.

²¹ My people will build houses and then
live in them.

They will plant vineyards and then
eat grapes from those vineyards.

²² The houses that they build, no one will
take those houses away from them and
live in them.

No one will take a vineyard away from
its owner.

My chosen people will live a long time,
like trees do,

and they will enjoy the things that
they have done—

the houses that they have built and the
crops that they have planted.

²³ They will not work hard in vain,

and their children will not die from
some calamity.

I will certainly bless their children and their grandchildren.

²⁴ Before they call to me to help them, I will answer;

I will answer their prayers while they are still praying for me to do something for them.

²⁵ No one will be harmed or injured anywhere on Zion, my sacred hill:

wolves and lambs will eat grass together peacefully;

lions will eat hay like oxen do, and they will not attack people.

Snakes will not hurt anyone; they will lie on the ground and eat only dirt.

That is surely what it will be like because I, Yahweh, have said it.”

Chapter 66

¹ Yahweh also said this:

”All of heaven is like my throne,
and the whole earth is like my footstool.

So you could certainly not build a house that would be adequate for me to live in and rest!

² I have created everything;
all things exist because I made them.

That is true because I, Yahweh, have said it.

The people I am most pleased with are those who are humble,

who patiently endure it when they suffer,

and who tremble when they hear me rebuking them.

³ You have chosen to continually do the things that you want to do:

some of you slaughter oxen to sacrifice them to me,

but you also bring human sacrifices to your idols!

You sacrifice lambs to me,

but you kill dogs to offer them to your gods.

You offer grain to me,

but you also bring pigs’ blood to your idols.

You burn incense to me,

but you also praise your idols.

You delight to do those disgusting things.

⁴ When I called out to you,
you did not answer.

When I spoke, you did not pay attention.

You did many things that I say are evil,
and you chose to do things that I did not like.

So now I will punish you by causing you to experience the things that you yourselves have done, that you yourselves are afraid of.”

⁵ But you people who tremble when you hear what Yahweh says,

listen to what he says now:

”Some of your people hate you and drive you away

because you belong to me.

They make fun of you, and they say,

’Yahweh should show his glorious power!

We want to see him do something to cause you to be truly happy.’

But some day those people will be very disgraced.”

⁶ At that time, you will listen to the noise in the city.

You will hear the shouting in the temple.

It will be the sound of Yahweh paying back his enemies.

⁷ No one ever heard that a woman gave birth to a baby

when she was just starting to have birth pains.

⁸ Certainly no one ever heard about such a thing happening,

and no one has ever seen it happen.

Similarly, no one ever heard that a nation was created in one instant,

not in one day.

But Jerusalem is like a woman who gives birth to children

as soon as she starts to have birth pains.

⁹ Women certainly do not bring infants to the time when they are ready to be born and then do not allow them to be born.

Similarly, Yahweh will do for Jerusalem what he has promised to do:

he will cause Jerusalem to be full of people again.

That will happen because Yahweh has said it.

¹⁰ You people in Jerusalem, rejoice!

And all you people who love Jerusalem should also be happy.

You people who were sad because of what happened to Jerusalem,

you should now be glad.

¹¹ You people in Jerusalem will have everything that you need,

like a baby that gets all it needs from its mother's breasts.

You will enjoy all the abundant and glorious things in the city.

¹² Yahweh has promised,

”I will cause Jerusalem to be full of valuable things that come from other nations;

those things will pour into Jerusalem; it will be like a big flood.

I will take care of the people of Jerusalem

like women care for the babies that they nurse.

¹³ I will comfort you people in Jerusalem like mothers comfort their children.”

¹⁴ When you see those things happen, you will rejoice.

Your old bones will become strong again like in the springtime, when the grass grows.

When that happens, everyone will know that Yahweh has power to help those who worship and obey him,

but that he is angry with his enemies.

¹⁵ Yahweh will come down with flames of fire,

and his chariots will come down like a whirlwind;

he will be extremely angry,

and he will punish his enemies by burning them in a fire.

¹⁶ It is as though Yahweh had a big sword,

and he will judge and execute many people.

¹⁷ Yahweh says, “Some of you will prepare yourselves to enter the garden of idols by washings and special diets and clothing, and you follow into that place, those who

eat the meat of pigs and mice, and other things that I have forbidden you to eat. I promise you, I will stop them and they will not do this any more!”

¹⁸ I know all the evil things that they all think and do. It is now time for me to gather together the people who live in all nations and who speak all languages, and to show them that I am very great.

¹⁹ I will do something among them to show everyone who they are, and those whom I have spared will go to various distant countries: To Tarshish, Put, Lud (home of archers), Meshech, Tubal, Javan, and to distant islands. I will send them to proclaim to nations that have never heard about me that I am very great and glorious.

²⁰ Then they will bring back here your relatives who have been exiled, like the offerings that my Israelite people used to bring in the correct manner to the temple. They will travel to Jerusalem, where my holy mountain is; they will come on horses and in chariots, in wagons, on mules and on camels. ²¹ I solemnly promise that I will appoint some of them to be priests, and others to do other work in my temple. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.

²² I also promise that just like the new heaven and the new earth will last forever, you will always have descendants, and you will always be honored. ²³ At every festival to celebrate the Sabbath each week and the new moon each month, everyone will come and worship me. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it. ²⁴ Then they will go out of Jerusalem and look at the corpses of those who rebelled against me. The maggots in those corpses will never die, the fire will never stop burning them, and everyone who sees their corpses will detest them.”

JEREMIAH

Chapter 1

¹ This is the message of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah, who wrote this. He was a priest, from the town of Anathoth in the area where the tribe of Benjamin lives. ² Yahweh started to give him these messages when Josiah had been ruling Judah for almost thirteen years. ³ Yahweh continued to give him messages when Josiah's son Jehoiakim was the king, and he continued to do that until Zedekiah had been the king of Judah for almost eleven years. It was in the fifth month of that year that the people of Jerusalem were exiled to Babylonia.

⁴ One day Yahweh gave me this message,

⁵ "I knew you before I finished forming you in your mother's womb.

I set you apart for my honor before you were born,

and I appointed you to be my prophet for all the nations."

⁶ I replied, "O, Yahweh my God, do you not see that I am not qualified to speak for you? I am very young!"

⁷ Yahweh replied, "Do not say that you are too young, because you must go to everyone to whom I will send you, and you must tell them everything that I tell you to say. ⁸ And you must not be afraid of the people to whom you will speak, because I will protect you from being harmed by them. This will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it!"

⁹ Then it was as though Yahweh touched my mouth and said, "Listen to me! I have put my message into your mouth. ¹⁰ Today I am appointing you to warn nations and kingdoms. You will tell them that I will completely destroy and get rid of some of

them and that I will establish others and cause them to be prosperous."

¹¹ Then Yahweh showed something to me, and said, "Jeremiah, what do you see?"

I replied, "I see a branch from an almond tree."

¹² Yahweh said, "That is correct. And because the word for 'almond' resembles the word for 'watching', it means that I am watching what will happen, and I will make certain that what I have said to you about destroying nations will happen."

¹³ Then Yahweh spoke to me again and said, "What do you see now?"

I replied, "I see a pot full of boiling water. It is in the north, tipping toward me."

¹⁴ Yahweh replied, "Yes! It means that from the north great trouble will spread over this land, like boiling water pouring from a pot.

¹⁵ Listen to what I say:

I am summoning the armies of the kingdoms that are north of Judah to come to Jerusalem.

Their kings will set up their thrones at the gates of this city to indicate that they are now the kings of Judah.

Their armies will attack and break down the walls of this city, and they will do the same thing to all the other towns in Judah.

¹⁶ I will punish my people because of all the evil things that they have done;

they have abandoned me and they offer offerings of worship to false gods.

They worship idols that they have made with their own hands!

¹⁷ So, get up and put on your clothes to get ready for action! Then go to the people of Judah and tell them everything that I tell you to say. Do not be afraid of them,

because if you are afraid of them, I will punish you as an example right in front of them! ¹⁸ But listen! I will cause you to be strong, like a city that has strong walls around it. You will be as strong as an iron pillar or a bronze wall. Even the royal officials, the priests, and the general populace will not be able to defeat you. ¹⁹ They will oppose you, but they will not be able to defeat you, because I will be with you and will protect you. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it!"

Chapter 2

¹ Yahweh gave me another message ² to proclaim to everyone in Jerusalem. He said that I should tell them this,

"I, Yahweh, remember in your favor that you followed me and trusted in our covenant long ago.

You tried to please me like a bride tries to please her husband;

You loved me,

and you followed me through the desert.

³ At that time you Israelites were set apart to me;

you belonged to me like the first part of the harvests belong to me.

I promised to punish all those who harmed you, my people,

and send disasters on them.

This is the way it will always be since I, Yahweh, said that it would happen."

⁴ Listen to what Yahweh says, descendants of Jacob, all you people of Israel. You must listen to what Yahweh says.

⁵ He says,

"What sin did I commit that caused your ancestors to turn far away from me?

They worshiped worthless idols,

and they themselves became worthless.

⁶ They should have said,

'We need Yahweh. He is the one who brought us safely out of Egypt

and led us through a desert plain where there were a lot of pits.

We need Yahweh. He is the one who led us

where there was no water and where it was very dangerous,

through a land where no one lives or even travels.'

⁷ But when I, Yahweh, brought you into a very fertile land,

in order that you could enjoy all the fruit and other good things that you would harvest,

you caused the land that I promised to give to you to be unfit for me

and to become disgusting to me.

⁸ Your priests also did not ask

if I was still with them.

Those who teach God's laws are not faithful to me themselves!

And your leaders have rebelled against me.

Your prophets gave you messages from their god Baal,

and they worship worthless idols.

⁹ So I, Yahweh, will accuse you in court.

In future years, I will also bring your children and your grandchildren to trial!

That will happen because I, Yahweh, have said that it will happen.

¹⁰ If you go west to the island of Cyprus,
or if you go east to Kedar land,

and if you ask people in those places,

they will tell you that no people from
their countries have ever done the wicked
things that you people have done!

¹¹ No people of any nation have ever
abandoned their gods that they thought
were glorious

and started to worship gods that are
not really gods,

but you people have abandoned me,
your glorious God,

and are worshiping gods that are
useless.

¹² It is as though everything in the sky
is dismayed about what you have done;

it is as though they tremble and are
very horrified. I, Yahweh, see and declare
this to you.

¹³ You, my people, have done two evil
things:

you have rejected me, the one who is
like a fountain where you can obtain fresh
water,

and you are worshiping gods that are
like pits in the ground

that are cracked and which are not
able to hold any water.

¹⁴ You Israelite people, you were cer-
tainly not slaves when you were born;

so why were you captured by your
enemies?

¹⁵ Your enemies roared like lions,
and they destroyed your land.

Now your towns have been burned,
and no one lives in them.

¹⁶ Soldiers from Memphis and Tahpenes,
cities in Egypt, have defeated you

and shaved your heads to show that
you are their slaves.

¹⁷ But it is because you abandoned me,
Yahweh your God,

that these disasters have happened
to you, since I had been leading your to
safety.

¹⁸ So why are you trying to make an
alliance with the rulers of Egypt who live
near the Shihor?

Why are you trying to make an al-
liance with the rulers of Assyria who live
near the Euphrates River?

¹⁹ It is because you have been very
wicked that I will punish you.

It is because you have turned away
from me that I will condemn you.

When I do that, you will realize that
bitter and evil things will happen to you
because you have forsaken me, Yahweh,
your God,

and you no longer have an awesome
respect for me.

That will certainly happen because I,
the Lord, Yahweh, commander of the an-
gel armies in heaven, have said it.

²⁰ Long ago, you stopped obeying me
and you would not allow me to lead you.

You refused to worship me, even
though I saved you from being slaves.

Instead, you worship idols that are un-
der trees on the top of every hill.

You love and worship those idols
instead of me just like an unfaithful man
loves a prostitute instead of his wife.

²¹ It is as though you were the best
grapevine that I could plant,

and I planted you so you would grow
from the very best seed.

So how could you change yourself from the best grapevine into becoming like a vine that is disgusting and rotten?

²² Your guilt from your sins is like very bad stains on a cloth,

and you cannot get rid of those stains even by using very strong soap.

This is true because I, Yahweh, have said it.

²³ You say that you have not sinned.

You claim to be acceptable to God

and that you have not worshiped the images of Baal.

But think about the disgusting things that you do very eagerly in Hinnom Valley outside Jerusalem.

You are like desperate female camels running here and there to find male camels to mate with.

²⁴ You are like wild female donkeys that live in the desert.

They sniff the air to find where the male donkeys are,

and there is no one who can restrain their lust.

The male donkeys that want to mate with them only wear themselves out chasing after them;

because at mating time they find them easily.

²⁵ You constantly run here and there to find idols to worship, with the result that your sandals are worn out,

and your throats have become dry.

I told you to stop doing that but you said that you could not stop,

and you said that you loved those foreign gods

and had to worship them!

²⁶ A robber is disgraced when he is caught.

And all of you, including your kings and priests and prophets, are similarly disgraced.

²⁷ You call a piece of wood that is carved to become a sacred idol, your 'father,'

and you call a stone that you have set up, your 'mother.'

You have rejected me

but when you experience troubles,

you call for me to rescue you!

²⁸ Why do you not shout to the gods that you made?

Why do you not plead with them to rescue you

when you experience disasters?

For you have as many gods as you have cities and towns in Judah!

²⁹ You complain that it was wrong for me not to have rescued you,

but you have all rebelled against me, Yahweh, the one who is speaking to you right now.

³⁰ I punished some of you,

but you did not learn anything from my doing that.

Instead you have killed many of the prophets that I sent to you,

like fierce lions kill other animals.

³¹ You people of Israel, pay attention to what I say.

I have certainly never abandoned you in a desert;

I have never left you in a very dark land.

So, why do you, my people, say that you are free from my control

and that you will not return to worship me anymore?

³² A young woman would certainly never forget to wear her jewelry,

and a bride would never forget to wear her wedding dress,

but you my people have forgotten me for many years.

³³ You know how to easily find gods from other countries whom you can love.

You can find them more easily than a prostitute can find men to sleep with. You could teach her about infidelity!

³⁴ You also have the blood of poor people on your clothes; the very people you have murdered;

people who were innocent! You did not catch them robbing you!

³⁵ Yet you say, 'I have done nothing wrong!

I am sure that Yahweh will not be angry with me for much longer.'

But I will punish you severely

for claiming that you have not sinned.

³⁶ Previously you requested the army of Assyria to help you,

but they were not able to help you.

Now you have requested the army of Egypt to help you,

but they will not be able to help you, either.

³⁷ They will capture you, and you will be their prisoners,

very ashamed with your hands on your heads.

That will happen because Yahweh has rejected those nations that you are relying on,

and they will not be able to help you at all."

Chapter 3

¹ "People know that if a man divorces his wife and then she marries another man,

her first husband certainly must not take her back again to be his wife again.

She would be ceremonially unclean and she has broken the law of Yahweh.

This nation is like this woman.

But you have more idols than prostitutes have men whom they have slept with!

So, why should I accept you if you return to me? it is Yahweh who says this.

² "Look up at the barren hilltops.

On every hilltop you have given yourselves to the idols

in the way a prostitute gives herself to her lovers.

You sat along the roadsides like an Arab nomad who is always waiting in the desert for someone to come;

but you are waiting to have sex with those who pass by.

Your unfaithfulness is the worship of idols,

and your prostitution is just like your idol worship.

The whole land is made unacceptable to Yahweh,

and your worship of idols is your prostitution and your wickedness is what made you unclean.

³ That is why I have not sent you any rain at the times of the year when you needed it.

But you are like prostitutes

who are not at all ashamed for what they have done.

⁴ Now each of you says to me, 'You are my father!

You have loved me ever since I was young!

⁵ So surely you will not be angry with me forever!

You promised you would not obey me, and you did what you said!

And you sinned over and over again!

But you will not quit sinning!"

⁶ One day when Josiah was the king of Judah, Yahweh said to me, "Have you seen what the people of Israel have done? They have turned away from me, like a woman who has abandoned her husband and sleeps with other men. They have gone up on every hilltop and under every shady tree and worshiped idols there. ⁷ I thought that they would return to me, but they did not. And their brothers, the people of Judah, were watching all of this. ⁸ So I sent the people of Israel away to other countries, as a man writes a note saying that he is divorcing his wife and then sends her away because she has committed adultery. But I realized that, just as the people of Israel, the people of Judah were not at all afraid of me. Instead, they acted just as the people of Israel had done. They also turned away from me and began worshiping idols, just as women who leave their husbands and go to other men. ⁹ They did not care that worshiping idols offended me, so they have made the entire land unacceptable to me by worshiping idols of wood and stone. ¹⁰ The people of Judah have pretended to return to me, but they have not been sincere. This is true because I, Yahweh, have said it."

¹¹ Then Yahweh said to me, "Jeremiah, the people of Israel have turned away from

me, but what the people of Judah have done is worse. ¹² So go and tell this to the people of Israel,

'Yahweh says this to you Israelite people who have turned away from him:

I am merciful.

I will not continue to be angry with you forever.

So return to me.

¹³ But you must admit that you are guilty,

and that you have rebelled against me, Yahweh, your God,

that you have worshiped idols under big trees everywhere,

and you have not obeyed me.

You have turned away from me.

¹⁴ But you belong to me,

so come back to me, my children!

If you do, I will take you, one from each city and two from each clan,

and bring you back to Jerusalem.

¹⁵ If you do that, I will appoint for you leaders with whom I am pleased

who will guide you well because they will know and understand what pleases me.

¹⁶ And when you become very numerous in your land,

you will not need to talk about the Sacred Chest that contained the Ten Commandments.

You will not think about it,

and you will not want to make a new one.'

¹⁷ At that time people will say that my throne is in Jerusalem.

People from all nations will come there to worship me,

and they will no longer stubbornly do the evil things that they desire in their inner beings.

¹⁸ At that time you people of Israel and Judah will return from being exiled in lands to the north.

You will return to the land that I gave to your ancestors to belong to them forever.

¹⁹ You people of Israel, I wanted to accept you to be my children.

I wanted to give you this delightful land.

It is a land more desirable than the land of any other nation!

I wanted you to call me your father,

and I wanted you to never stop honoring me.

²⁰ But you have abandoned me like women who have abandoned their husbands."

That is what Yahweh said, and I told it to the people of Israel.

²¹ Then God said, "People will hear a noise on the barren hilltops.

It will be the noise made by people weeping and pleading for God to be merciful to them.

They will be admitting that they have forgotten Yahweh their God,

and that they turned away from behaving as God wanted them to.

²² You Israelite people, come back to me!

If you do that, I will cause you to never turn away from me again."

The people will reply, "We are returning to you,

because you are Yahweh, our God.

²³ When we worshiped idols on the mountains, we did not get any help.

Even though we shouted very loudly in our worship, every promise we believed turned out to be lies and only lies.

We now know that trusting in Yahweh our God is the only way Israel will be rescued!

²⁴ From the time when we were young, the shameful god Baal has taken away from us everything that our ancestors worked hard to acquire.

He has taken away their flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, their sons and their daughters.

²⁵ So, now we should lie down feeling very ashamed,

because we and our ancestors have sinned against Yahweh our God,

and we have never obeyed him."

Chapter 4

¹ Yahweh says, "You Israelite people, if you come back to anyone, it should be to me.

If you get rid of those detestable idols, if you do not go away from me again,

² and if you declare, 'Just as surely as Yahweh lives,'

when you take your oaths,

and if you are truthful, just, and righteous,

then the people in the other nations of the world

will ask me to bless them as I have blessed you,

and they will all come and honor me."

³ This is what Yahweh says to the people of Jerusalem and the other cities in Judah,

"Cause your inner beings to be ready to receive my messages

like farmers plow up hard ground in order that they can plant seed in it.

Just as farmers do not waste good seed by sowing seeds among thorny plants,

I do not want to waste my time telling you messages that you are not ready to receive.

⁴ Show that your inner beings and your minds are devoted to me.

If you do not do that, my being angry with you

because of all the sins that you have committed

will be like a fire that will be impossible to extinguish.

⁵ Declare this to all the people in Jerusalem and the rest of Judea;

blow the trumpets everywhere in the land to warn the people.

Tell them that they should flee to the cities that have high walls around them.

⁶ Shout to the people of Jerusalem and run away now. Do not delay, because I am about to bring a terrible disaster upon you

that will come from the north.

⁷ An army that has destroyed many nations will attack you

like a lion that comes out of its den to attack other animals.

The soldiers of that army are already marching toward your land.

They will destroy your cities and leave them without any people still living in them.

⁸ So, put on rough clothes

and weep and beat your breasts

to show that you are very sorry for what you have done,

because Yahweh is still very angry with us.

⁹ Yahweh declares that at the time when Yahweh punishes you, the king of Judah and all his officials will be very afraid.

The priests and the prophets will be terrified."

¹⁰ Then I replied, "Yahweh my God, you completely deceived the people by telling them that there would be peace in Jerusalem, but now our enemies are ready to slaughter us with their swords!"

¹¹ When that happens, Yahweh will say to the people of Jerusalem,

"A huge army will come to attack you.

They will not be like a gentle breeze that separates the wheat from the chaff.

They will be like a very hot wind that blows in from the desert.

¹² They will be like a strong blast that I will send.

Now I am declaring that I will punish you."

¹³ And the people in Jerusalem will say, "Our enemies are about to rush down on us; their chariots are like whirlwinds.

Their horses are faster than eagles.

It will be terrible for us!

¹⁴ You people of Jerusalem cleanse your inner beings,

in order that Yahweh will rescue you.

How long will you continue to think about doing evil deeds?

¹⁵ From the city of Dan in the far north to the hills of Ephraim a few miles north

of Jerusalem messengers are proclaiming that disasters are coming.”

¹⁶ So I said this to the people in other nations,

and also announced it in Jerusalem,

”Yahweh says that an army is coming to Jerusalem from far away;

they will shout a battle cry against the cities of Judah.

¹⁷ They will set up tents around Jerusalem like people set up temporary shelters around a field at harvest time.

That will happen because the people of Judah have rebelled against me.

¹⁸ You will be punished very severely;

it will be as though a sword has stabbed your hearts.

But you are causing those things to happen to you

because of the evil things that you have done.”

¹⁹ Then I said to myself, ”I am extremely anguished;

the pain in my inner being is very severe.

My heart beats wildly!

But I cannot remain silent

because I have heard our enemies blowing their trumpets

to announce that the battle against Judah will start immediately!

²⁰ Disasters will occur one after another

until the whole land is ruined.

Suddenly all our tents will be destroyed;

even the curtains inside the tents will be ripped apart.

²¹ How long will this battle continue?

How long will I continue to see the enemy battle flags

and hear the sound of their trumpets being blown?

²² Yahweh says: My people are very foolish!

They do not have a relationship with me.

They are like stupid children

who do not understand anything.

They very cleverly do what is wrong,

but they do not know how to do what is good.

²³ God gave me a vision in which I saw that the earth was barren and without form.

I looked at the sky,

and there was no light there.

²⁴ I looked at the mountains and hills,

and they shook and moved from side to side.

²⁵ I looked and saw that all there were no more people

and all the birds had flown away.

²⁶ I looked and saw that the fields that previously were fertile had become a desert.

The cities were all ruined;

they had all been destroyed by Yahweh because he was extremely angry.”

²⁷ This is what Yahweh is saying,

”the entire land of Judah will be ruined,

but I will not destroy it completely.

²⁸ I will do to my people what I said that I would do,

and I will not change my mind.

So when that happens, it will be as though the earth will mourn

and the sky will become very dark.

²⁹ When the people hear the sound of the enemy cavalry and archers marching,

they will be terrified as they flee from their cities.

Some of them will find places to hide in the bushes,

and others will run toward the quarries to escape being killed by their enemies.

All the cities in Judah will be abandoned;

not one person will remain in them.

³⁰ So you who will surely be destroyed, what will you do then?

Even though you have worn beautiful clothes and jewelry

and paint around your eyes,

those things will not help you,

because the people in other countries that you think love you really despise you,

and they will try to kill you.

³¹ It is as though I already hear the people in Jerusalem crying very loudly,

as a woman cries when she is giving birth to her first child;

she gasps for breath and pleads for someone to help her,

and she shouts, 'Something terrible is happening to me; they are about to murder me!'

Search in the marketplaces to find people who do what is fair,

who try to be faithful to me.

If you find even one person like that,

I will forgive the people of Jerusalem and not destroy their city.

² But when the people there swear an official oath by Yahweh's life,

they are lying."

³ So I prayed, "Yahweh, you are certainly searching for people who are faithful to you.

You punished your people, but they did not pay any attention.

You crushed them, but they ignored what you were telling them to do.

They were extremely stubborn

and refused to return to you."

⁴ Then I thought, "We cannot expect these people to act righteously, because they are poor;

they do not have any sense.

They do not know the way Yahweh wants them to conduct their lives;

they do not know what God requires them to do.

⁵ So, I will go and talk to their leaders,

because they surely know how God wants them to conduct their lives."

But they also have stopped obeying Yahweh,

and they will not allow him to lead them.

⁶ Because of that, lions will come out of the forests and kill them;

wolves from the desert will attack them;

Chapter 5

¹ Yahweh said to the people of Jerusalem, "Go up and down every street.

leopards that lurk outside their cities will maul anyone who walks outside the cities.

Those things will happen because the people have sinned very much against God

and have turned away from him very frequently.

⁷ Yahweh says, "I cannot forgive these people;

even their children have abandoned me.

When they solemnly declare something, they ask their gods to show that what they say is true.

I gave my people everything that they needed,

but they often went to the high places on the hills, where they worshiped their idols and committed adultery there.

⁸ Just like well fed male horses neigh, wanting to mate with female horses,

each of the men desires to sleep with his neighbor's wife.

⁹ Should I not punish them for this?

I will certainly get revenge on this nation whose people behave like that!

¹⁰ The people of Judah and Israel are like a vineyard.

Go along the rows in their vineyards

and get rid of most of the people,

but do not kill all of them.

These people do not belong to me,

so get rid of them,

like a gardener lops off branches from a vine.

¹¹ The people of Israel and Judah have turned away from me completely.

¹² They have lied about me and said,

'He cannot do anything to help us!

He will not punish us!

He will not send disasters on us!

We will not experience wars or famines!

¹³ What God's prophets say is nothing but wind!

They do not have messages from God!

And because they have not believed me, all of these things will happen to them!"

¹⁴ So, this is what Yahweh, the commander of the armies of angels in heaven, has said to me,

"Because my people are saying those things,

I will give you a message to tell them that will be like a fire,

and these people will be like wood that the fire will burn up completely!

¹⁵ Listen to Yahweh's declaration, you people of Israel:

I will bring the army of a distant nation to attack you.

It is a very powerful nation that has existed for a long time.

They speak a language that you do not know,

and which you will not be able to understand.

¹⁶ Their soldiers are all very strong,

and the arrows from their quivers will send many Judean men to their graves.

¹⁷ They will eat the food that you have harvested from your fields,

even though it should be your own children who eat your bread.

They will kill your flocks of sheep and herds of cattle.

They will eat your grapes and your figs.

They will also destroy your cities that have high walls around them

and kill the people with their swords.

¹⁸ But even when those things happen, I will not get rid of all of you.

¹⁹ And when the people ask, 'Why is Yahweh doing this to us?'

you will tell them, 'You rejected him and worshiped foreign gods in your own land,

so now you will become slaves of foreigners in a land that is not your land.'"

²⁰ Yahweh instructed me to proclaim this message to the people of Israel and Judah,

²¹ "Listen to this, you people who so are foolish, and you who have no understanding!

You have eyes, but you cannot see.

Yes, you have ears, but you cannot hear anything.

²² Why do you not have any awesome respect for me?

You should tremble when you are in my presence!

I, Yahweh, am the one who put a barrier along the shores

so that the waters of the ocean cannot cross it and flood the land.

The waves roll and roar, but they cannot go past that barrier.

²³ But you people are not like the waves that obey me.

You people are very stubborn and rebellious,

and have constantly turned away from me.

²⁴ You do not say to yourselves,

'Let us have an awesome respect for Yahweh our God,

the one who sends us rain at the times that we need it,

the one who causes the grain to become ripe at the harvest season.'

²⁵ It is because of the wrong things that you have done, that those good things have not happened.

It is because of the sins that you have committed that you have been prevented from receiving those blessings.

²⁶ Among my people are wicked people who hide along the roads to ambush people

like men who hunt birds put nets to catch them.

²⁷ Like a hunter has a cage full of birds that he has captured,

their homes are full of things that they have gotten by deceiving others

so now they are very rich and powerful.

²⁸ They are big and fat

because they eat rich food, and there is no limit to the evil deeds that they have done.

In court, they do not help ordinary people get judges to decide fairly for them, and they do not try to defend orphans.

They do not even want to listen to them in court.

²⁹ So I will certainly punish them for doing those things.

I, Yahweh, declare that I will certainly get revenge on their nation.

³⁰ Very appalling things are happening in this country:

³¹ Prophets speak only lies

and priests rule by their own authority,
yet you people like that!

But when you start to experience disasters,
what will you do?

Chapter 6

¹ You people in Jerusalem who are from
the tribe of Benjamin,

flee from this city!

Blow the trumpets in the city of Tekoa
south of Jerusalem!

Send up a smoke signal in the city of
Beth Hakerem

to warn the people of the coming
danger!

A powerful army will come against you
from the north,

and they will cause great destruction.

² Jerusalem is like a beautiful woman,
but it will soon be destroyed.

³ Enemy kings, the shepherds of foreign
people groups, will come with their
armies and set up their tents around the
city,

and each king will choose a part of
the city for his soldiers to destroy as shepherds
divide their pastures for their flocks
of sheep.

⁴ The kings will tell their troops,

'Make the sacrifices necessary to get
ready for battle.

We should attack them before noon-
time,

but even if we arrive there late in the
afternoon,

⁵ we will attack them at night

and tear down their fortresses.'"

⁶ Yahweh, the commander of the armies
of angels in heaven, says this,

"I will command those soldiers to cut
down the trees outside Jerusalem

and to build ramps up to the top of
the city walls!

This city must be punished

because everyone there continually
oppresses others.

⁷ Its people keep doing wicked deeds,

just as a well keeps producing water.

The noise from people doing violent and
destructive actions is heard everywhere.

I continually see people who are suffering
and wounded.

⁸ Listen to what I am warning you, you
people of Jerusalem,

because if you do not listen, I will
reject you

and cause your land to become desolate,
a land where no one lives."

⁹ Yahweh, the commander of the angel
armies, says this,

"Your enemies will cause your country
to become as desolate as a vineyard from
which all the grapes have been completely
stripped from the vines.

Their soldiers will seize the possessions
of those who remain in Israel after the others
have been exiled

like farmers go to the vines again to
pick any grapes that were left.

¹⁰ Who can I, Jeremiah, speak to?
Who would listen to me, even if I spoke to
them?

The ears of the Israelite people are
unable to hear what I have to tell them.

See! the message Yahweh gave me to tell them is offensive to them.

When they hear the message of Yahweh, they hate what I tell them!"

¹¹ After hearing this I became very angry,

as Yahweh is angry, and I could not hold myself back any longer.

So Yahweh said to me,

"Tell the children in the streets and the young men who gather together.

Tell the men and their wives;

tell the very old people, also.

¹² Tell the men that I will give their houses to their enemies,

and I will give their property and their wives to them, also,

when I punish the people who live in this land!

¹³ Everyone is trying to get money by tricking others,

from the the least important people to the most important people.

Even my prophets and priests, they all lie to get what they want.

¹⁴ They act as though the sins of my people are like small wounds that they can easily treat.

They tell the people that everything will go well with them, but that is not true; things will not go well with them.

¹⁵ They should be ashamed about the disgusting things that they do, but they are not ashamed at all. They do not even know how to blush.

So, they also will be among those who will be killed. They will be destroyed when I punish them."

¹⁶ This is also what Yahweh said to the Israelite people,

"Stand at the crossroads and look at the people who pass by.

Ask them what was the good behavior that their ancestors had long ago.

And when they tell you, behave that way.

If you do that, you will find rest for yourselves.

But you said that you did not want to do that!

¹⁷ I sent my prophets who were like watchmen.

They told you to listen carefully when the trumpets blow to warn you that your enemies are approaching,

but you did not want to listen.

¹⁸ Therefore, you people in the other nations, listen to this:

Pay attention to what is going to happen to the Israelite people.

¹⁹ Listen, all of you!

I am going to cause disasters to happen to the Israelite people.

That is what will happen to them because they have refused to listen to what I told them.

They have refused to obey my laws.

²⁰ You Israelite people, when you burn frankincense that came from Sheba

and when you offer to me sweet-smelling anointing oil that came from far away,

I will not be pleased with your sacrifices.

I will not accept the sacrifices that are completely burned on the altar;

I am not pleased with any of your sacrifices.

²¹ Therefore, I will put obstacles on the roads on which my people will travel.

Men and their sons and people's neighbors and friends will stumble over those obstacles and fall down;

everyone will die."

²² Yahweh also says this,

"You will see a huge army marching toward you from the north.

An army of a great nation very far away is preparing to attack you.

²³ They have bows and arrows and spears;

they are very cruel, and do not act mercifully to anyone.

As they ride along on their horses,

the horses' feet sound like the roaring of the ocean waves;

they are riding in battle formation

to attack you people of Jerusalem."

²⁴ The people of Jerusalem say to each other,

"We have heard reports about the enemy;

so we are very frightened, with the result that we are weak.

We are very afraid, and worried,

like women who are about to give birth to babies.

²⁵ So, do not go out into the fields! Do not go on the roads,

because the enemy soldiers have swords and they are everywhere;

they are coming from all directions, and we are extremely afraid."

²⁶ So I, Jeremiah, say to you,

"My dear people, put on rough clothes and sit in ashes

to show how much you are grieving.

Mourn loudly and cry very much,

as a mother would cry when her only son has died.

For your enemies are very near,

and they are going to destroy everything."

²⁷ Then Yahweh said to me,

"Jeremiah, I have caused you to become like someone who heats metal very hot to completely burn the impurities.

You will examine my people's behavior.

²⁸ You will find out that they are very stubborn rebels:

they are always slandering others.

Their inner beings are as hard as bronze or iron;

they all continually deceive others.

²⁹ A metalworker causes the bellows to blow very hard to make the fire very hot to completely burn up the impurities.

But just as a fire does not cause all the waste material to run off,

it is impossible to separate the people from their wicked deeds.

³⁰ I, Yahweh, have rejected them;

I say that they are like worthless silver."

Chapter 7

¹ Yahweh gave me another message. He said to me, ² "Go to the entrance of my house and give this message to the people: You people of Judah, who worship here, listen to this message from Yahweh. ³ This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says to you: 'If you improve your ways and start doing what is right, I will allow you to remain living in your land. ⁴ But some people are repeatedly

saying to you, 'The temple of Yahweh is here, so we will be safe; he will not allow us and the temple to be destroyed.' But do not pay attention to what they say, because they are deceiving you. ⁵ I will act mercifully to you only if you change your behavior and stop doing evil things, and if you start to act fairly toward others, ⁶ and if you stop oppressing foreigners who live in your country, and orphans and widows, and if you stop murdering people and worshiping foreign gods. ⁷ If you do what I have told you, I will allow you to stay in this land that I promised to your ancestors long ago that it would belong to them and their descendants forever.

⁸ People are repeatedly telling you, 'The temple is here, so we are safe,' and you are trusting that what they are saying is true. But those people are deceiving you; what they say is worthless. ⁹ You think that you can steal things, murder people, commit adultery, tell lies in court, and worship Baal and all those other gods that you did not know about previously. ¹⁰ Then you think you can come here and stand in front of this temple, which is my temple, and say 'Nothing bad will happen to us!,' while you continue to do all those disgusting things. ¹¹ Perhaps you do not know that you have made this temple, which is my temple, to become like a cave where thieves hide. But I, Yahweh, am telling you that I have seen all these things!

¹² Long ago I put my sacred tent in the district of Shiloh, to be a place where people would worship me. Think about how I destroyed it because my people, the Israelite people, did many wicked things there. ¹³ And while you were continually doing those wicked things, I told you about it many times, but you refused to listen. I called out to you, but you refused to answer me. ¹⁴ Therefore, just as I de-

stroyed Shiloh, I will now destroy this temple that was built for people to worship me, this temple that you trust in, in this place that I gave to you and your ancestors. ¹⁵ And I will expel you from this land and send you to other countries far away from me, just as I did to your relatives, the people of Israel."

¹⁶ Yahweh said to me, "Jeremiah, do not pray for these people any longer. Do not call out on their behalf or plead for me to help them, because I will not pay any attention to you. ¹⁷ Do you see the wicked things that they are doing in the streets of Jerusalem and in the other towns in Judah? ¹⁸ The children gather firewood and their fathers make fires on the altars to burn sacrifices. The women knead dough to make cakes to offer to their goddess Asherah who is called the Queen of Heaven. And on their altars they pour out offerings of wine to their other idols. All of those things cause me to become extremely angry! ¹⁹ But I am not the one whom they are hurting; they are really hurting themselves by doing these things for which they should be very ashamed!"

²⁰ So Yahweh the Lord says this: "Because I am extremely angry with what happens at this place, I will punish these people severely; my being very angry will be like a fire that will not be extinguished, and I will destroy the people, their animals, their fruit trees, and their crops."

²¹ Therefore, this is what Yahweh, commander of the armies of angels, the God of Israel, says: "Take away your offerings that you bring to burn completely on your altars and your other sacrifices; do not give them to me; eat them yourselves! ²² When I led your ancestors out of Egypt, it was not offerings to be completely burned on the altar or other sacrifices that I wanted from them. ²³ What I told them was, 'Obey me; if you do that, I

will be your God and you will be my people. If you do the things that I want you to do, everything will go well for you.’ ²⁴ But your ancestors would not pay any attention to me. They continued to do the evil things that they wanted to do, everything that in their stubborn inner beings they desired to do. Instead of coming closer to me, they went further away from me. ²⁵ From the day that your ancestors left Egypt until now, I have continued to send my prophets to you repeatedly. ²⁶ But you, my people, have not listened to me or paid attention to what I said; you have been stubborn, and you have done more sinful things than your ancestors did.”

²⁷ Then Yahweh said to me, “When you tell all this to my people, they will not listen to you. When you call to them, they will not answer. ²⁸ Say to them, ‘You people of Judah have not obeyed Yahweh, your God; you have not accepted it when he tried to correct you. No one among you is truthful; you do not say anything that is true; you speak only lies.’

²⁹ So, tell them to cut off their hair to show that they are mourning; tell them to go up into the barren hills and sing a sad funeral song,

Because I have completely rejected this generation of people who have made me angry.” ³⁰ Yahweh says this: “The people of Judah have done many things that I say are evil. They have set up their disgusting idols in my temple, causing it to become an unacceptable place to worship me. ³¹ They have built altars at Topheth in Hinnom Valley outside Jerusalem, and they sacrifice their sons and daughters on those altars. I never commanded them to do that; it was not even in my thoughts! ³² So they should beware! There will be a time when that place will no longer be called Topheth or the Hinnom Valley; instead, it will be called the Valley of Slaugh-

ter. There will be a huge number of people who will be buried there, with the result that there will be no space to bury more bodies. ³³ The corpses of my people that are not buried and are left on the ground will be eaten by vultures and wild animals, and there will be no one to shoo them away. ³⁴ There will be no one singing and laughing anymore in the streets of Jerusalem; there will be no more joyful voices of bridegrooms and brides in Judah, because the land will be completely destroyed.”

Chapter 8

¹ Yahweh says, “After your enemies have destroyed you, then they will break open the graves of your kings and other officials who lived in Judah, and the graves of your priests and prophets and other people who lived there. ² They will take out their bones from their graves and dishonor them by scattering them on the ground under the sun and the moon and the stars—those are the gods which my people loved and served and worshiped. No one will gather up their bones and bury them again; they will remain scattered on the ground like dung. ³ And all the people of this wicked nation who are still alive and whom I have exiled to other countries will say, ‘We would prefer to die than to continue to stay alive here in these countries.’ That will be true because I, Yahweh, have said it.”

⁴ Yahweh said to me, “Jeremiah, tell the people that this is what I, Yahweh, am saying to them: ‘When people fall down, they get up again, do they not?’

When people are going along a road and find out that they are walking on the wrong road, they go back and find the correct road, do they not ?

⁵ Yes, they do, so why do these people of Judah continue trusting in those idols that have deceived them?

They continue turning away from me and betray my covenant, even though I have warned them of what will happen.

⁶ I have listened carefully to what they say, but they do not say what they should say. Not one of them is sorry for having sinned.

No one says, "I have done wicked things." They are sinning and doing what they want to;

Charging into sinful behavior with the excitement of a horse that is running into a battle.

⁷ Even the stork knows when the seasons change,

and the dove, the swallow, and the crane understanding the time of their migration!

But my people do not know what I, Yahweh, require them to do.

⁸ Your men who teach you the laws that Moses wrote have been saying false things about those laws.

So, why do they continue saying, "We are very wise because we have the laws of Yahweh"?

⁹ Those teachers, who think that they are wise, will be ashamed and dismayed when they are taken to other countries by their enemies

Because they sinned by rejecting what I told them. Truly, they were not very wise to do that!

¹⁰ So, I will give their wives to other men; I will give their fields to the enemy soldiers who conquer them.

All the people, including those who are least important and those who are most

important, they all are trying to get money by tricking others

Even my prophets and priests, they all lie to get what they want.

¹¹ They act as though the sins of my people are like small wounds that they can easily treat.

They tell the people that everything will go well with them, but that is not true; things will not go well with them.

¹² They should be ashamed when they do disgusting things, but they do not even know how to show on their faces that they are ashamed about their sins.

So, they also will be among those who will be killed. They will be destroyed when I punish them.

¹³ I will allow their enemies to take away the figs and grapes that the people would have harvested from their fields. Their fruit trees will all wither.

They will not receive all the blessings that I prepared for them. This will certainly happen because I, Yahweh, have said it."

¹⁴ Then the people will say, "Why should we wait here in these small towns? We should go to the cities that have high walls around them, but even if we do that we will be killed there,

Because Yahweh our God has decided that we must be destroyed; it is as though he has given us a cup of poison to drink, because we sinned against him.

¹⁵ We hoped that things would go well for us, but things have not gone well.

We hoped that we would recover and be strong again, but only things that terrify us are happening to us.

¹⁶ People far north in the Israelite city of Dan can already hear the snorting of the

horses of those who are preparing to attack us. It is as though the entire land is shaking as their army approaches;

they are coming to destroy our land and everything in it, the people and the cities.”

¹⁷ Yahweh says, “I will send those enemy soldiers to Judah, and they will be like poisonous snakes among you.

No one will be able to stop them from attacking you; they will attack you like snakes do, and kill you.”

¹⁸ My grief for the people of Judah has overwhelmed any sense of happiness. I am very sad in my inner being.

¹⁹ Throughout our land, the people ask, “Has Yahweh abandoned Jerusalem?

Is he, our city’s king, no longer there?” Yahweh replies, “If they want me to be in Jerusalem, why do the people worship idols and foreign gods?”

²⁰ The people say, “The harvest season is finished, the summer has ended, but Yahweh still has not rescued us from our enemies.”

²¹ I cry because my people have been crushed. I mourn, and I am completely dismayed.

²² I ask, “Surely there is medicinal balm in the region of Gilead! Surely there are doctors there!”

But my people have been badly wounded in their spirits, and nothing can heal them.

Chapter 9

¹ “I wish that my head could produce as many tears as water from a spring, and that my eyes were like a fountain of tears,

since I cry night and day for all of my people who have been killed by their enemies.

² I wish that I could leave my people and forget them, and go and live in a shack in the desert,

because they have not remained faithful to Yahweh; they are a mob of people who deceive others.

³ They use their tongues to tell lies just as people shoot arrows with bows.

They are powerful, but not because they are faithful, but they go about doing wicked things. “They do not know me,” Yahweh says.

⁴ Do not trust your neighbors and even your brothers! They all are as deceitful as Jacob was.

They slander each other and tell lies about each other.

⁵ They deceive their friends and never tell the truth.

They lie continually and, because of that, they have become skilled liars; they do one oppressive deed after another until they grow tired from sinning so much.

⁶ Jeremiah, everyone living around you is a deceiver. Not one of them will admit that I am God.

⁷ Therefore I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, say this:

Listen carefully to what I say: I will test my people, like a metalworker puts metal in a hot fire to completely burn out the impure bits.

Because of all the evil things that my people have done, there is absolutely nothing else that I can do.

⁸ What they say injures people like poisoned arrows do.

They say to their neighbors, 'I hope things will go well for you,' while they are planning to kill them.

⁹ Should I not punish them for doing that?

Yes, I should certainly get revenge on the people of a nation that does things like that!"

¹⁰ So, I will weep and wail for the people who live in the mountains and in the pastures,

because those areas will be desolate, and no one will live there.

There will be no cattle there to call to each other,

and all the birds and wild animals will have fled to other places.

¹¹ Yahweh also says, "I will cause Jerusalem to become a heap of ruins,

and only jackals will live there.

I will destroy the towns of Judah, with the result that they will be completely deserted;

no people will live there."

¹² I said, "Only people who are very wise can understand these things.

Only those who have been taught by Yahweh can explain these things to others.

The wise people are the only ones who can explain why the land will be completely ruined

with the result that everyone will be afraid to travel through it."

¹³ Yahweh replied, "These things will happen because my people have rejected my laws which I gave to them; they have not obeyed me or my instructions. ¹⁴ Instead, they have stubbornly done the things that they wanted in their inner beings to do.

They have worshiped the idols that represent the god Baal, which is what their ancestors did. ¹⁵ So now listen to what I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God of the Israelites, say: What I will do will be like giving these people bitter things to eat and poison to drink: ¹⁶ I will scatter them to many nations which neither they nor their ancestors have known anything about; I will enable their enemies to strike them with swords until I have destroyed them."

¹⁷ This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says:

"Think about what is happening,

then summon those women who mourn when someone has died.

¹⁸ Tell them to come quickly and start to wail,

with the result that tears will stream down from your eyes.

¹⁹ Listen to the people of Jerusalem calling out, saying,

'We have been ruined!

We have experienced a terrible disaster!

Now we are very ashamed,

because our houses have been destroyed by our enemies, and we are being forced to leave our land.'

²⁰ You women, listen to what Yahweh says.

Pay attention to his words.

Teach your daughters to wail.

Teach each other how to sing funeral songs.

²¹ You must learn to sing funeral songs because people will be dying in your houses and in palaces.

There will be no more children playing in the streets,

there will be no more young men gathering in the city squares.

²² There will be corpses scattered across the fields like dung;

their dead bodies will lie there like grain that has been cut by reapers,

and there will be no one still alive to bury them.

²³ Yahweh says this:

"Wise men should not boast about their being wise,

strong men should not boast about their being strong;

and rich people should not boast about their being rich.

²⁴ Instead, those who want to boast should boast about their knowing me

and about understanding that I am Yahweh,

that I am kind and just and righteous,

that I faithfully love people,

and that I am delighted with people who act that way.

²⁵⁻²⁶ There will be a time when I will punish all those people who have changed their bodies by circumcising them but who have not changed their inner beings: The Egyptian, the Moab, of Edom, and of the Ammon people groups, all those who live close to desert areas far from Judah. I will even punish the people of Israel because they are only circumcised on the outside, and physically, and not on the inside, in their inner self."

Chapter 10

¹ You people of Israel, listen to what Yah-

weh says:

² "Do not act like the people of other nations act, and do not be terrified by strange things that you see in the sky,

even though they cause the people of other nations to be terrified.

³ The customs of the people of other nations are worthless. For example, they cut down a tree in the forest.

Then a skilled worker cuts a section of it and uses his chisel to carve an idol from that section.

⁴ Then people decorate the idol with silver and gold.

Then they fasten it securely with nails in order that it will not topple over.

⁵ Then the idol stands there like a scarecrow in a field of cucumbers.

It cannot speak,

and people must carry it,

because it cannot walk.

Do not be afraid of idols,

because they cannot harm anyone,

and they cannot do anything good to help anyone."

⁶ Yahweh, there is no one like you.

You are great, and you are very powerful.

⁷ You are the king of all the nations!

Everyone should revere you,

because that is what you deserve.

Among all the wise people on the earth and in all the kingdoms where they live,

there is no one like you.

⁸ Those people who think that they are very wise are stupid and foolish.

The idols that they worship are only made of wood!

Those idols certainly cannot teach them anything.

⁹ People hammer silver from Tarshish and gold from Uphaz into sheets,

and then they give those sheets of silver and gold to skilled workers to cover the idols.

Then they put on those idols expensive purple robes

that are made by skilled workers.

¹⁰ But Yahweh is the only true God;

he is the all-powerful God,

the king who rules forever.

When he is angry, all the earth shakes;

and the people of the nations cannot endure what he does when he is angry with them.

¹¹ You Israelite people, tell this to those people: "Those idols did not make the sky and the earth, and they will disappear from the earth."

¹² But Yahweh made the earth by his power;

he made firm ground to stand on by his wisdom

and stretched out the sky by his understanding.

¹³ When he speaks loudly, there is thunder in the sky;

he causes clouds to form over every part of the earth.

He sends lightning with the rain

and releases the winds from his storehouses.

¹⁴ People are as senseless as animals and know nothing of what God desires!

those who make idols are always disappointed

because their idols do nothing for them.

The images that they make are not real gods;

they are lifeless.

¹⁵ Idols are worthless; they are just objects that make a mockery of the true God;

there will be a time when they all will be destroyed.

¹⁶ But the God whom we Israelites worship is not like those idols;

he is the one who created everything that exists;

we, the tribe of Israel, belong to him;

he is the commander of the angel armies.

¹⁷ Yahweh says this to the people of Jerusalem:

"The army of your enemies surrounds your city,

so gather up your possessions and prepare to leave the city.

¹⁸ I will soon throw you out of this land and cause you to experience great troubles,

with the result that you will begin to think of me again."

¹⁹ The people replied, "It is as though we have been badly wounded,

and we are very grieved;

It is as though we have a very serious illness,

and we must endure the pain.

²⁰ It is as though our great tent is destroyed;

the ropes that held it up have been cut;

our children have gone away from us and will not return;

there are no people left to rebuild our great tent.

²¹ Our leaders have become just like animals;

they no longer ask Yahweh to guide them,

so they will no longer prosper,

and all those over whom they rule will be scattered.

²² Listen! Our enemies' armies in the north are making a very great noise

as they march toward us.

The towns in Judah will be destroyed,

and they will become a place where jackals live."

²³ Yahweh, I know that no person controls what will happen to him;

no one is able to direct the events that he will experience.

²⁴ So correct us, but do it gently.

Do not correct us when you are angry,

because we would die if you did that.

²⁵ Punish all the nations whose people do not acknowledge that you are God;

punish all the nations whose people do not worship you,

because they are completely destroying us people of Israel

and they are causing our land to soon be only a desert.

of Jerusalem and the other cities in Judah. Then tell that agreement to them again.

³ Then tell them that I, Yahweh, the God whom the Israelite people worship, said that I will curse everyone who does not obey what was written in that agreement that I made with them. ⁴ It is the same agreement that I made with their ancestors when I brought them out of Egypt. What happened to them in Egypt was terrible; it was as though they were living in a hot furnace. When I brought them out of Egypt, I told them to obey me, and to do everything that I had commanded them to do. I also told them that if they obeyed me, they would be my people and I would be their God. ⁵ Now tell these people that if they obey me, I will do what I promised to do for their ancestors. I will enable them to continue living in this very fertile land in which they now live."

I replied, "Yahweh, I trust you that what you have said will happen."

⁶ Then Yahweh said to me, "Go into the streets of Jerusalem and to the other cities in Judah. Proclaim my message to the people. Tell them to listen to the agreement that I made with their ancestors and to obey it. ⁷ When I brought their ancestors out of Egypt, I solemnly pleaded with them many times to obey me, and I am still pleading with them now. ⁸ But they did not obey me or even pay any attention to me. Everyone continued to be stubborn and to do the evil things that they wanted to do. I commanded them to do what was written in the agreement, but they refused. So I punished them in all the ways that I promised that I would."

⁹ Then Yahweh said to me, "The people of Jerusalem and the other cities in Judah are rebelling against me. ¹⁰ Their ancestors refused to do what I told them to do, and now these people have returned to committing the sins that their ancestors com-

Chapter 11

¹ This is another message that Yahweh told me: ² "Listen to the agreement that I made with the ancestors of the people

mitted. They are worshiping other gods. The people of Israel disobeyed the agreement that I made with their ancestors, and now the people of Judah have done the same thing. ¹¹ So now I, Yahweh, am warning them that I will cause disasters to come to them, and they will not escape. And when they call out for me to help them, I will not pay attention. ¹² When that happens, the people in Jerusalem and other cities in Judah will offer sacrifices and burn incense to their gods and ask for their help, but those gods will not be able to save them when those disasters come to them. ¹³ There are now as many gods in Judah as there are towns in Judah; the people of Jerusalem have erected as many altars to burn incense to those gods as there are streets in Jerusalem.

¹⁴ Jeremiah, do not pray for these people, and do not plead with me to rescue them. If you plead with me, I will not pay attention; and if they call out to me for help when they are in distress, I will not listen to them."

¹⁵ Then Yahweh said,

"The people of Judah whom I love certainly no longer have a right to come to my temple,

because they continually do many evil things.

They think that continually making sacrifices of meat to me certainly will protect them from disasters,

with the result that they will be able to rejoice.

¹⁶ I previously said that they were like an olive tree full of green leaves

with a lot of good olives on it,

but now I will send their enemies to attack them furiously;

it is as though I will break off their branches, and their city will be destroyed

by fire. ¹⁷ It is as though the people of Judah and Israel were a beautiful olive tree that I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, planted,

but now, by burning incense to their god Baal, they have caused me to become very angry.

So now I have decided to destroy them."

¹⁸ Yahweh revealed to me that my enemies were planning to kill me. ¹⁹ Before he did that, I was like a lamb that was being led away to be slaughtered; I did not know what they were planning to do. I did not know that they were saying, "Let us get rid of this tree and its fruit," so I did not know that they intended to kill me, in order that no one would remember me.

²⁰ Then I prayed, "Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, you judge people justly,

and you examine everything that we are thinking.

Allow me to watch you getting revenge on the people who want to kill me,

because I trust that you will do for me what is right."

²¹ It was the men of my own town, Anathoth, who wanted to kill me, and they told me that they would kill me if I did not stop prophesying what Yahweh told me to say. ²² So Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, said about them, "I will punish them. Their young men will be killed in wars, and their children will die because they have no food. ²³ I have set a time when I will bring disasters to the people of Anathoth, and when that happens, none of them will remain alive."

Chapter 12

¹ Yahweh, whenever I tell you that I am unhappy about what is happening to me, you always act justly.

So now allow me to ask about one more thing that I do not understand:

Why are wicked people often very prosperous?

Why do things go very well for dishonest people?

² You allow them to prosper like trees that grow tall and bear a lot of fruit.

They always say good things about you, but in their inner beings, they are really far from you.

³ But Yahweh, you know me very well. You see what I do and you are able to know what I am thinking.

Set them apart like we separate the sheep out of the herd so that on the day of slaughter they will be butchered.

⁴ This land is becoming very dry and even the grass is withering.

Even the wild animals and the birds have all died

because the people who live in this land are very wicked.

All this has happened because the people have said,

“Yahweh does not know what has happened to us!”

⁵ Then to show me that I needed to be prepared to endure even greater difficulties, Yahweh said to me,

“It is as though you have become exhausted from racing against men;

so how will you be able to race against horses?

If you only prepare to run on open ground,

what will happen to you when you are running through the thick foliage near the Jordan River?

⁶ Already your brothers and other members of your own family oppose you.

They plot against you and they say bad things about you.

So even if they say nice things about you, do not trust them!

⁷ I have abandoned my Israelite people, the people whom I chose to belong to me.

I have allowed their enemies to conquer the people whom I love.

⁸ My people have become to me like a lion in the forest.

It is as though they roar at me like a lion, so now I hate them.

⁹ My chosen people have become like speckled birds

that are surrounded by vultures waiting to eat their flesh.

Tell all the wild animals to come

and eat the flesh until they are full.

¹⁰ Many rulers from other countries have come with their armies and devastated my people

whom I care for like a farmer takes care of his vineyard.

They have caused my beautiful land to become a barren desert where no one lives.

¹¹ They have caused it to become completely empty;

So now it is as though I am mourning the death of a loved one.

The whole land is desolate,
and no one worries about it.

¹² The soldiers of our enemies have marched across all the barren hilltops.

But I, Yahweh, am using those armies to punish your land from one end to the other,

and no one will escape.

¹³ It is as though my people planted wheat,

but now they are harvesting thorns.

They have become very tired because of much hard work,

but they have gained nothing from all that work.

They will be very disappointed because their harvests will be very small,

and that will happen because I, Yahweh, am extremely angry with them."

¹⁴ This is also what Yahweh said to me: "I will punish the evil nearby nations that have been trying to take away the land that I gave to my Israelite people. I will force them to leave their own lands. But I will throw the people of Judah out of their lands, also. ¹⁵ But later I will act mercifully toward those nations again, and I will bring them back to their own lands again. Each clan will come back to its own land. ¹⁶ And if the people of the other nations whose armies have invaded Israel learn the religious customs of my people, and if they learn that I am listening when they solemnly promise that they will do something, like they taught my people to believe that their god Baal was listening when they made solemn promises,

I will cause them to become prosperous, and they also will be my people. ¹⁷ But I will expel any nation whose people refuse to obey me, and I will destroy that nation and its people. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it."

Chapter 13

¹ One day Yahweh said to me, "Go and buy a linen waistcloth. Put it on, but do not wash it." ² So I bought a very nice waistcloth, which is what Yahweh told me to do, and I put it on.

³ Then later Yahweh gave me another message. ⁴ He said, "Go to the Euphrates River and hide your waistcloth in a crevice in the rocks." ⁵ So I went to the river and did what Yahweh told me to do.

⁶ A long time later, Yahweh said to me, "Go back to the river and get the waistcloth that I told you to hide there." ⁷ So I went to the Euphrates River and dug out the waistcloth from the crevice in which I had hidden it. But it was ruined, and useless.

⁸ Then Yahweh gave me this message: ⁹ "What happened to your waistcloth shows that I will destroy the things that the people of Jerusalem and other places in Judah are very proud of. ¹⁰ Those wicked people refuse to pay attention to what I say. They stubbornly do just what they desire to do; they worship other gods. Therefore, they will become completely useless, like your waistcloth. ¹¹ Just like a waistcloth clings closely to a man's waist, I wanted the people of Israel and Judah to cling closely to me. I wanted them to be my people, people who would praise me and honor me. But they would not pay attention to me.

¹² So, tell this to them: 'Yahweh, the God whom you Israelite people worship, says that every leather wineskin should

be filled with wine.’ And when you tell that to them, they will reply, ‘Of course we know that all wineskins should be filled with wine!’ ¹³ And then you must tell them, ‘No, that is not what Yahweh means. What he said means that he will cause this land to be filled with people who are drunk. That will include all of you—the king who sits on the throne that King David previously sat on, the priests and the prophets, and even the common people of Jerusalem.’ ¹⁴ He is saying, ‘I will cause a drunken brawl among you. Even parents will brawl with their children. I will not pity you or act mercifully toward you at all; pitying you will not prevent me from getting rid of you.’”

¹⁵ You people of Judah, pay very careful attention.

Do not be proud, because Yahweh has spoken to you.

¹⁶ It is as though he is ready to bring darkness on you

and to cause you to stumble and fall as you walk on the hills when it is becoming dark.

So praise Yahweh your God before that happens.

If you do not do that, you will look for light,

but all you will see is darkness and gloom.

¹⁷ And if you still refuse to heed what he says,

what will happen to you because of your being proud will cause me to cry when I am alone.

My eyes will be filled with tears

because you, Yahweh’s people,

whom he takes care of like a shepherd takes care of his flock,

will all be captured by your enemies and taken to other countries.

¹⁸ You people of Judah, say to the king and to his mother,

”Come down from sitting on your thrones

and humbly sit in the dirt,

because your enemies will soon snatch from your heads your glorious crowns.”

¹⁹ The towns in the southern Judean wilderness will be surrounded by your enemies,

and no one will be able to get through their lines to rescue the people in those towns.

You people of Judah will be captured and taken away;

you will all be exiled.

²⁰ You leaders of Jerusalem, open your eyes and look:

the enemy armies are ready to march down from the north.

When that happens, what will happen to the people of Judah who are like a beautiful flock of sheep,

people that he gave to you to take care of?

²¹ What will you say when Yahweh appoints people from other countries to rule over you,

people who you mistakenly thought were your friends?

You will suffer very much pain,

like a woman who is about to give birth to a baby.

²² You will ask yourselves, “Why is this happening to us?”

I will reply that it is because of your many sins.

That is why soldiers of the invading armies will lift up the skirts of your women and rape them.

²³ A man from Ethiopia certainly cannot change the color of his black skin,

and a leopard certainly cannot change its spots.

Similarly, you cannot start doing what is good,

because you have always done what is evil.

²⁴ Yahweh says, "I will scatter you like chaff

that is blown away by the wind from the desert.

²⁵ That is what is certainly going to happen to you,

the things that I have determined will happen to you,

because you have forgotten me,

and you are trusting in false gods.

²⁶ It is as though I myself will pull your skirts up over your faces

and cause you to be very ashamed because everyone will be able to see your private parts.

²⁷ I have seen that you act like men who are eager to commit adultery;

you are like male horses that whinny when they desire to mate with a female horse.

I have seen that you worship disgusting idols in the fields and on the hills.

You people of Jerusalem, terrible things will happen to you because you will not be obedient and live a good life!

How long will it be until you are acceptable to me again?"

Chapter 14

¹ After there had been no rain in Judah for a long time, Yahweh gave Jeremiah this message:

² The people in Judah are very distressed;

people are sitting on the ground and mourning;

in all of Jerusalem people are crying loudly.

³ The rich people send their servants to wells to get water,

but all the wells are dry.

The servants return with empty pitchers;

they cover their heads

because they are ashamed and humiliated.

⁴ The ground is extremely dry and cracked open

because there has been no rain.

The farmers are ashamed that they cannot raise a crop,

so they also cover their heads.

⁵ Even the does abandon their newborn babies,

because there is no grass in the fields for them to eat.

⁶ The wild donkeys stand on the barren hills,

panting like thirsty jackals.

They become blind

because there is no grass to eat.

⁷ The people say, "Yahweh, if we have turned away from you and sinned many times,

we now know that we are being punished because of our sins!

Please help us

in order that everyone can see that you are very great and keep your promises.

⁸ You are the one whom we Israelites confidently expect to do good things for us when we have many troubles.

So, why do you not help us?

You act as though you are a stranger in our land,

like you are someone who is staying here for only one night.

⁹ Are you also surprised about the terrible things that are happening to us?

Why do you act like you are unable to save anyone, even though you are a strong warrior?

Yahweh, you are here among us,

and others know that we are your people,

so do not abandon us!"

¹⁰ And this is what Yahweh says to those people:

"You love to wander away from me;

you run from one idol to another.

Therefore, now I will no longer accept you,

and I will punish you for your sins."

¹¹ Then Yahweh said to me, "Do not pray for these people anymore. ¹² When they fast, I will not pay any attention. When they bring to me their offerings of animals to be completely burned on the altar and their offerings of flour, I will not accept them. Instead, I will get rid of them by wars, by famines, and by diseases."

¹³ Then I replied to him, "Yahweh my God, their prophets are telling the people that they will not experience wars or famines. They are telling the people that you will

surely allow us to have peace in our land for many years."

¹⁴ Yahweh replied to me, "Those prophets say that they are speaking what I tell them to say, but they are telling lies. I did not send them, so what they are saying is false. They say that they have received visions from me, and that they are telling things that I have revealed to them, but that is not true. They are saying foolish things that they have only thought of themselves. ¹⁵ So this is what I say about those prophets who are predicting what will happen, saying that I told them those things: They are saying that we Israelites will not die from wars or famines, but I did not send those prophets. And they themselves will die from wars or from famines. ¹⁶ And the people to whom they are predicting these things, they and their wives and their sons and their daughters, will also die from wars or from famines. Their corpses will be thrown into the streets of Jerusalem, and there will not be anyone to bury them. I will punish them like they deserve to be punished.

¹⁷ So, Jeremiah, tell this to them about yourself:

'Day and night my eyes are full of tears.

I cannot stop crying.

I cry for my people,

who are very precious to me, as if they were my daughters.

I cry for them because they have been severely wounded;

and they will not recover or heal from this severe wound.

¹⁸ If I go out into the fields,

I see corpses of people who have been slaughtered by our enemies.

If I walk along the streets of the city,

I see corpses of people who died from hunger.

The prophets and the priests travel through the land, preaching to people,

but they do not know what they are doing .”

¹⁹ Then I prayed this:

”Yahweh, have you completely rejected the people of Judah?

Do you really despise the people of Jerusalem?

Why have you wounded us very badly,

with the result that we will never be healed?

We hoped that we would have peace,

but there was no peace.

We hoped that there would be a time when we would be healed,

but all that we received were things that terrified us.

²⁰ Yahweh, we admit that we are wicked people,

and that our ancestors also did many wicked things.

We have all sinned against you.

²¹ But Yahweh, in order that we may honor you,

do not despise us.

Do not dishonor the city where your glorious throne is.

Please do not forget us,

and do not break your agreement with us.

²² Those idols that have been brought from other nations certainly cannot bring rain to us,

and the sky certainly cannot cause rain to fall.

Yahweh our God, you are the only one who can do things like that.

So we will confidently expect you to help us.”

Chapter 15

¹ Then Yahweh said this to me: ”Even if Moses and Samuel could come back from their graves and stand in front of me and plead with me for these Israelite people, I would not act mercifully toward these people. I would tell you to send them away from me. Cause them to leave me! ² And if they ask you, ‘Where shall we go?’, tell them, ”This is what Yahweh says:

The ones that I say must die, will die:

The ones that I say must die in wars, will die in wars.

The ones that I say must die from hunger, will die from hunger.

The ones that I say must be captured and taken to other countries, will be captured and taken to other countries.

³ I will send four things that will get rid of them: I will send enemy soldiers using swords to kill them. I will send wild dogs to drag away their corpses. I will send vultures to eat their corpses. And I will send other wild animals to eat what remains of their corpses. ⁴ Because of the wicked things that King Manasseh did in Jerusalem, I will cause people in all the kingdoms of the earth to be horrified concerning what will happen in Judah to my people.

⁵ You people of Jerusalem, no one will feel sorry for you.

No one will weep for you.

No one will wish that you would not be hurt.

⁶ You people have abandoned me;
you have continued to walk away
from me.

So, I will lift up my fist to smash you;
I am tired of acting mercifully toward.

⁷ At the gates of your cities, I will scatter
you like a farmer scatters the chaff from
his grain by winnowing it.

You, my people, have refused to turn
away from your evil behavior.

So, I will get rid of you,
and I will even cause your children
to be killed.

⁸ I will cause there to be more widows
in Judah

than there are grains of sand on the
seashore.

I will bring on you an enemy army
that will destroy your young men and
cause their mothers to weep.

I will cause you to suddenly experience
great suffering and become very terrified.

⁹ A woman who has seven children will
become faint and gasp for breath;

it will be as though her daylight will
become darkness,

because most of her children will be
dead,

and she will be disgraced and humil-
iated.

And her children who are still alive, I
will enable your enemies to kill them.

That will surely happen because I,
Yahweh, have said it.”

¹⁰ I said to my mother, “I am very sad;

I wish that you had not given birth to
me;

everyone in this land opposes me and
quarrels with me.

I have not made anyone angry by lend-
ing or borrow money and then quarreling
about it,

but everyone curses me anyway.”

¹¹ But Yahweh replied to me,

”Jeremiah, I will take care of you.

And at times when you have the most
troubles,

I will come on your behalf and protect
you from your enemy.

¹² People of Judah, you know how strong
iron is when it is mixed with bronze,

it is very hard and good for weapons.

That iron mixed with bronze metal
is just like the strength of your enemies
when they attack Judah from the north,

no one will be able to stop them.

¹³ I will give all the valuable possessions
of your people to their enemies,

without them paying for it.

Your people will lose everything valu-
able

because of all the sins that they have
committed throughout the country.

¹⁴ I will tell their enemies to force them
to become their prisoners,

to take them to other lands that they
have not experienced,

and force them to become their slaves.

That will happen because I am ex-
tremely angry with your people;

my anger is like a burning fire.”

¹⁵ Then I said, “Yahweh, you know what
is happening to me.

Please come and help me.

Punish those who are persecuting me.

Please do not continue to be patient with them

and do not allow me to die now.

It is for your sake that I am suffering.

¹⁶ Yahweh my God, you are the commander of the angel armies;

when you spoke to me,

I was delighted with your message; it caused me to be joyful,

and I eagerly accepted what you said

because I belong to you.

¹⁷ When the people were carousing together,

I never joined them;

I sat alone, because you are the one who controls what I do.

I was very angry with those people because of their sins.

¹⁸ So, why do you allow me to continue to suffer?

It seems that my wounds cannot be healed.

Sometimes you help me, sometimes you do not help me.

It seems that you are as undependable as a brook that has water in it only during certain seasons;

you are like a spring that has dried up."

¹⁹ Then Yahweh replied to me saying this:

"If you begin again to trust in me,

I will restore you,

in order that you can continue to serve me.

If you proclaim good messages and not worthless ones,

you will continue to be the one who speaks what I tell you to say.

You must cause the people to pay attention to what you say;

you must not pay attention to what they say.

²⁰ They will fight against you,

but I will protect you, like people are protected from their enemies by a bronze wall.

They will not defeat you,

because I will be with you,

and I will protect and rescue you.

²¹ Truly, I will keep you safe from those wicked people,

I will rescue you when you are seized by cruel people.

That will happen because I, Yahweh, have said it."

Chapter 16

¹ Yahweh gave me another message. He said to me, ² "Do not get married and have children in this land, ³ because this is what I, Yahweh, say about the children who are born in this city, and about their mothers and fathers: ⁴ Many of them will die from terrible diseases. And no one will mourn for them. No one will even bury their corpses; the corpses will lie on the ground, scattered like manure. Others will die in wars or from hunger, and then their corpses will become food for vultures and wild animals."

⁵ This is also what Yahweh said to me: "Do not go to funerals to mourn or to show those whose relatives have died that you feel sorry for them, because I have stopped protecting them, and I have caused that things will not go well for them. I have stopped faithfully loving them and acting mercifully toward them.

⁶ Very many people will die in this land, including those who are important and those who are not important. And no one will mourn for them, or even bury their corpses. No one will cut himself or shave his head to show that he is very sad. ⁷ No one will bring food to comfort those who are mourning, not even if it is their father or their mother who is mourning. No one will give them a cup of wine to cheer them up.

⁸ And do not go into the houses where people are feasting. Do not eat or drink anything with them. ⁹ I want you to do this because this is what I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, say: 'While you are still alive and seeing it happen, I will cause there to be no more singing and laughing in this land. There will be no more joyful voices of bridegrooms and brides.'

¹⁰ When you tell these things to the people, they will ask, 'Why has Yahweh declared that these terrible things will happen to us? What have we done for which we deserve to be punished like this? What sin have we committed against Yahweh our God?'

¹¹ Then this is what you must tell them that I am replying to them: 'It is because your ancestors turned away from me, Yahweh. They worshiped other gods and served them. They abandoned me and did not obey my commands. ¹² But you who are living now have done more wicked things than your ancestors did! Each of you stubbornly does the evil things that he desires and refuses to pay attention to what I say. ¹³ So, I will throw you out of this land, and I will send you to a land that you and your ancestors have never known about. There you will worship other gods day and night. And I will not act mercifully toward you.'

¹⁴ But there will be a time when people who are solemnly promising to do some-

thing will no longer say, 'I will do this, just as surely as Yahweh lives—the one who brought the Israelite people here from Egypt.' ¹⁵ Instead, they will say 'I will do this, just as surely as Yahweh lives—the one who brought us Israelite people back to our own land, from the lands to the north and from all the other lands to which he had exiled us.' They will be able to say that because some day I will bring your descendants back to this land that I gave to your ancestors.

¹⁶ But now I am summoning your enemies who will seize them like fishermen catch fish. I am summoning those who will search for them on every mountain and hill, and in every cave, like hunters search for animals to kill. ¹⁷ I am watching them carefully. I see every sin that they commit. They will not be able to hide from me. ¹⁸ Because of all the wicked things that they have done, I will punish them twice as much as I would punish other people. I will do that because they have caused my own land to become unacceptable to me because of their worshiping lifeless statues of detestable gods, and also because they have filled my land with the other evil things that they have done."

¹⁹ Then I prayed, saying, "Yahweh, you are the one who strengthens me and protects me;

you are the one to whom I go when I have troubles.

Some day people from nations all over the world will come to you and say,

'Our ancestors left us only something that was false;

they worshiped idols that are completely worthless.

²⁰ No one can make their own gods;

the gods that they make are only idols; they are not real gods."

²¹ Then Yahweh said, "Now I will show my power to the people of Judah;

I will show them that I am truly very powerful.

Then, finally, they will know that I, Yahweh, am the true God."

Chapter 17

¹ Yahweh said, "It is as though a list of the sins committed by the people of Judah is engraved with an iron chisel, or engraved using the fine point of a very hard stone,

on their inner beings and on the altars where they worship their idols.

² Even their children remember when they went to the altars,

and they went up to the poles that represent the goddess Asherah,

and there they worshiped underneath all the big trees

and on all the high hills.

³ I will give my mountain as plunder, along with all your wealth and all your treasures,

because of your idolatry and your worship on the hills.

They will take your possessions away

because you sinned against Yahweh throughout your land.

⁴ The wonderful land that I gave to you will no longer belong to you.

I will tell your enemies to take you to a land that you do not know about,

and you will become their slaves.

I will do that because I am extremely angry with you;

my being angry is like a fire that will burn forever."

⁵ This is also what Yahweh says:

"Those who trust in human beings to help them are cursed,

those who rely on their own strength

and turn away from me with their inner beings.

⁶ They are like dry bushes in the desert,

they are people who will not experience any good things.

Those people will live in the barren desert

in a salty area, where no one can safely abide.

⁷ But Yahweh is pleased with those who trust in him,

and who confidently expect him to take care of them.

⁸ Those people are like fruit trees that have been planted along a riverbank,

trees that have roots that go down into the wet ground beside the water.

They are trees whose leaves remain green when it becomes hot,

trees that continue to bear fruit when there are many months in which there is no rain.

⁹ Human minds are extremely corrupt, and we cannot change that.

It is also completely impossible for anyone to understand that.

¹⁰ But I, Yahweh, search what is in everyone's inner being,

and I examine what they are thinking.

I will give all people reward or punishment,

what they deserve for what they have done."

¹¹ I know some people who become rich by doing things that are unjust.

They are like birds that hatch eggs that they did not lay.

So, when those people have lived only half of the years that they expect to live, they will disappear.

Then other people will realize that those people have been foolish.

¹² Yahweh, your temple is like a glorious throne

that has been on a high hill since it was built.

¹³ You are the one whom we Israelite people confidently expect to bless us,

and all those who turn away from you will be disgraced and feel what it is like to be separated from you,

because they have abandoned you, who are like a fountain where people obtain fresh water.

¹⁴ Yahweh, please heal me, because if you heal me, I will truly be healed.

If you rescue me, I will truly be safe, because you are the only one whom I praise.

¹⁵ People often ridicule me and say,

"You tell us messages that you say came from Yahweh,

but why have the things that you predicted not happened?

¹⁶ Yahweh, you appointed me to take care of your people like a shepherd takes care of his sheep; I have not abandoned that work,

and you know that I have not previously wanted this time of disaster to come to people who ridicule me.

And you know everything that I have said to your people.

¹⁷ Do not cause me to be terrified!

When disasters come, you are the one to whom I will go to be safe.

¹⁸ So now, cause those who persecute me to be ashamed and dismayed,

but do not do things to me that will cause me to be ashamed and dismayed.

Cause them to be terrified!

Do to them many things that will completely destroy them!

¹⁹ This is what Yahweh said to me: "Go to the city gates in Jerusalem. First go to the gate where the kings of Judah go in and out of the city, and then go to each of the other gates. ²⁰ Say to the people at each gate, 'You kings of Judah and everyone else who is living in Jerusalem and all you other people of Judah who enter these gates, listen to this message from Yahweh! ²¹ He says, "Listen to this warning carefully if you want to live! Stop doing work on Sabbath days! Stop carrying loads through these gates on those days! ²² Do not carry loads out of your houses or do any other work on Sabbath days! Instead, cause Sabbath days to be holy. I commanded your ancestors to do that, ²³ but they did not listen to me or obey me. When I did things to correct them, they stubbornly refused to pay attention to what I said or to accept it. ²⁴ But I say that if you obey me, and if you do not carry loads through these gates on Sabbath days or do any other work on Sabbath days, and if you dedicate the Sabbath days to me, ²⁵ kings of Judah and their officials will continue to go in and out of these gates. There will always be someone who is a descendant of King David ruling here in Jerusalem. Kings and their officials will go in and out of these gates, riding in chariots and on horses, and there will be people living in this city forever. ²⁶ And people will come to Jerusalem bringing offerings to be completely burned on the altar

and other offerings. They will bring to the temple grain offerings and incense and offerings to thank me. People will bring these offerings from the towns in Judah and the villages near Jerusalem and from the land where the tribe of Benjamin lives and from the western foothills and from the southern Judean wilderness. ²⁷ But if you do not pay attention to what I say, and if you refuse to dedicate the Sabbath days to me, and if you continue to carry loads through these gates into the city on Sabbath days, I will burn these gates completely. The fire will spread to the palaces, and no one will be able to put out that fire.”

Chapter 18

¹ Yahweh gave another message to me. He said, ² “Go to the shop of the man who makes clay pots. I will give you a message there.” ³ So I went to that shop, and I saw the man who makes pots. He was working at the wheel that he uses to form pots. ⁴ But when he finished making one jar, it was not as good as he hoped it to be. So, he took the clay and formed it into another jar, shaping it as he desired to.

⁵ Then Yahweh gave me this message: ⁶ “Perhaps the people of Israel think that I cannot do to them like this man who makes pots has done. But what they think is wrong. I can control what happens to them like this man controls what he does with the clay in his hands. ⁷ There may be a time when I proclaim that I will get rid of a nation or kingdom, like someone pulls up a plant with its roots, and smash it, and destroy it. ⁸ But if the people of that nation repent of doing evil things, I will not send to them the disasters that I planned to send. ⁹ And there may be a time when I proclaim that I will establish a nation or

kingdom and cause it to be strong. ¹⁰ But if the people of that nation start to do evil things and refuse to obey me, then I will not bless them as I said that I would do.

¹¹ Therefore, Jeremiah, go and warn all the people in Jerusalem and in other places in Judah. Say to them, “This is what Yahweh says: I am planning a disaster that I will send to you. So, each of you should turn from your evil behavior and start doing what is right, in order that good things will come to you instead!”

¹² But the people will say back to you, “It is useless for you to say these things to us. We will continue to be stubborn and behave as wickedly as we want to.”

¹³ So this is what Yahweh said in response:

“Ask the people who live in other nations if they have ever heard of such a thing.

My Israelite people, who have been pure like virgins, have done a terrible thing!

¹⁴ The snow certainly never completely disappears from the rocky slopes of the mountains in Lebanon.

The cold streams that flow down from those distant mountains never cease flowing.

¹⁵ But my people are not as reliable as those streams:

They have abandoned me.

They burn incense to honor worthless idols.

It is as though they have stumbled as they walked along well known and reliable roads

and now, instead, they are walking on dirt paths.

¹⁶ Therefore, their land will become desolate,

and people who see it will hiss to ridicule it from now on.

All the people who pass by will be appalled;

they will shake their heads to show that they are shocked.

¹⁷ I will scatter the people when their enemies attack them

like dust is scattered by an east wind.

And when they experience all these disasters,

I will turn my back on them and refuse to help them."

¹⁸ Then the people said, "Come, we should plan to attack Jeremiah. We have many priests who teach us God's laws, wise men who give us good advice, and prophets who tell us what will happen. We do not need Jeremiah! So we should slander him and not pay attention to anything that he says."

¹⁹ Then I prayed, "Yahweh, please listen to me!

And listen to what my enemies are saying about me.

²⁰ I am doing things that are good,

so it is disgusting that they are paying me back by doing evil things to me.

It is as though they have dug a pit for me to fall into and die.

Do not forget that one time I stood in front of you and pleaded for you to help them,

and I tried to prevent you from punishing them, even though you were very angry with them.

²¹ So now, allow their children to die from hunger!

Or cause them to be killed by their enemies' swords!

Cause their wives to become widows, whose children are all dead!

Cause their husbands to be killed in battles!

²² Cause people to scream in their homes when enemy soldiers suddenly come into their houses!

Cause all these things to happen to them because they want to kill me.

It is as though they have dug a pit for me to fall into,

and they have hidden traps along my path.

²³ Yahweh, you know all the things that they are planning to do to kill me.

Do not forgive them for their crimes

or blot out the record of their sins.

Cause them to be destroyed;

punish them because of your being angry with them!"

Chapter 19

¹ This is another message that Yahweh gave to me: "Go and buy a clay jar from a man who makes them. Then take with you some of the elders of the people and leaders of the priests. ² Go out of the city past the Broken Pottery Gate, to the place overlooking the dump for broken pottery in the Hinnom Valley. Then give them a message. ³ Say to them, 'This message is for you kings of Judah and other people of Jerusalem. Listen to what Yahweh is saying! The God of Israel, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says that he will bring a terrible disaster on Jerusalem. Those who hear about it will be stunned. ⁴ That will happen because you Israelite people have stopped worshiping me, and have caused this place to be a place where

you worship foreign gods. You burn sacrifices to gods that neither you nor your ancestors nor even the kings of Judah ever heard about. And you have filled this place with the blood of innocent people whom you have killed. ⁵ You have built houses on the top of many hills to honor your god Baal, and at those places you have killed your own children and offered them to be sacrifices to Baal. I never commanded you to do that, I never spoke about doing that, and never even considered allowing that! ⁶ So, beware, because I, Yahweh, say that there will be a time when this garbage dump will no longer be called Topheth or Hinnom Valley; it will be called Slaughter Valley. ⁷ In this place I will ruin the plans of you people who live in Jerusalem and in other places in Judah. I will allow your enemies who want to kill you to kill many of you with their swords. Then I will allow your corpses to remain on the ground to be food for vultures and wild animals. ⁸ I will completely destroy Jerusalem and cause it to become a heap of ruins that people will despise. All the people who pass by will be appalled, and they will be shocked when they see that the city has been destroyed. ⁹ I will enable your enemies who want to kill you to surround the city for a long time. Then the food will be all gone, and you people will be extremely hungry, with the result that you people in the city will eat the flesh of your own children and your neighbors' children.'

¹⁰ Jeremiah, after you tell that to them, while the people who are with you are watching, smash the jar that you brought.

¹¹ Then say to them, 'This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says: Just like this jar has been smashed and cannot be repaired, I will smash this city of Jerusalem and other places in Judah. You will bury some of your corpses here in this dump, until there is no more space to bury

any more corpses. ¹² That is what I will do to this city and to you people who live here. I will make you unfit to worship me, and this city will be like you, just as Topheth is. ¹³ The houses in Jerusalem and the palaces of the kings of Judah will be unfit, like this place will be. All the houses where you burned incense on the rooftops to honor the stars that you worshiped, and where you poured out wine to be an offering to your gods, will become unfit for anyone who worships me to live in.'"

¹⁴ Then I returned from the garbage dump where Yahweh had sent me to tell them that message, and I stood in the courtyard of Yahweh's temple and said this to all the people who were there: ¹⁵ "This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says: 'I will bring a disaster to this city and to the villages around it like I promised, because you people have stubbornly refused to pay attention to what I said to you.'"

Chapter 20

¹ Pashhur son of Immer, was a priest who supervised the temple guards. He heard these things that I had prophesied. ² So he arrested me. Then he commanded guards to whip me and fasten my feet in stocks at the Benjamin Gate of Yahweh's temple.

³ The next day, when Pashhur released me, I said to him, "Pashhur, Yahweh is giving you a new name. From now on, your name will be 'Surrounded by Terror,' ⁴ because Yahweh says this to you: 'I will cause you and your loved ones to be terrified. You will watch them being killed by your enemies' swords. I will enable the army of the king of Babylon to capture the people of Judah. Those soldiers will take some of the people to Babylon, and they will kill others with their

swords. ⁵ And I will enable their soldiers to take away other things in Jerusalem: all your wealth and the produce of your hard work. They will take to Babylon all the very valuable things that belonged to your kings. ⁶ And as for you, Pashhur, they will take you and all your family to Babylon. You and your family and all your friends who have prophesied things that are lies will die there and be buried there.”

⁷ One day I said this to Yahweh:

”Yahweh, when you chose me to be a prophet, you deceived me so that I would agree to do this work.

You forced me to become a prophet.

But now everyone ridicules me.

They make fun of me all the day.

⁸ When I tell people your messages, I shout saying,

‘Yahweh is going to cause you to experience violence and destruction!’

So because I tell them those messages from you,

they insult me and scoff at me all the day.

⁹ But if I would say, ‘I will never mention Yahweh or say anything about him,’

it would be as though your message would burn in my inner being like a fire;

it would be like a fire in my bones.

Sometimes I try to remain silent and not proclaim your messages,

but I am not able to do that.

¹⁰ I hear many people whispering about me,

saying ‘He is the man who proclaims that there will be things that cause us to be terrified everywhere.

We must tell the authorities what he is saying! We must denounce him!’

Even my best friends are waiting for me to say something that is wrong.

They are saying, ‘Perhaps we can cause him to say something wrong,

and if he does, we will be able to defeat him.’

¹¹ But you, Yahweh, are helping me like a strong warrior,

so it is as though he will cause those who persecute me to stumble, and they will not defeat me.

They will be completely disgraced because of being unable to gain any advantage over me;

and other people will never forget that they were disgraced.

¹² Yahweh, commander of the angel armies,

you examine all those who are righteous;

you know all that is in their inner beings and what they think.

Allow me to see you getting revenge on those who want to harm me,

because I came to you to petition for what is right.”

¹³ Sing to Yahweh!

Praise Yahweh!

He rescues poor and needy people,

from those who are wicked.

¹⁴ But I hope that the day that I was born will be cursed.

I do not want anyone to celebrate that day when my mother gave birth to me.

¹⁵ And as for that man who brought to my father the news,

and caused him to be very happy, by saying

"Your wife has given birth to a son for you,"

I hope that he also will be cursed.

¹⁶ Allow him to be destroyed like the cities that Yahweh destroyed long ago,

without acting mercifully toward them.

Cause that man to hear the people wailing in the morning,

and to hear the enemy soldiers shout their battle cries at noon.

¹⁷ I want that to happen to him because he did not kill me when I was born.

I wish that I had died in my mother's womb,

and that my mother's body would have been like my grave.

¹⁸ I have continually experienced much trouble and sorrow,

and I am disgraced now when I am about to die;

why was it necessary for me to be born?

Chapter 21

¹ Yahweh gave me another message when King Zedekiah of Judah sent a man named Pashhur son of Malkijah, and a priest named Zephaniah son of Maaseiah, to talk to me. They pleaded with me, saying, ² "The army of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon is attacking Judah. Please speak to Yahweh for us. Ask him if he will help us. Perhaps he will force Nebuchadnezzar's army to leave by performing a miracle for us, like the miracles he performed previously."

³ I replied to them, "Go back to King Zedekiah. Tell him, ⁴ 'This is what Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship,

says: "I will cause your weapons to be useless in fighting against the king of Babylon and his army that is outside the walls of Jerusalem, attacking. I will enable them to enter into the center of this city. ⁵ I myself will fight against your army with my very great power, because I am very angry with you. ⁶ I will send a very terrible plague on the people of this city, and on their domestic animals, and many of them will die." ⁷ And Yahweh says there are many people in this city who want to kill you. So, he will enable the army of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and other people in this city to capture you, King Zedekiah, and your officials, and all the other people who do not die from the plague. His army will slaughter your soldiers; they will not act mercifully toward you or pity you at all.'

⁸ And tell this to all the people: 'Yahweh says that you must decide whether you want to die or to remain alive. ⁹ Everyone who remains in Jerusalem will die. They will be killed in battles or die from being hungry or from diseases. But those who surrender to the army of Babylon that is surrounding your city will remain alive. They will escape dying. ¹⁰ This will happen because I, Yahweh, have decided to cause this city to experience disasters, not to experience something good. The army of the king of Babylon will capture this city and will destroy it completely by fire.'"

¹¹ Yahweh also told me to say this to the family of the king of Judah: "Listen to this message from Yahweh! ¹² This is what he says to you descendants of King David:

'Every day, make fair decisions for the people whom you judge.

Help those who have been robbed.

Rescue them from robbers and abusers.

If you do not do that,

I will be angry and punish you with a fire that will be impossible to extinguish,

because of all the sins that you have committed.

¹³ I will fight against you people of Jerusalem,

you who live on top of a rocky hill above the valley.

I will fight against you people who boast, saying,

“No one can attack us and break through our defenses.”

¹⁴ I will punish you for your wicked deeds like you deserve to be punished;

It will be as though I will light a fire in your forests

that will burn up everything around you.”

Chapter 22

¹ This is another message that Yahweh gave to me: “Go down to the palace of the king of Judah and say this to him: ² ‘You are the king of Judah. You are the ruler, like King David was. You and your officials and your people must listen ³ to what Yahweh says: “Act fairly and justly. Do what is right. Help those who have been robbed. Rescue people from those who oppress them. Stop doing evil deeds. Do not mistreat those who have come here from other countries, and do not mistreat orphans and widows. Stop murdering here in Jerusalem. ⁴ If you obey these commands carefully, there will always be some descendant of King David who will be ruling here in Jerusalem. The king and his officials and other people will ride through the gates of the city in chariots and on horses. ⁵ But if you refuse to pay attention to these commands, I, Yahweh,

solemnly declare, that this palace will become a pile of rubble.””

⁶ And this is what Yahweh says about the house of the king of Judah:

“I like this palace, like I like the forests in the region of Gilead

and the mountains in Lebanon.

But I will cause this palace to become a desert,

a place that no one lives in.

⁷ I will select troops who will destroy this palace;

each soldier will use his own tools to wreck the building.

They will cut into pieces the beautiful big cedar beams

and throw them into a fire.”

⁸ People from many nations will walk past the ruins of this city and say to each other, “Why did Yahweh destroy this city that was very great?” ⁹ And other people will reply, “He did it because his people stopped obeying the agreement that they had made with Yahweh their God. Instead, they worshiped other gods.”

¹⁰ Yahweh also says, “Do not mourn for King Josiah;

do not cry because he has died.

Instead, mourn for King Jehoahaz, his son,

because he will be captured and taken to another country,

and he will never return to see his own country, Judah, again.”

¹¹ Jehoahaz became king after his father, King Josiah, died, but Jehoahaz was captured and taken to Babylonia. And this is what Yahweh says about him: “He also will never return to Judah. ¹² He will die in that country where they have taken him

as a captive and will never see his own country again.”

¹³ And Yahweh said to me, “Terrible things will happen to King Jehoahaz’s brother, King Jehoiakim.

He unjustly forced men to build his palace.

The rooms on the upper level were built by men who were forced unjustly to do that work;

he forced his neighbors to work for nothing;

he did not pay them anything.

¹⁴ He said, ‘I will force my workers to build a huge beautiful palace

with very large rooms and many windows.

They will cover the walls with fragrant cedar panels

and paint them bright red.”

¹⁵ But it is certainly not having a beautiful cedar palace that causes a king to be great!

Jehoiakim’s father, Josiah, also had plenty of things to eat and drink.

But Josiah always did things that are right and just,

and that is why God blessed him.

¹⁶ Josiah acted justly and helped poor and needy people,

so things went well for him.

Yahweh says, “That is the way a person should behave who knows me.

¹⁷ But Jehoiakim, you are greedy and desire only to obtain things by acting dishonestly.

You murder innocent people,
you oppress poor people,

and you treat people cruelly and violently.”

¹⁸ Therefore, this is what Yahweh says about Jehoiakim son of King Josiah:

“When he dies, people will not mourn for him.

They will not say to each other, ‘It is very sad; we are so sorry!’

The people whom he ruled will not mourn for him, saying,

‘We are sad that our king is dead; we are so sorry that the wonderful things that happened while he was king are ended.’

¹⁹ When he dies, people will do to his corpse what they do to a dead donkey;

his corpse will be dragged out of Jerusalem and dumped outside the gates!

²⁰ You people of Judah, go to the mountains in Lebanon and weep,

shout in the mountains of the Bashan region,

call out in mourning in the mountains of Moab,

because all your friends in those areas have been destroyed.

²¹ When you were prosperous, I warned you,

but you replied, ‘We will not pay attention to what you say.’

You have been acting like that since you were young;

you have never obeyed me.

²² So, now I will punish all your leaders;

it will be as though they have been blown away by the wind.

They will be captured by your enemies and taken to another country.

When that happens, you will truly be ashamed and disgraced

because of all the wicked things that you have done.

²³ Now, your king enjoys living in the cedar rooms in his palace,

but soon he will be punished,
and then he will groan

like a woman who is giving birth to a baby.”

²⁴ Yahweh says this: “Jehoiachin son of King Jehoiakim of Judah, as surely as I am alive, I will punish you. Even if you were the ring on my finger that shows that I am the king, I would pull you off. ²⁵ You are afraid of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and his huge army, because they are wanting to kill you. I will enable them to capture you. ²⁶ I will expel you and your mother from this land, and you will be taken to another country. Neither of you were born there, but you will both die there. ²⁷ You will never return to this land that you will very much desire to return to.”

²⁸ Someone said, “Jehoiachin will be like a broken pot

that is despised and which no one wants.

He and his children will be exiled to a foreign land.

²⁹ I want the people in this land to listen carefully to this message from Yahweh.

³⁰ This is what Yahweh says:

“In the record about the kings of Judah, write down that it will be as though this man Jehoiachin had no children,

and that he has not been successful during his life,

because none of his children will ever become king

to rule over the people of Judah.”

Chapter 23

¹ Yahweh declares, “Terrible things will happen to the leaders of my people—those who are like shepherds of the people who are like my sheep—because they have scattered my people and sent them away, and have not taken care of them. ² So, this is what I, Yahweh, the God whom the Israelite people worship, say to those leaders: ‘Instead of taking care of my people and leading them to places where they are safe like a shepherd does for his sheep, you have scattered them. So I will punish you for the evil things that you have done. ³ But later I will gather those who are still alive, from the countries where I have forced them to go. I will bring them back to their own country, where they will have many children, and their number will increase. ⁴ Then I will appoint other leaders for my people, leaders who will take care of them. And my people will never be afraid of anything again, and none of them will be like a lost sheep that has been driven off by its shepherd.’”

⁵ Yahweh also says,

“Some day I will appoint for you a righteous man

who will be a descendant of King David.

As king, he will do what is just and right for all the people in the nation.

⁶ At that time, he will save all the Israelite people from their enemies,
and they will be safe.

And his name will be

“Yahweh, the one who does what is right for us.”

⁷ Yahweh also says that at that time, people who are solemnly promising to do something will no longer say, “I will do it as surely as Yahweh lives, who rescued

the Israelite people from Egypt.” ⁸ Instead, they will say, “I will do it as surely as Yahweh lives, who brought us Israelite people back to our own land, from the land to the northeast and from all the other countries to which he had exiled us.” And they will live in their own land again.

⁹ I am very sad in my deepest emotions because of the sacred message that Yahweh has spoken about what will happen to of the false prophets;

it is as though all my bones shake.

I stagger like a man who is drunk

after drinking a lot of wine,

¹⁰ The land is full of people who commit adultery;

and Yahweh has cursed the land.

Even the pastures in the desert are all dried up,

because the people do what is evil,

and the false prophets use their power to do things that are not just.

¹¹ Yahweh says, “Even the priests and the prophets are ungodly;

they do wicked things even in his temple.

¹² Therefore, it will be as though the paths that they walk on are slippery.

It will be as though they are being chased in the darkness,

and there they will fall down,

because I will cause them to experience disasters

at the time that I will punish them.

That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.”

¹³ Previously I saw that the prophets in Samaria were doing something that was wrong;

they were prophesying, saying that Baal gave them the messages that they were proclaiming,

and they were deceiving my people.

¹⁴ And now I have seen the prophets in Jerusalem doing terrible things.

They commit adultery

and habitually tell lies.

They encourage evil people to continue to do evil things,

with the result that the people do not stop sinning.

Those prophets are as wicked as the people in Sodom and Gomorrah were.

¹⁵ So, this is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says about those false prophets:

“I will give those prophets bitter things to eat

and poison to drink,

because it is because of them that this land is filled with people who do wicked deeds.”

¹⁶ This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says:

“Do not pay any attention to what those false prophets say to you,

because they are just fooling you.

They tell you about visions that they have only thought in their own minds,

not about visions that I have given them.

¹⁷ They habitually say to those who hate me,

‘Yahweh says that you will have peace.’

And they say to those who stubbornly do what they want to do,

‘Nothing bad will happen to you because of your doing those things.’

¹⁸ But none of them has ever been in a council meeting in heaven

in order to listen to a message from me.

None of them has paid attention to anything that Yahweh has said.

¹⁹ So, Yahweh will punish them; it will be like a great storm;

it will come down like a whirlwind, swirling around the heads of those wicked people.

²⁰ Yahweh will not stop being angry

until he has completely accomplished all that he has planned.

In the future, you will understand all of this clearly."

²¹ Yahweh also says, "I have not appointed those prophets,

but they run around telling people their messages.

I did not speak to them,

but they continue to prophesy.

²² If they had been in my council meetings,

they would have been able to speak messages from me,

and they would have caused people to turn away from committing evil deeds. "

²³ Yahweh also says, "Am I a God who is only nearby?

No, I am a God who is far away, also.

²⁴ So, no one can hide in some secret place

with the result that I cannot see him.

I am everywhere, in heaven and on the earth!

That is what I, Yahweh, say!

²⁵ I have heard those prophets prophesy lies, saying that they are telling people messages from me. They say, 'Listen to me tell you the dream I received from God last night! I really had this dream!' ²⁶ How long will they continue to do this? How long will those lying prophets continue to prophesy things that come only from their own minds? ²⁷ They think that because of the dreams that they tell to each other, people will forget me, like their ancestors forgot about me when they started to worship Baal. ²⁸ Allow those false prophets to tell people their dreams, but those who have messages that really come from me should proclaim those messages faithfully. I, Yahweh, say that like straw and grain are certainly very different, my messages and the message from those false prophets are certainly very different. ²⁹ It is as though my messages burn like a fire and is like a hammer that smashes rocks into pieces when it affects someone's heart.

³⁰ Therefore, I, Yahweh say, I oppose all those prophets who steal messages from each other and claim that those messages came from me. ³¹ I oppose those prophets who speak their own messages but claim that those messages came from me. ³² I oppose those prophets who falsely say that I told them something in a vision, but they are only telling lies that cause my people to sin. I did not send those prophets. I did not even appoint them to be prophets. And they have no messages that will benefit my people at all. That is what I, Yahweh, declare."

³³ Yahweh said to me, "If one of those prophets or priests or one of the other people asks you, 'What problem has Yahweh told you about now?', you must reply, 'He has not given me anything to say to you! Instead, Yahweh says that he will abandon you!' ³⁴ And if any prophet or

priest or anyone else falsely says, 'I have a prophecy from Yahweh,' I will punish that person and his family. ³⁵ What you should continually ask each other is, 'When you spoke to Yahweh, what did he reply? What is he saying to us?' ³⁶ But instead you are only concerned with your own ideas and with twisting the true message from the true God, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, whom we worship. ³⁷ This is what you should ask each prophet: 'What did Yahweh reply when you talked to him? What is he saying to us?' ³⁸ If he replies, 'What I told you is a prophecy from Yahweh' then let him know I will punish him, because I told my true prophets not to give any messages to this people right now.

³⁹ So I, Yahweh, will get rid of you false prophets. I will expel you from my presence. And I will get rid of this city that I gave to you and to your ancestors.

⁴⁰ I will cause people to make fun of you forever. People will never forget that you were disgraced."

Chapter 24

¹ The army of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon captured Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, and his officials, and all his skilled workers and took them to Babylon. After that happened, Yahweh gave me a vision. In the vision I saw two baskets of figs that had been placed in front of the temple. ² One basket was full of good figs, like the kind that ripen first. The other basket was filled with figs that were bad, with the result that they could not be eaten.

³ Then Yahweh said to me, "Jeremiah, what do you see?"

I replied, "I see some figs. Some are very

good ones, but some are very bad, with the result that no one would eat them."

⁴ Then Yahweh gave me this message: ⁵ "This is what I, Yahweh, the God whom the Israelite people say that they worship, say: The good figs represent the people of Judah whom I exiled to Babylonia. I sent them there for their own good. ⁶ and I will not exile them again, instead I will bring them back to this land and let them build up houses and cities again. They will be like plants that grow and prosper and are never cut down. ⁷ I will enable them to desire to know in their inner beings that I am Yahweh. They will be my people, and I will be their God, because they will return to me sincerely.

⁸ But I, Yahweh, also say, the bad figs represent Zedekiah, the king of Judah, and his officials, and all the other people who remain in Jerusalem, and those who have gone to Egypt. I will do to them like people do to rotten figs. ⁹ I will cause them to experience calamities, with the result that people in every nation on the earth will be horrified, and will hate them because they are evil people. Wherever I scatter them, people will make fun of them, and say that they are disgraced, and ridicule them, and curse them. ¹⁰ And I will cause them to experience wars and famines and diseases, until they have disappeared from Israel, this land which I gave to them and to their ancestors."

Chapter 25

¹ After Jehoiakim had been ruling Judah for almost four years, Yahweh gave me this message for all the people of Judah. It was during the year that King Nebuchadnezzar started to rule in Babylon. ² Jeremiah spoke this message to all the people in Jerusalem and other places in Judah:

³ "Yahweh has been giving me messages for twenty-three years. He started giving me messages when Josiah son of Amon, had been ruling Judah for almost thirteen years. And I have faithfully told you those messages, but you have not paid any attention to them.

⁴ Many times Yahweh has sent to you the prophets who served him, but you have not listened to them or paid any attention to what they said. ⁵ Each time their message was this: 'Turn from all your evil behavior, from all the evil things that you have continually been doing. If you do that, you will be able to stay in this land that Yahweh gave to you and to your ancestors, to belong to you forever. ⁶ Do not cause Yahweh to become angry by serving and worshiping idols that you have made with your hands. If you do not cause him to be angry, he will not punish you.'

⁷ And Yahweh says, 'But you would not pay attention to the messages that I gave to those prophets. You caused me to become extremely angry by your worshiping idols that you had made with your own hands. That resulted in my punishing you.

⁸ So now, I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, say that because you have not paid attention to what I said, ⁹ I will gather all the armies of the nations that will come from the northeast. I have appointed King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon to lead them. I have appointed him to do my work for me. I will bring those armies to attack this land, all the people living in it, and even nearby countries. I will completely destroy them, and cause them to be places that people are horrified about, and that people will ridicule, places that will be ruined forever. ¹⁰ I will cause happy singing and laughing to cease in your land. There will no longer be brides and bridegrooms talking joyfully. There

will not be the sound of people grinding grain with millstones. There will be no lamps lit in your houses. ¹¹ All of this land will become a desert where no one will live. And the people of Israel and of the nearby countries will be exiled to Babylonia and work for the kings of Babylon for seventy years.

¹² Then, after they have been in Babylonia for seventy years, I will punish the king of Babylonia and his people for the sins that they have committed. I will cause Babylonia to become a wasteland forever. ¹³ I will cause them to experience all the terrible things that Jeremiah has written about—all the punishments that he predicted will happen to all those nations. ¹⁴ The leaders of many nations will cause the people of Babylonia to become their slaves, like the people of Babylonia caused my people to become slaves. I will punish them like they deserve for having caused my people to suffer."

¹⁵ Then Yahweh, the God of Israel, gave me a vision. In the vision he was holding a cup of wine. He said, "Take from me this cup that is full of wine that represents punishment. I will cause all the leaders of the nations to which I will send you to drink some of the wine in this cup. ¹⁶ When they drink the wine, they will stagger and act like crazy people, because they will realize that I will massacre many of their people with swords."

¹⁷ So, in the vision, I took that cup full of wine from Yahweh, and I took it to all the nations to which he sent me, and caused the leaders of those nations to drink some of that wine. ¹⁸ I went to Jerusalem and the other towns in Judah, and the king and the other officials drank some of the wine from that cup. And, starting from that day, they all eventually were removed from having authority, and became people whom others ridiculed, who were de-

spised, and cursed. ¹⁹ In the vision Egypt had to drink some of the wine, including the king and his officials and many of his people, ²⁰ and foreigners who were living there. In the vision the land of Uz and the cities and kings of Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and Ashdod had to drink some of the wine. ²¹ Then the vision about the kings of Edom, Moab, and Ammon began. ²² Then there were more visions about the kings of the cities of Tyre and Sidon across the Mediterranean Sea, about the kings who had to drink some of the wine. ²³ In the vision the religious leaders of the cities of Dedan, Tema, and Buz, which were cities in Arabia and other distant places, they had to drink some of the wine. ²⁴ In the vision other places in Arabia and the kings of tribes in the desert ²⁵ and the kings of the Zimri, Elam, and Media people groups, ²⁶ and kings in countries to the north that are near to Israel and to countries that are far from Israel, one after the other—all the kingdoms in the world had to drink, and finally the king of Babylon had to drink some of the wine.

²⁷ Then in the vision Yahweh said to me, "Tell them that this is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God of Israel, says: 'Drink from this cup some of the wine that represents the punishment that I will give you. Drink a lot of it and become drunk and vomit. You will fall down and not get up again, because I will cause you to be killed in wars that I will send to you. ²⁸ If any of those to whom you give this wine refuse to drink it, tell them that Yahweh, commander of the angel armies says that they must drink it. ²⁹ I am starting to bring disaster to my own people. They will not be exempt from punishment, for I am sending wars to all the nations on the earth. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, have said it.'

³⁰ Now tell them all those things that I have said, and also say this to them:

'Yahweh will shout to them from the highest places like a lion roars!

He will call out with a shout from the holy place where he lives!

He will roar like a lion against his people because of their sins!

Like those who shout so loudly when they are treading the grapes,

he will shout so that everyone who lives on the earth can hear him!

³¹ Even people in very remote places around the earth will hear him shouting,

because he will say why he will judge and punish all the nations.

He will cause the wicked people to be slaughtered with swords.

That will surely happen because Yahweh has said it.'

³² Then tell them that this is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says:

'Listen to this!

Disasters will happen to one nation after another.

Punishment from me will arise like a great storm

from the most distant places on the earth.

³³ When that happens, the corpses of those whom I have caused to be slaughtered will fill the earth from the east to the west.

And no one will mourn for them, and no one will gather their corpses to bury them. They will be scattered on the ground like manure.

³⁴ You evil leaders, they call out for someone to help them!

You who were the leaders of my people, fell down and and they rolled in the dust.

Now is time for you to be slaughtered!

You will fall down and be shattered like a fragile vase shatters when it falls to the ground.

³⁵ Those who should have taken care of my people will not find any place to hide;

there will be no place for the leaders of my people to find safety.

³⁶ Your who take care of my people now crying out for help, and and those who were the leaders of my people they cry and beg for help—

while I, Yahweh, am destroying your nation.

³⁷ Your peaceful meadows will become a wasteland

because Yahweh will severely punish it.

³⁸ Yahweh will leave his dwelling like a lion leaves its den to attack other animals,

and he will cause your land to become desolate.

He is very angry with you and will make your enemies angry at you.”

Chapter 26

¹ Soon after Jehoiakim son of Josiah, became the king of Judah, Yahweh gave me this message: ² ”This is what I, Yahweh, am telling you: Stand in the courtyard in front of my temple, and speak to all the people from the various towns in Judah who come there to worship me. Tell them everything that I tell you; do not omit anything. ³ If you do tell them everything, perhaps they will pay attention, and each one

of them will turn away from his evil behavior. Then I will change my mind, and not bring on them the disaster that I was planning to bring on them because of the evil things that they have done. ⁴⁻⁵ Say to them, ”This is what Yahweh says: I sent to you the prophets who serve me, to tell you what you should do. I sent them to you many times, but you have not paid attention to what they said. If you will not pay attention to what I say and do not obey the message that I have given to you, and if you do not pay attention to what the prophets say, ⁶ I will destroy this temple like I destroyed Shiloh, the place where the sacred tent was put. And I will cause Jerusalem to be a place whose name people in every nation on the earth will say when they curse someone.”

⁷ Jeremiah did what Yahweh told him to do. The priests, the false prophets, and many other people listened to him as he told them that message outside the temple. ⁸ But as soon as Jeremiah finished telling them everything that Yahweh had commanded him to say, they all seized him and said, ”You must be executed! ⁹ Why are you prophesying that this temple will be destroyed like Shiloh was destroyed? Why are you saying that this city will be destroyed, and that no one will live here anymore? All the people surrounded Jeremiah as he stood in front of the temple.

¹⁰ When the officials of Judah heard about all this that was happening, they rushed from the palace and sat down at the gate of the temple named The New Gate, to judge Jeremiah’s case. ¹¹ The priests and the prophets told the officials and the other people who were there, ”This man should be executed, because he has prophesied that this city will be destroyed, and you yourselves have heard him say that!”

¹² Then Jeremiah replied to the officials

and the other people. He said to them, "Yahweh sent me to prophesy all the things that you heard me say about what will happen to this temple and this city. ¹³ But if you change your behavior and stop sinning, and start to obey Yahweh our God, he will change his mind, and not send to you the disasters that he said that he would send. ¹⁴ As for me, I am not able to free myself from your grasp. So you can do to me whatever you want to do. ¹⁵ But you need to know that if you kill me, you will be killing a man who is innocent. And you and everyone else in this city will be guilty, because the truth is that it was Yahweh who sent me to speak every word that you have heard me say."

¹⁶ Then the officials and the other people said to the priests and the false prophets, "This man does not deserve to be executed, because he has spoken to us the message that Yahweh gave him!"

¹⁷ Then some of the elders stood up and spoke to all the people who were gathered there. ¹⁸ They said, "Remember what Micah, the prophet from Moresheth, prophesied during the years that Hezekiah was the king of Judah. He told the people of Judah this:

"This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says:

Some day Mount Zion will be plowed like fields are plowed;

Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins.

There will be a large clump of trees on top of the hill where the temple is now.' ¹⁹ But did Hezekiah or anyone else in Judah kill Micah for saying that? No! Instead, Hezekiah revered Yahweh, and pleaded that he would act mercifully toward them. So, Yahweh changed his mind about sending to them the terrible disaster that he said he would send. And now if we kill Jeremiah, we are going to bring

even worse disaster on ourselves!"

²⁰ At that time, Uriah son of Shemaiah from the city of Kiriath Jearim was also prophesying from Yahweh. He was predicting that the city and the rest of the land would experience the same disasters that Jeremiah was predicting. ²¹ When King Jehoiakim and his army officers and officials heard what Uriah was saying, the king sent someone to kill Uriah. But Uriah heard about it, and became very afraid, and he escaped to Egypt. ²² Then King Jehoiakim sent Elnathan son of Acbor along with several other men to Egypt. ²³ They captured Uriah and took him back to Jerusalem to King Jehoiakim. The king then commanded a soldier to kill Uriah with a sword. Then they buried his corpse in a place where poor people are buried. ²⁴ However, Ahikam son of Shaphan defended me, and persuaded the officials not to allow the mob to murder Jeremiah.

Chapter 27

¹ Soon after Zedekiah son of Josiah became the king of Judah, Yahweh gave a message to me. ² This is what he said to me: "Make a yoke and bonds, then fasten them around your own neck. ³ Then send them to the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon, and give them to the ambassadors from those countries who have come to Jerusalem to talk to King Zedekiah. ⁴ Tell them to give this message to their kings: This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, whom Israel worships, says: ⁵ 'With my very great power I created the earth and the people and the animals that are on the earth. And I can give those things to anyone whom I want to. ⁶ And now I am going to enable King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who does what I want him to do,

to control your countries. I am going to enable him to rule everything, even the wild animals. ⁷ The people of all the nations will work for him, and later for his son, and later for his grandson, until the time for them to rule is finished. Then the armies of many great kings from many nations will conquer Babylon.'

⁸ But now I tell you that you must do what the king of Babylon wants you to do, like an ox that has a yoke on its neck must do what its master wants it to do. I will punish any nation that refuses to do that. I will cause those people to experience war and famine and diseases, until the armies of Babylon have conquered that nation. ⁹ So, do not pay attention to your false prophets and fortune tellers and people who predict what will happen by working magic or by talking with spirits of dead people. Those people say not to serve him because the king of Babylon will not conquer your country. ¹⁰ Those people are all liars. If you believe what they say, it will result in your being exiled from your land. I will cause you to be taken from your land, and you will die far away. ¹¹ But the people of any country who do what the king of Babylon wants them to do will remain in their own country and be able to plant their crops as they always have done. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it."

¹² After I gave that message to those ambassadors, I gave the same message to King Zedekiah of Judah. I said to him, "If you want to remain alive, do what the king of Babylon and his officials want you to do. ¹³ It would be foolish for you not to do that, because the result would be that you and your people would die by your enemies' swords or by famine or diseases, which Yahweh will cause any nation to experience that refuses to allow the king of Babylon to rule them. ¹⁴ Do not pay atten-

tion to those prophets who say to you, 'Do not obey the king of Babylon since he will not conquer your country.' They are liars. ¹⁵ This is what Yahweh says: 'I have not appointed those prophets. They are saying that I gave them messages, but they are lying. So, if you believe them, I will expel you from this land. And you and all those prophets will die in Babylon!'"

¹⁶ Then I spoke to the priests and the other people, and I said, "This is what Yahweh says: 'Do not believe your prophets who tell you that all the gold items that were taken from my temple by soldiers from Babylon will soon be returned from Babylon, because what they are prophesying is a lie. ¹⁷ Do not pay attention to what they say. Surrender to the king of Babylon. If you do that, you will remain alive. If you do not do that, this entire city will be destroyed. ¹⁸ If they are really prophets who speak messages from me, tell them to plead to me, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, that the soldiers from Babylon will not be allowed to take away to Babylon the valuable items that still remain in the temple and in the king's palace and in the other palaces in Jerusalem. ¹⁹ I say this because the huge pillars that are in front of the temple and the large tank that was called "The Sea" and the ten water carts and all the other items that are used for offering sacrifices are still in this city. ²⁰ King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon left those things here when he exiled Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, to Babylon, along with all the other leaders of Jerusalem and the leaders of other places in Judah. ²¹ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says this about all those valuable things that are still outside the temple and in the palace of the king of Judah: ²² They will all be carried away to Babylon. And they will stay there until I say that they should be brought back to Jerusalem. Then they

will be bought back here. That is what I, Yahweh, say.”

Chapter 28

¹ These things occurred when Zedekiah was beginning his rule as king of Judah. It happened on the fourth year and fifth month of his rule, that Azzur's son Hananiah, a prophet from the city of Gibeon, spoke to Jeremiah in the courtyard of the temple, while all the priests and other people were listening. He said, ² "This is what the Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, whom Israel worships, says: 'I will cause the king of Babylon to stop ruling you. ³ Within two years, I will cause to be brought back to this temple all the valuable things that King Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers took from this temple and took to Babylon. ⁴ And I will also bring back to this place Jehoiachin, who was the son of the Jehoiakim, the King of Judah, and all the other people who were captured and taken to Babylon. The king of Babylon has forced you to do what he wants, like someone puts a yoke on the neck of an ox to force it to do what he wants it to do. But I will cause that to end. That will happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.'"

⁵ Jeremiah replied to Hananiah in front of all the priests and other people whom were standing outside the temple. ⁶ He said, "I want that to be true! I desire that what you have predicted will happen just as you said! I hope that he will cause men from Babylon to bring back all the valuable things that were in this temple, and all the people who were taken to Babylon. ⁷ But now listen to what I say to you while all these people are listening. ⁸ Many years ago, those who were prophets before you and I became prophets spoke messages about many na-

tions and great kingdoms. They predicted that wars and disasters and plagues would occur in those nations. ⁹ So now you or any other prophet who predicts that things will go well for us must show that your message is correct. Only if what you predict actually happens will we know that you were truly appointed by Yahweh."

¹⁰ Then Hananiah took the yoke off my neck and broke it. ¹¹ Then he said this to all the people who were there: "This is what Yahweh says: 'Just like Hananiah has broken this yoke, within two years I will cause King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon to stop forcing the people to do what he wants, which has been like a heavy yoke on all their necks.'"

After Hananiah said that, Jeremiah left the temple area.

¹² Soon after Hananiah had broken the yoke that was around the neck of Jeremiah, Yahweh gave this message to me: ¹³ "Go and say this to Hananiah: 'Yahweh, Commander of the angel armies, whom Israel worships, says that you have broken a wooden yoke, but that he will replace it with an iron yoke. ¹⁴ I have forced the people of all these nations to become slaves of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. That is like an iron yoke around their necks. I have put everything, even wild animals, under his control.'"

¹⁵ Then Jeremiah went to Hananiah and said to him, "Hananiah, listen to this: Yahweh has not appointed you; instead, you have told lies to the people, and they have believed your lies. ¹⁶ Therefore, this is what Yahweh says: 'You will soon die. Before the end of this year, you will die, because you have encouraged people to act against Yahweh.'"

¹⁷ Hananiah died two months later.

Chapter 29

¹⁻² After King Jehoiachin, his mother, his palace officials, other officials in Judah and Jerusalem, and all the various kinds of craftsmen had been exiled to Babylon, Jeremiah wrote a letter to the elders, the priests, the prophets and all the other people who had been taken from Jerusalem to Babylon by soldiers of Nebuchadnezzar. ³ He gave the letter to Elasah son of Shaphan, and to Gemariah son of Hilkiah, when they were about to go to Babylon to be ambassadors from King Zedekiah to King Nebuchadnezzar. This is the letter that Jeremiah wrote, the message that Yahweh gave him.

⁴ This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, says to all you people who were captured here in Jerusalem and taken there to Babylon: ⁵ "Build houses there, and plan to stay there because you will be there for many years. Plant gardens, and eat the food that is produced in the gardens. ⁶ Get married and have children. Then when they grow up, choose wives for your sons, and husbands for your daughters, in order that they also may have children. In that way, the number of your people will increase, not decrease. ⁷ Also, do things that will cause things to go well for the other people there in the city where I sent you. Pray that things will go well for the people in that city, because if things go well for them, things will go well for you, also."

⁸ This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, says: "There are false prophets and fortune tellers among you. Do not allow them to deceive you. Do not pay attention to them when they tell you their dreams, ⁹ because they are telling you lies, saying that I have given them the messages that

they are telling you. But, I have not appointed them."

¹⁰ This is also what Yahweh says: "After you and your children have been in Babylon for seventy years, I will help you, and do for you the things that I promised, and I will enable you to return here to Jerusalem. ¹¹ I, Yahweh, know what I have planned for you. I am planning to cause things to go well for you, not to cause you to experience disasters. I am planning to give you many things that you can confidently expect to receive in the future that your people will survive to see. ¹² At that time, when you go to worship me and call out my name in prayer, I will listen to what you pray. ¹³ If you earnestly desire for me to bless you, you will see that I will answer you. ¹⁴ I will help you. I will cause you to no longer be slaves in Babylon. I will gather you from all the nations to which I have exiled you, and I will bring you back here to your own land, to the place from which you were taken."

¹⁵ Some of you say that Yahweh has appointed prophets for you there in Babylon. ¹⁶ But this is what Yahweh says about the king who rules here in Jerusalem, and about all the other people who are still living here—your relatives who were not taken to Babylon with you. ¹⁷ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says this: "I will cause them to experience wars and famines and diseases. I will cause them to become like bad figs that are very rotten, with the result that no one can eat them. ¹⁸ I will not stop causing them to experience wars and famines and diseases. And I will scatter them all around the world. In every country where I force them to be taken, I will cause them to be people whom others curse and be horrified about and mock. ¹⁹ That will happen because they have refused to pay attention to my messages, messages that I

gave to the prophets whom I sent to them. And you who have been exiled to Babylon have not paid attention to them, either.” That is what Yahweh says.

²⁰ Therefore, you people who have been exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon, listen to this message from Yahweh. ²¹ This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, says about Ahab son of Kolaiah, and about Zedekiah son of Maaseiah, who are telling lies to you, saying that they are giving messages from him: “They will be seized and taken to King Nebuchadnezzar, who will cause them to be executed while you are watching. ²² Because of what will happen to them, all you people who have been taken from Judah to Babylon will say this when they curse someone: ‘I hope that Yahweh will do to you the same thing that he did to Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king of Babylon caused to be killed by being burned in a fire.’ ²³ They have done terrible things to my Israelite people. They have committed adultery with their neighbors’ wives, and they have spoken lies, saying that they were messages from me. They have said things that I did not tell them to say, and I, Yahweh, have heard them say those things.”

²⁴ Yahweh told me to send this message to Shemaiah, a man from Nehelam who was living in Babylon: ²⁵ “This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, says: “You wrote a letter that no one told you to write. You sent it to Zephaniah the priest, son of Maaseiah, and you sent copies to the other priests and all the other people here in Jerusalem. This is what you wrote to him:

²⁶ ‘Zephaniah, Yahweh has appointed you to be the priest instead of Jehoiada, to supervise those who work in the temple. Anyone who acts like a crazy man and who claims that he is a prophet, you

should put his arms and legs and head into stocks. ²⁷ So why have you not done anything to stop Jeremiah, the man from Anathoth, who pretends that he is a prophet among you? ²⁸ He sent a letter to us who are here in Babylon, saying that we will be here for a long time. He said that therefore we should build houses and plan to stay here, and plant gardens, and eat the food that is produced in the gardens.”

²⁹ But when Zephaniah the priest received the letter from you, he brought it to me and read it to me. ³⁰ Then Yahweh gave me this message: ³¹ “Send this message to all the people from Judah who are there in Babylon: Say that this is what Yahweh says about Shemaiah, the man from Nehelam: ‘I did not appoint him, but he has deceived you and caused you to believe the lies that he prophesied. ³² So, I will punish him and his family. He has incited you to rebel against me. Because of that, all of his descendants will soon die. I will do many good things for you, my people, but he and his descendants will not see those things, because they will be dead. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it!’”

Chapter 30

¹ Yahweh gave Jeremiah another message. He said, ² “I, Yahweh, the God of Israel am telling you to write down everything that I have said to you. ³ I want you to know that some day I will free my people, the people of Israel and Judah, from being slaves in Babylon. I will bring them back to this land that I gave to their ancestors, and this land will belong to them again. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.”

⁴ Yahweh gave to me another message concerning the people of Israel and Judah. ⁵

This is what he said:

"I hear people screaming because they are terrified;

there is no peace in the land.

⁶ But think about this:

Men certainly do not give birth to babies.

Therefore, why do strong men stand there,

with their faces very white,

with their hands pressed against their stomachs,

like women who are about to give birth to babies?

⁷ Terrible things will soon happen;

That will be a terrible day!

There has never been such a time.

It will be a time when my Israelite people will experience great trouble,

but finally they will be saved from their sufferings."

⁸ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says this:

"At that time it will be as though I will sever the ropes that are around my people,

and I will free them from being slaves.

People in other countries will no longer enslave them.

⁹ My people will again serve me, Yahweh, their God,

and they will serve a king who is a descendant of King David;

and I will appoint this king for them.

¹⁰ So, you people of Israel who serve me, do not be dismayed now,

because some day I will bring you back from distant places;

I will bring your descendants back home from the land where they had been exiled.

Then you Israelite people will again live peacefully and safely,

and there will not be any nation that will cause you to be terrified.

¹¹ I, Yahweh, say that I will be with you and will rescue you;

I will completely destroy the nations to which I have scattered you.

But I will not completely destroy you.

I will punish you for your many sins, but I will punish you only as severely as you deserve:

I would be doing wrong if I did not to punish you at all."

¹² Yahweh also says this:

"You have suffered very much;

it is as though you have a terrible wound that cannot be cured.

¹³ There is no one to help you,

no one to put a bandage on your wound.

There is no medicine that will heal you.

¹⁴ All your allies have deserted you

and they do not want to help you anymore.

It is true that I have punished you severely,

like your enemies would wound you, because you have committed many sins and you are very guilty.

¹⁵ Because that is true, why do you protest about my punishing you,

as though I had caused a wound that could not be cured?

It was necessary for me to punish you,
because you had committed many
sins
and you were very guilty.

¹⁶ But some day all those who are trying
to destroy you will be destroyed;

all your enemies will be exiled to other
nations.

All those who have stolen things from
you

will have their valuable possessions
stolen,

and all those who attack you will be
attacked.

¹⁷ Everyone says that you are outcasts,
and that you live in Jerusalem, a city
that no one cares about.”

But Yahweh says,

”I will heal your injuries
and cause you to be healthy again.”

¹⁸ This is what Yahweh says:

”I will bring the people of Israel back
from the lands to which they were taken

and enable them to possess their land
and their houses again.

When that happens, Jerusalem will be
rebuilt on top of its ruins,

and the king’s palace will be rebuilt
as a place of justice.

¹⁹ People will again sing joyfully to thank
me,

and I will cause there to be more
people in Jerusalem, not fewer;

I will cause them to be honored, not
despised.

²⁰ Their children will prosper like they
did before.

I will cause them to be a group of
people who worship me,

and I will punish any nation that op-
presses them.

²¹ One of their own people will be their
king,

and I will invite him to come close to
me to worship me,

because no one would dare to come
close to me

if I did not invite him.

²² You Israelite people will be my people,
and I will be your God.”

²³ Yahweh will punish your enemies;
it will be like a great storm;

it will come down like a whirlwind,
swirling around the heads of wicked peo-
ple.

²⁴ He will not stop being angry
until he completely accomplishes all
that he has planned.

In the future, you will understand all
of this clearly.

Chapter 31

¹ Yahweh says that at that time, he will be
the God who is worshiped by all the clans
in Israel, and they will be his people.

² This is what Yahweh says:

”Those people who remained alive and
were not killed by their enemies’ swords
were blessed by me even in the desert;
where they survived.

³ Long ago I, Yahweh, said to your ances-
tors, the Israelite people,

'I have loved you and I will continue to love you forever.

By faithfully loving you I have brought you close to myself.'

⁴ And now I tell you, my Israelite people who I will think of like a chaste woman, that I will cause you to be a nation again.

You will joyfully dance as you play your tambourines.

⁵ Again you will plant your vineyards on the hills of Samaria,

and you will eat the grapes that grow there.

⁶ There will be a time when watchmen will call out from the hills of Samaria ,

'Come, let us go up to Jerusalem to worship Yahweh, our God!'"

⁷ And now Yahweh also says this:

"Sing joyfully about what I have done for the people of Israel!

Shout about your nation, the greatest nation!

Shout joyfully, praising me and saying,

'Yahweh, has rescued his people, the ones who were still alive!'

⁸ Do that because I will bring them back from the northeast,

from the most distant places on the earth.

Among them will be blind people and lame people,

women who are pregnant and women who are having labor pains.

They will be a huge group of people!

⁹ They will be weeping as they return, and they will be praying to me.

I will guide them along streams of water,

on level paths where they will not stumble.

I will do this because I am like a father to the Israelite people;

it is as though Israel is my oldest son."

¹⁰ People in the nations of the world, listen to this message from Yahweh.

Then proclaim it to people who live along the coasts far away.

Yahweh scattered his people, but he will gather them again and will take care of them

like a shepherd takes care of his sheep.

¹¹ Yahweh will buy his Israelite people back

from those who conquered them because they were more powerful than his people.

¹² Yahweh's people will return to Jerusalem

and shout joyfully on the slopes of Zion Hill.

They will rejoice about the things that Yahweh has abundantly given to them—

grain and new wine and olive oil

and young sheep and cattle.

They themselves will be like a well-watered garden,

and they will no longer feel worn out.

¹³ The young women will dance joyfully, and all the men, young ones and old ones, will join with them.

I will cause them to rejoice instead of mourning;

I will comfort them and cause them to be happy instead of being sad.

¹⁴ The priests will have plenty of things to eat and drink,

and all my people will be filled with the good things that I give them.

That will certainly happen because I, Yahweh, have said it!"

¹⁵ Yahweh also says this:

"Women were weeping in Ramah, on the border between Israel and Judah;

they were mourning and crying very loudly.

The women who were the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh, the two grandsons of Rachel the wife of Jacob, were weeping about their children,

and no one could comfort them

because their children were all dead.

¹⁶ But now this is what Yahweh says:

'Do not cry anymore,

because I will reward you for the good things you have done for your children.

Your children will return from the land where their enemies have taken them.

¹⁷ I, Yahweh, am telling you that there are things that you can confidently expect me to do for you in the future.

Your children will return to their own land.'

¹⁸ I have heard the people of Israel grieving very much and saying to me,

'You punished us severely,

like calves are beaten by their owners to train them for pulling a plow.

So bring us back to obey you again,

because we are ready to return to you, because you alone are Yahweh, our God.

¹⁹ We turned away from you,

but we repented;

after you caused us to realize that we were guilty.

We beat our hands on our legs to show that we were very ashamed of the sins that we committed when we were young.'

²⁰ But I, Yahweh, say this:

The Israelite people certainly are still my dear children.

It is often necessary for me to threaten to punish them,

but I still love them.

That is why I have not forgotten them,

and I will certainly act mercifully toward them.

²¹ You Israelite people, set up road signs;

put up posts along the roads

to mark the road on which you walked when you were taken from Jerusalem.

My precious Israelite people,

come back to your towns here.

²² You people who have been like daughters who have forsaken their parents,

how long will you continue to wander away from me?

I, Yahweh, will cause something to happen on the earth that is new:

the women of Israel will be protecting their husbands as they travel back here!"

²³ This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, says: "When I bring them back from the countries to which they have been exiled, all the people from the towns in Judah will again say, 'I hope that Yahweh will bless this my home, the holy place where righteous people will live!' ²⁴ The people of Judah who live in the towns, including the farmers and the shepherds, will all live together peacefully. ²⁵ I will enable weary people to be refreshed with drinks of water, and enable people who are very exhausted to become strong again."

²⁶ I, Jeremiah, woke up after dreaming all those things, and I looked around. I had slept very delightfully!

²⁷ Then Yahweh said to me, "There will be a time when I will greatly increase the number of people and the number of livestock here in Israel and Judah. ²⁸ Previously, I caused their enemies to remove the people from their land and to destroy their land and to bring many disasters to it. But in the future, I will enable them to build houses and to plant crops here in Israel again. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it. ²⁹ Previously the people often said, 'The parents have eaten sour grapes, but it is the children's teeth that ache.' They meant that it was not fair for them to be punished for their ancestors' sins. But when I bring them back to their land, they will no longer say that.

³⁰ But now all people will die because of the sins that they themselves have committed. It will be more like 'The person who eats sour grapes will have his own teeth aching.' ³¹ I, Yahweh, say this: 'There will be a time when I will make a new agreement with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. ³² This new agreement will not be like the agreement that I made with their ancestors when I took them by their hands and led them out of Egypt. They disobeyed that agreement, even though I loved them like husbands love their wives.' ³³ This is what I, Yahweh, say: 'This is the new agreement that I will make with the people of Israel some day: I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their inner beings. I will be their God, and they will be my people. ³⁴ And it will not be necessary for them to teach their neighbors or their relatives and say, "You need to know Yahweh," because everyone, including both unimportant people and very important

people, will already know me. And I will forgive them for having been very wicked, and I will never think again about the sins that they have committed.'"

³⁵ Yahweh is the one who causes the sun to give light during the day,

and who causes the moon and the stars to give light during the night.

He stirs up the seas, with the result that waves roar.

His name is Yahweh, commander of the angel armies,

and this is what he says:

³⁶ "I will not permanently reject my Israelite people

any more than I will get rid of the laws that control the universe.

³⁷ And this is what I say:

'No one can measure the sky

and no one can find out what is supporting the earth.

Similarly, I cannot reject the descendants of Jacob

because of all the evil things that they have done.'

That is certain, because I, Yahweh, have said it!

³⁸ I, Yahweh, also say that there will be a time when everything in Jerusalem will be rebuilt for me, from the tower of Hananel at the northeast corner, west to the gate named the Corner Gate. ³⁹ Workers will stretch a measuring line over Gareb Hill all the way southwest to Goah. ⁴⁰ And the whole area, including the place where corpses and ashes are thrown in the Kidron Valley, and all the fields to the east as far as the Horse Gate, will become set apart for me. And the city of Jerusalem will never again be captured or destroyed."

Chapter 32

¹ After Zedekiah had been ruling Judah for almost ten years, Yahweh gave me another message, during the time that Nebuchadnezzar had been ruling Babylonia for almost eighteen years. ² His army had surrounded Jerusalem, and Jeremiah was in a prison area in the courtyard where the guards of the king's palace stayed. ³ King Zedekiah had put me there. I continued to prophesy there about what would happen. I continued to say, "Yahweh says that he is about to allow the army of the king of Babylon to capture this city. ⁴ And the soldiers of Babylonia will most definitely capture King Zedekiah and take him to the king of Babylon for a face to face encounter. ⁵ Then his soldiers will take Zedekiah to Babylon, and he will remain there until I arrange for him to be punished. And if he tries to fight against the soldiers from Babylonia, he will not succeed." King Zedekiah asked Jeremiah why he continued to say that, but Yahweh had said this would be so.

⁶ At that time, Yahweh gave Jeremiah another message. He said, ⁷ "Your cousin Hanamel son of Shallum your uncle, will come to you. He will say to you, 'Buy my field at Anathoth, your hometown. Because you are my closest relative, it is written in our laws that you have the right to buy it before I ask if anyone else wants to buy it.'"

⁸ And just as Yahweh had predicted, my cousin Hanamel came to see me in the courtyard of the palace. He said, "Please buy my field at Anathoth in the area where the descendants of Benjamin live. It is written in our laws that you have the right to buy it before I ask if anyone else wants to buy it." When he said that, I knew that the message that I had received was truly from Yahweh.

⁹ So, I bought the field at Anathoth. I paid Hanamel almost two hundred grams of silver for it. ¹⁰ I signed the paper it on which it was written that I was buying it, while others were watching. Then I weighed the silver and gave it to him. ¹¹ Then I took two copies of the paper. One was sealed and the other was not sealed. On both of them was written the price and conditions of the purchase. I took both copies ¹² and I gave them to Baruch son of Neraiah, and the grandson of Mahseiah. I did this while my cousin Hanamel, the other witnesses who had signed the paper, and other men of Judah who were there in the courtyard, were watching.

¹³ Then, while they were all listening, I said to Baruch, ¹⁴ "This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, says: 'Take both copies of this paper and put them in a clay jar, to preserve them for a long time. ¹⁵ Do that because this is what I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, say: Some day people will again own property in this land, and they will buy and sell houses and vineyards and fields.'"

¹⁶ After I had given the papers to Baruch, I prayed to Yahweh, saying this: ¹⁷ "Yahweh, you are my Lord! You made the sky and the earth by your very great power. Nothing is too difficult for you to do. ¹⁸ You show thousands of people that you will always be faithful to your covenant with them, but people suffer the consequences of the sins that their parents have committed. You are the great and powerful God. You are Yahweh, commander of the angel armies. ¹⁹ You make wise plans and you do mighty deeds. You see how all people behave, and you do to them what they deserve. ²⁰ You performed many miracles in Egypt, and you continue to perform miracles here in Israel and everywhere else in

the world. Because of that, you have become very famous. ²¹ You brought our Israelite ancestors out of Egypt by performing many great miracles, using your very great power, causing our enemies to be terrified. ²² You gave to us Israelite people this land that you solemnly promised to give to our ancestors, a land that is very fertile. ²³ Our ancestors came here and conquered this land and started to live in it, but they refused to obey you or to do what you commanded them to do. Because of that, you have caused them to experience all these disasters.

²⁴ And now, the army of Babylonia has built ramps up against our city walls in order to attack our city. Because of our enemies' swords and because of famines and diseases, they will be able to conquer it easily. The things that you said would happen have now happened. ²⁵ And it is evident that the Babylonian army will soon conquer this city. So now, I do not understand why you told me to buy this field with my silver, while others were watching. It seems that I have just been wasting my money by doing that!"

²⁶ Then Yahweh gave me this message: ²⁷ "I am Yahweh, the God who rules over every living thing in the world. There is absolutely nothing that is too difficult for me to do. ²⁸ So, this is what I say: It is true that I will enable the Babylonian army and King Nebuchadnezzar to capture this city. ²⁹ The soldiers of Babylonia who are now outside the walls around the city will enter and burn this city. They will burn down all the houses where people caused me to become angry by burning incense on the tops of their roofs to honor Baal and by pouring out offerings of wine to other gods.

³⁰ The people of Israel and Judah have continually done only evil things from the time that they became a nation. They

have caused me to become very angry by all their evil deeds. ³¹ From the time that this city was built until now, the people of this city have done only things that caused me to be very angry. So now I will destroy it. ³² The people of Israel and Judah, including their kings, their officials, the priests, the false prophets, and all the other people in Jerusalem have committed many sins that have caused me to become angry. ³³ My people have turned away from me and have refused to return to me. Even though I taught them things many times, they would not pay attention to what I taught them, and they would not obey me. ³⁴ They have set up their detestable idols even in my own temple and defiled it. ³⁵ They have built on the hilltops places to worship Baal in Ben Hinnom Valley outside Jerusalem, and there they sacrifice their sons and daughters to their god Molech. I never commanded them to do such horrible deeds. I never even considered ordering such a terrible thing. And by doing it they have caused all the people of Judah to be guilty of having sinned."

³⁶ "But now I will say something more about this city. You people of Jerusalem have been saying, 'The army of the king of Babylon will conquer it, either by their swords or because of famines or diseases.' But this is what I, the God of Israel, say: ³⁷ 'I will certainly bring my people back here again, from all the countries to which I will force them to go because I am extremely angry with them. I will bring them back to this city and allow them to live here safely. ³⁸ They will be my people, and I will be their God. ³⁹ I will give them one way of thinking and behaving, in order that they may revere me, for their good and for the good of their descendants. ⁴⁰ I will make an agreement with them that will last forever: I will never stop doing good things for them, and they will always honor me; they will never stop

worshiping me. ⁴¹ I will be happy to do good things for them, and I will surely enable them to return to this land and remain here; I will do that with all my inner being and all my strength.'

⁴² And this is also what I, Yahweh, say: 'I have caused them to experience all these disasters. Similarly, some day I will do for them all the good things that I have promised. ⁴³ By buying land you, Jeremiah, have predicted that some day people will buy and sell fields in this land about which you people of Jerusalem now say, "The Babylonian soldiers have destroyed it. It is now desolate. It is a land where there are no longer any people or animals." ⁴⁴ But some day people will again buy and sell fields here. People will sign documents about buying those fields, and other people will witness them doing that. That will happen in the land where the descendants of Benjamin live and here in the villages near Jerusalem, in other towns in Judah, in the hill country and in the foothills to the west, and in the southern Judean wilderness. Some day I will cause them to prosper again. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.'"

Chapter 33

¹ While Jeremiah was still being guarded in the courtyard of the palace, Yahweh gave him this second message: ² "This is what I, the one who made the earth, who formed it and put it in its place, say to the people of Jerusalem: 'My name is Yahweh. ³ Call out to me, and then I will tell you great and wonderful things that you have not known before.' ⁴ This is what I, Yahweh, the God of Israel, say: 'The men in this city have torn down some of their houses, and even parts of the king's

palace, to get materials to strengthen the walls around the city, in order that the soldiers of Babylonia would not be able to break through the walls after they climb up the ramps that they have built against the walls, and kill the inhabitants with their swords. ⁵ You are expecting to fight against the army from Babylonia, but what will happen is that the houses of this city will be filled with the corpses of the men of this city whom I will allow to be killed because I am extremely angry with them. I have abandoned them because of all the wicked things that they have done.

⁶ However, there will be a time when I will cause the people in this city to be healthy and strong again. I will enable them to be prosperous and have peace. ⁷ I will bring the people of Judah and Israel back from the lands to which they were exiled. I will enable them to rebuild their towns. ⁸ I will get rid of their guilt for all the sins that they have committed against me, and I will forgive them for their sin of rebelling against me. ⁹ When that happens, all the nations of the world will rejoice, and they will praise me and honor me. They will hear about all the good things that I have done for this city and, because of that, they will revere me, and they will tremble because I have caused the people in this city to have peace and to prosper.'

¹⁰ And this is also what I, Yahweh, say: 'You people have said that this is a land where there are no longer any people or animals. But in the streets of Jerusalem that are now completely empty, and in the other towns in Judah, ¹¹ some day people will again be happy and laugh. Brides and bridegrooms will again sing joyfully. And many other people will also sing joyfully as they bring their offerings to me to thank me for what I have done for them. They will sing this song:

"We thank you, Yahweh, commander of

the angel armies,

because you are good to us.

You faithfully hold to your covenant with us forever.”

They will sing that because I will cause the people of this land to be as prosperous as they were before.’

¹² This land is now desolate. There are no people or animals living here. But I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, say this: ‘In this land there will again be pastures where shepherds will lead their sheep ¹³ Shepherds will again count their sheep as the sheep walk by, outside the towns in the hill country, in the western foothills, in the southern Judean wilderness, in the land where the descendants of Benjamin live, around Jerusalem, and outside all the other towns in Judah.’ That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.

¹⁴ Listen to this! I, Yahweh, say that there will be a time when I will do for the people of Israel and Judah all the good things that I promised to do for them.

¹⁵ At that time I will appoint a righteous man who will be a descendant of King David.

Throughout the land, he will do what is just and right.

¹⁶ At that time, the people of Judah will be rescued from their enemies,

and the people of Jerusalem will be safe.

And people will say that the name of the city is ‘Yahweh is the one who does right for us.’ ¹⁷ And this is also what I, Yahweh, say: ‘There will be descendants of King David ruling Israel forever. ¹⁸ And there will always be priests who are descendants of Levi who stand in front of me and offer sacrifices that will be com-

pletely burned on the altar and who will burn food offerings and other sacrifices.’”

¹⁹ Then Yahweh gave Jeremiah this message: ²⁰ “This is what I, Yahweh, say: ‘You certainly cannot annul my promise to cause nighttime to follow daytime each day. ²¹ Similarly, you cannot annul the promise that I made with King David, who served me well, that there will always be descendants of his who will rule Judah. The same is true for my agreement with the descendants of Levi who are priests who do work for me. ²² No one can count the stars in the sky, and no one can count the grains of sand at the seashore. Similarly, I will cause there to be a huge number of descendants of David and descendants of Levi who will work for me.’”

²³ Yahweh gave another message to me. He said, ²⁴ “Surely you know that some people are saying, ‘Yahweh chose two groups, the people of Judah and the people of Israel, and later abandoned them.’ The people who are saying this are despising my people; they are saying that Israel no longer deserves to be considered a nation. ²⁵ But this is what I say: ‘I will not reject my people any quicker than I will change my laws that control the day and the night, the sky and the earth. ²⁶ Similarly, I will never abandon the descendants of David or the other descendants of Jacob, and I will always allow descendants of David to rule the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I will bring them back to their land, and I will act mercifully toward them.’”

Chapter 34

¹ King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came with the armies of all the kingdoms that he ruled, and they fought against Jerusalem and the other towns in Judah. At that time,

Yahweh gave me this message: ² "Go to Zedekiah the King of Judah, and say to him, 'This is what Yahweh, the God of Israel, says: "I am about to enable the army of the king of Babylon to capture this city, and they will burn it down. ³ You will not escape from them; they will capture you and take you to the king of Babylon. You will meet him and speak with him face to face; then they will take you to Babylon."

⁴ But King Zedekiah, listen to what Yahweh has promised: "You will not be killed in a battle; ⁵ you will die peacefully. When you die, people will burn incense to honor you just as they did for your ancestors who were kings before you became king. They will mourn for you, calling out, 'We are very sad that our king is dead!' I, Yahweh, promise that will happen."

⁶ So I took that message to King Zedekiah.

⁷ At that time the army of Babylonia had surrounded Jerusalem and Lachish and Azekah. Those three cities were the only three cities in Judah that had high walls around them that still had not been captured.

⁸ King Zedekiah had decreed that the people must free their slaves. ⁹ He decreed that the people must free their Hebrew slaves, both the men slaves and the women slaves. No one would be allowed to force a fellow Jew to continue to be his slave. ¹⁰ The officials and the rest of the people had obeyed what the king decreed, ¹¹ but later they changed their minds. They forced the men and women whom they had freed to become their slaves again.

¹² So Yahweh gave me this message to tell to them: ¹³ "I, Yahweh, the God of Israel, made an agreement with your ancestors long ago, when I rescued them from being slaves in Egypt. ¹⁴ I told them that they must free all their Hebrew slaves after the slaves had worked for them for six

years. But your ancestors did not pay any attention to what I said. ¹⁵ Recently, you obeyed my command and stopped doing what was wrong and did what was right. You made a solemn agreement at my temple that you would free your slaves, and then you freed them. ¹⁶ But now you have disregarded what you solemnly promised, and you have shown contempt for what I said by taking back the women and men whom you had freed and said they could live wherever they wanted to. Now you have forced them to be your slaves again.

¹⁷ Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh, say: 'Because you have not obeyed me by freeing your fellow Israelites, I will free you to be destroyed by the swords of your enemies and by famines and diseases. All the nations of the earth will be horrified because of what happens to you. ¹⁸⁻¹⁹ Because you have disregarded what I said in my agreement with you, I will do to you just what you did to the calves that you cut in half to show that you would surely do what you solemnly promised that you would do. I will enable your enemies to cut you into pieces, you officials of Judah and you officials of Jerusalem, and you officials in the palace, and you priests and all you common people. I will do that because you have ignored the fact that you had solemnly promised to free your slaves. ²⁰ I will enable your enemies to capture you, and they will kill you. And your bodies will be food for vultures and wild animals.

²¹ I will enable the army of the king of Babylon to capture King Zedekiah and his officials. Although the king of Babylon and his army have left Jerusalem for a short time, ²² I will summon them back again. This time, they will fight against this city and capture it and burn it down. I will make sure that all the towns in Judah are destroyed, with the result that no one

will live there anymore.”

Chapter 35

¹ Several years earlier, when Jehoiakim son of Josiah was the king of Judah, Yahweh gave me this message: ² “Go to the place where families of the Rekab clan live. Invite them to my temple. When they arrive, take them into one of the inside rooms and offer them some wine.”

³ So I went to see Jaazaniah and all his brothers and sons who represented the Rekab clan. Jaazaniah was a son of another man named Jeremiah and grandson of Habazziniah. ⁴ I took them to the temple, and we went into the room where the sons of Igdaliah’s son Hanan, who was a prophet, stayed. That room was next to the room that was used by the men who were in charge of the entrances to the temple. It was above the room that belonged to Maaseiah, who was the temple gatekeeper and the son of Shallum.

⁵ I set jugs of wine and some cups in front of them and urged them to drink some, ⁶ but they refused. They said, “We do not drink wine, because our ancestor Jonadab son of Rekab, commanded us, saying ‘You and your descendants must never drink wine.’ ⁷ And you must not build houses or plant vineyards or other crops. Instead, you must always live in tents. If you obey those commands, you all will live for many years in this land.” ⁸ So we have obeyed him in all those matters. We have never drunk wine. Our wives and our sons and our daughters have also never drunk wine. ⁹ We have not built houses or planted vineyards or other crops or worked in fields. ¹⁰ We have lived in tents. We have obeyed all the commands that Jonadab, our ancestor, gave us. ¹¹ But when the army of King Nebuchadnezzar

attacked this country, we said, ‘We must go to Jerusalem to escape from the armies of Babylonia and Aram.’ So, we came to Jerusalem and we are living here.”

¹² Then Yahweh gave this message to me:

¹³ “This is what I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, say: ‘Go and tell this to the people in Jerusalem and in other places in Judah: “Why do you not listen to me or learn something about how to obey me?’

¹⁴ The Rekab clan still do not drink wine, because their ancestor Jonadab told them to not do that. In contrast, I have spoken to you many times, but you ignored me and refused to obey me. ¹⁵ Many times I sent prophets to you. They told you, ‘Turn away from your wicked behavior, and do things that you should do. Stop worshiping other gods, in order that you will be able to live peacefully in this land that I gave to you and your ancestors.’ But you would not pay attention to what I said or obey me. ¹⁶ The descendants of Jonadab have obeyed their ancestor, but you have refused to pay attention to what I told you.

¹⁷ Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, say: ‘You have refused to listen to me and you did not answer when I called you. Therefore, I will cause the people in Jerusalem and other places in Judah to experience all the disasters that I said that I would cause to happen.’”

¹⁸ Then Jeremiah turned to the Rekab clan and said, “This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, says: ‘You have obeyed what your ancestor Jonadab told you. You have obeyed all his instructions. ¹⁹ Therefore, this is what Yahweh says: “There will always be descendants of Jonadab who will do work for me.’”

Chapter 36

¹ When Jehoiakim son of Josiah had been the king of Judah for almost four years, Yahweh gave this message to me: ² "Get a scroll, and write on it the messages that I have given to you regarding Israel, Judah, and the other nations. Write all of the messages, starting from the time that I gave you the first message, when Josiah was the king, up until now. ³ When the people of Judah hear again about all the disasters that I plan to cause them to experience, perhaps each one of them will repent. If they do that, I will be able to forgive them for the wrong things that they have done."

⁴ So Jeremiah summoned Baruch son of Neraiah. Then, as Jeremiah dictated to him all the messages that Yahweh had spoken to him, he wrote them on a scroll. ⁵ Then Jeremiah said to him, "I am not allowed to leave here and go to the temple. ⁶ So, you go to the temple on the next day when the people are fasting, and read to them the messages from Yahweh that you wrote while I dictated them to you. Read them aloud to all the people who are there, including the people of Judah who come there from their towns. ⁷ Perhaps they will turn from their evil behavior and request Yahweh to act mercifully toward them. They must do that, because Yahweh is very angry with them and has threatened to punish them severely."

⁸ Baruch did what Jeremiah told him to do. He went to the temple and read to the people all those messages from Yahweh. ⁹ He did it on the ninth month, on a day when their leaders had proclaimed that all the people in Jerusalem, and the people who had come there from other towns in Judah, should fast to please Yahweh. This happened when Jehoiakim had been king for almost five years. ¹⁰ Baruch

read to all the people the messages that he had written on the scroll. He read them while he was in the temple, in the room where Gemariah stayed. He was the son of Shaphan, who had previously been the king's secretary. That room was close to the upper courtyard of the temple, near the entrance to the temple that is called the New Gate.

¹¹ When Micaiah son of Gemariah, and grandson of Shaphan, heard these messages from Yahweh, ¹² he went down to the secretary's room in the palace, where all the king's officials were meeting. Elishama the king's secretary was there. Delaiah son of Shemaiah, Elnathan son of Achor, Gemariah, Zedekiah son of Hananiah, and all the other officials of the king were also there. ¹³ When Micaiah told them about the messages that Baruch had been reading to the people, ¹⁴ the officials sent Jehudi son of Nethaniah, and grandson of Shelemiah and great-grandson of Cushi, to tell Baruch to come and read the messages to them, also. So Baruch took the scroll and went to them. ¹⁵ They said to him, "Please sit down and read it to us." So Baruch did what they requested.

¹⁶ After they had heard all the messages, they were afraid. They looked at each other and then they said, "We must tell these messages to the king!" ¹⁷ Then they asked Baruch, "How did you get this scroll? Did Jeremiah dictate to you all the messages on this scroll?"

¹⁸ Baruch replied, "Yes, Jeremiah dictated them to me, and I wrote them with ink on this scroll."

¹⁹ Then the officials told Baruch, "You and Jeremiah must both hide. Do not tell anyone where you are!"

²⁰ They put the scroll in the room of Elishama, the king's secretary. Then they went to the king, who was in the court-

yard, and reported to him everything that Baruch had read to them.

²¹ Then the king sent Jehudi to get the scroll. Jehudi brought it from Elishama's room and read it to the king, while all the king's officials were standing there. ²² It was in the cold season, and the king was in a part of the palace where he stayed when it was cold. He was sitting in front of a fire to keep warm. ²³ Each time Jehudi finished reading three or four columns, the king cut off that section of the scroll with a knife and threw it into the fire. He did that, section by section, until the entire scroll was burned up. ²⁴ Neither the king nor his officials showed that they were afraid that God would punish them. They did not tear their clothes to show that they were sorry for what they had done. ²⁵ Elnathan, Delaiah, and Gemariah pleaded with the king not to burn the scroll, but he did not pay any attention. ²⁶ Then the king commanded his son Jerahmeel, Seraiah son of Azriel, and Shelemiah son of Abdeel to arrest Baruch and me. But they were unable to do that because Yahweh had hidden us.

²⁷ After the king had burned the scroll on which were written the messages that I had dictated to Baruch, Yahweh said this to me: ²⁸ "Get another scroll, and tell Baruch to write everything again, the same messages that he had written on the scroll that King Jehoiakim burned. ²⁹ Then go to the king and say to him, 'Yahweh says this: You burned the scroll because you did not like what was written on it, that the king of Babylon would surely come with his army and destroy this land and get rid of all the people and the animals. ³⁰ Now this is what I, Yahweh, say about you, Jehoiakim: None of your descendants will rule this kingdom. Your corpse will be thrown out on the ground and not buried; it will be under the hot

sun during the days and struck by frost during the nights. ³¹ I will punish you and your family and your officials for their sins. And I will cause the people of Jerusalem and the people of the other towns in Judah to experience all the disasters that I promised, because you all would not pay attention to what I said;'"

³² So Jeremiah took another scroll, and again he dictated the messages to Baruch. He wrote everything that had been written on the other scroll, the one that King Jehoiakim had burned in the fire. But this time, Jeremiah added more messages.

Chapter 37

¹ After Jehoiakim died, his son Jehoiachin became king for only three months, after which King Josiah's son Zedekiah became the king of Judah. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, appointed him to be the new king. ² But King Zedekiah and his palace officials and the other people in the land paid no attention to the messages that Yahweh gave me.

³ However, one day King Zedekiah sent Jehukal son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah the priest, son of Maaseiah, to me. They requested me to pray to Yahweh our God for our nation.

⁴ At that time Jeremiah had not yet been put in prison, so he could go and come wherever and whenever he wanted to, without being hindered.

⁵ At that time, the army of Hophra, the king of Egypt, came to the southern border of Judah. When the army of Babylon heard about that, they stopped surrounding Jerusalem and left there to fight against the army from Egypt.

⁶ Then Yahweh gave this message to me: ⁷ "I, Yahweh, the God of Israel, say this: The

king of Judah has sent messengers to you to ask me what is going to happen. Tell the king that even though the army of the king of Egypt came to help him, they are about to return to Egypt. ⁸ Then the army of Babylonia will return here, capture this city, and burn everything in it.

⁹ So, this is what Jeremiah said to you Israelites: 'You should not deceive yourselves, thinking that the army from Babylonia has gone and will not return. That is not true. ¹⁰ And even if your soldiers could destroy almost all of the soldiers from Babylonia who are attacking you, and allow only those who were wounded to remain alive in their tents, those men would come out of their tents and completely burn this city.'

¹¹ When the army from Babylonia left Jerusalem because the army from Egypt was approaching, ¹² Jeremiah started to leave the city. He intended to go to the area where the descendants of Benjamin live, in order to take possession of my share of the property from my family. ¹³ But as he was walking out the Benjamin Gate, the head guard seized Jeremiah and said, "You are deserting us and going to the soldiers from Babylonia!" The man who seized him was Irijah son of Shelemiah, and grandson of Hananiah.

¹⁴ But Jeremiah protested and said, "That is not true! I was not intending to do that!" But Irijah would not pay attention to what Jeremiah said. He took Jeremiah to the king's officials. ¹⁵ They were very angry with him. They commanded the guards to beat Jeremiah and then to put him in the house where Jonathan the king's secretary stayed. They had changed Jonathan's house to make it become a prison.

¹⁶ They put Jeremiah in a dungeon in that prison, and he remained there for several days. ¹⁷ Then King Zedekiah secretly sent a servant to him, who took Jeremiah to

the palace. There the king asked him, "Do you have any messages from Yahweh?" Jeremiah replied, "Yes, the message is that you will be put into the hands of the king of Babylon."

¹⁸ Then Jeremiah asked the king, "What crime have I committed against you or against your officials or against the Israelite people, with the result that you have commanded that I be put in a prison? ¹⁹ Your prophets predicted that the army of the king of Babylon would not attack you or this land. Why were their messages not fulfilled? ²⁰ Your majesty, I plead with you to listen to me. Do not send me back to the dungeon in the house of Jonathan your secretary, because if you do that, I will die there."

²¹ So King Zedekiah commanded that Jeremiah not be sent back to the prison cell. Instead, he was allowed to be watched by the guards in the courtyard of the palace. The king also commanded that they should bring him a loaf of fresh bread every day, until there was no bread left in the city. So they put Jeremiah in that courtyard and he remained there.

Chapter 38

¹ Four officials, Shephatiah son of Mattan, Gedaliah son of Pashhur, Jehukal son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur son of Malkijah, heard what Jeremiah had been telling all the people. ² He had been telling them that Yahweh was saying, "Everyone who stays in Jerusalem will die. They will be killed by their enemies' swords or from famines or from diseases. But those who surrender to the Babylonian army will remain alive. They will escape; they will not be killed. ³ Yahweh also says that the army of the king of Babylon will certainly capture this city."

⁴ So those officials went to the king and said, "This man Jeremiah should be executed! Because of what he is saying, he is discouraging our soldiers who remain in the city. He is also discouraging the people. He is not saying things that will help us; he is saying things that will defeat us."

⁵ King Zedekiah said, "All right, do to him what you want to; I do not have the power to stop you."

⁶ So those officials took Jeremiah from his cell and lowered him by ropes into a cistern in the courtyard. The cistern belonged to Malkijah, who was a son of the king. There was no water in the cistern, but there was a lot of mud, so he sank down deep into the mud.

⁷ But Ebed-Melek, a palace official from Ethiopia, heard someone say that Jeremiah was in the well. At that time the king was deciding people's cases at the Benjamin Gate. ⁸ Ebed-Melek went out of the palace and said to the king, ⁹ "Your majesty, those men have done a very evil thing. They have put the prophet Jeremiah in a well. Almost all the food in the city is gone, so no one will be able to bring him any food, and as a result he will die from hunger!"

¹⁰ So the king told Ebed-Melek, "Take thirty of my men with you, and pull Jeremiah out of the well, in order that he does not die!"

¹¹ So Ebed-Melek took charge of those thirty men; they went into a room in the palace below the room where people had stored things. There they found some old rags and discarded clothing. They took those things and went to the well. They fastened them to a rope and lowered the rope to me. ¹² Then Ebed-Melek called down to me, "Put these rags underneath your armpits, to protect you from being injured by the ropes!" So Jeremiah did that.

¹³ Then they pulled him out of the well. So he stayed in the courtyard where the palace guards were.

¹⁴ One day King Zedekiah summoned Jeremiah, and he was brought to the king, who was waiting for him at the entrance of the temple. He said to Jeremiah, "I want to ask you something. I want you to answer me truthfully, and to not conceal anything."

¹⁵ Jeremiah replied, "If I tell you the truth, you will command that I be executed. And if I give you good advice, you will not pay attention to what I say."

¹⁶ But King Zedekiah secretly promised him, "Tell me the truth! And as surely as Yahweh lives, I will not cause you to be executed, and I will not put you into the hands of those who are wanting to kill you."

¹⁷ So then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, says: 'If you surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon, you and your family will be spared, and this city will not be burned. ¹⁸ But if you refuse to surrender to them, you will not escape. And the army from Babylonia will capture this city and completely burn it.'"

¹⁹ The king replied, "But I am afraid to surrender to the soldiers from Babylon, because their officers may put me into the hands of the people of Judah who have already joined the soldiers from Babylonia, and those people from Judah will mistreat me."

²⁰ Jeremiah replied, "If you obey Yahweh by doing what I tell you to do, they will not put you into the hands of our people. Things will go well for you, and you will remain alive. ²¹ But if you refuse to surrender, I will tell you what Yahweh has revealed to me. ²² All the women who re-

main in your palace will be brought out and given to the officers of the king of Babylon. Then those women will say to you:

'You had friends whom you thought you could trust,

but they have deceived you and caused you to make a wrong decision.

Now it is as though you are stuck in mud,

and your friends have abandoned you.'

²³ All of your wives and children in the city will be led out to the soldiers from Babylonia, and you also will not escape. The soldiers of the king of Babylon will seize you, and they will burn down this city."

²⁴ Then Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "Do not tell anyone what you told me; if you tell anyone, the king's officials may kill you.

²⁵ If my officials find out that I talked to you, perhaps they will come to you and say, 'Tell us what you and the king were talking about. If you do not tell us, we will kill you.' ²⁶ If that happens, just tell them that you pleaded with me not to send you back to the dungeon in Jonathan's house, because you were afraid that you would die if you were put there again."

²⁷ And that is what happened. The king's officials came to Jeremiah and asked why the king had summoned him. But he told them what the king told him to tell them. So they did not ask Jeremiah any more questions, because no one had heard what the king and Jeremiah had said to each other.

²⁸ So Jeremiah remained being guarded in the courtyard of the palace, until the day that the army of Babylonia captured Jerusalem.

Chapter 39

¹ After King Zedekiah had been ruling Judah for almost nine years, King Nebuchadnezzar came in the tenth month of the year with his army, and they surrounded Jerusalem. ² One and a half years later, after Zedekiah had been ruling for almost eleven years, in the eleventh year and fourth month, soldiers from Babylonia broke through the city wall. Then they rushed in and captured the city. ³ Then all the officers of the king of Babylon came in and sat down at the Middle Gate to decide what they would do to the city. They included Nergal-Sharezer, Samgar Nebo, Sarsekim who was one of the chief administrative officers, Nergal-Sharezer, the king's advisor, and many other officials.

⁴ When King Zedekiah and all his soldiers realized that the army of Babylonia had broken into the city, they fled. They waited until it was dark. Then they went out of the city through the king's garden, through the gate that was between the two walls. Then they started running toward the plain along the Jordan.

⁵ But the soldiers from Babylonia pursued the king, and they caught him on the plains near Jericho. They took him to the king of Babylon, who was at Riblah in the Hamath. There Nebuchadnezzar told his soldiers what they should do to punish Zedekiah. ⁶ They forced Zedekiah to watch while they killed his sons and all the officials from Judah. ⁷ Then they gouged out Zedekiah's eyes. They fastened him with bronze chains and took him to Babylon.

⁸ Meanwhile, the Babylonian army burned the palace and all the other buildings in Jerusalem. And they tore down the city walls. ⁹ Then Nebuzaradan, the captain of the king's bodyguards, forced to go to Babylon most of the other people who

remained in the city and the Jews who had joined the soldiers of Babylonia. ¹⁰ But he allowed some of the very poor people to remain in Judah, and he gave them vineyards and fields to take care of.

¹¹ King Nebuchadnezzar had previously told the captain of the guard, Nebuzaradan to find Jeremiah. He said, ¹² "Make sure that no one harms him. Take care of him, and do for him whatever he requests you to do." ¹³ So he and Nebushazban, who was one of their chief officers, and Nergal-Sharezer the king's advisor, and other officers of the king of Babylon ¹⁴ sent some men to bring Jeremiah out of the courtyard outside of the palace. They took him to Gedaliah who was the son of Ahikam and grandson of Shaphan. Then Gedaliah took Jeremiah to his home, and he stayed in Judah among his own people who had been allowed to remain there.

¹⁵ But while Jeremiah was still being guarded in the palace courtyard, Yahweh gave him this message: ¹⁶ "Say this to Ebed-Melek, the official from Ethiopia: 'This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, says: I will do to this city everything that I said that I would do. Everything I told you would be done, and you will see it with your own eyes. ¹⁷ But I promise to rescue you from the people you are afraid of. This is what I, Yahweh, have promised to you! ¹⁸ You trusted me, so I will save you. You will not be killed by our enemies' swords. You will live. That will surely happen, because I, Yahweh, have said it.'"

Chapter 40

¹ The soldiers from Babylonia captured Jeremiah and many other people from Jerusalem and other places in Judah. They

planned to take them to Babylon. So they fastened chains around their wrists and took them to Ramah, a town north of Jerusalem. While they were there, Jeremiah was released. This is how it happened: ² Nebuzaradan, the captain of the king's guards, found that Jeremiah was there. He summoned Jeremiah and said to him, "Yahweh your God said that he would cause this land to experience a disaster. ³ And now he has caused it to happen. He has done just what he said that he would do, because you people sinned against Yahweh and refused to obey him. ⁴ But today I am going to take the chains off your wrists and release you. If you want to come with me to Babylon, that will be fine. I will take care of you. But if you do not want to come with me, do not come. Stay here. Look, the entire country is available; you can choose whatever part you want to go to. You can go wherever you think it is best." Then he took the chains off Jeremiah's wrists. ⁵ He said, "If you decide to stay here, go to Gedaliah. The king of Babylon appointed him to be the governor of Judah. You will be allowed to stay here with the people that he is governing. But you can do whatever you want to."

Then Nebuzaradan gave Jeremiah some food and some money, and he allowed him to go.

⁶ He returned to Gedaliah at Mizpah, and he stayed in Judah with the people who still remained in the land.

⁷ The Israelite soldiers who had not surrendered to the army of Babylonia were roaming around in the countryside. Then their leaders heard someone say that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah to be the governor of the very poor people who were still in Judah, who had not been taken to Babylon. ⁸ So they went to talk to Gedaliah at Mizpah. Those who

went included Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth, the sons of Ephai from Netophath, and Jezaniah from Maacah, and the soldiers who were with them.

⁹ Gedaliah solemnly promised that the soldiers from Babylonia would not harm them. He said, "Do not be afraid to do things for them. Stay here in this land and do things for the king of Babylon. If you do that, things will go well for you."

¹⁰ As for me, I will stay here at Mizpah to be your representative to the officials from Babylonia who come to talk with us. But you should return to your towns, and eat the things that are produced on your land. Harvest the grapes and the fruit that ripens in the summer and the olives, make wine and olive oil, and store it."

¹¹ Then the Jews who had fled to Moab, Ammon, Edom, and other nearby countries heard people say that the king of Babylon had allowed a few people to remain in Judah, and that he had appointed Gedaliah to be their governor. ¹² So they began to return to Judah. They stopped at Mizpah to talk with Gedaliah. Then they went to various places in Judea, and they harvested a great amount of grapes and summer fruit.

¹³ Some time later, Johanan and all the other leaders of the Israelite soldiers who had not surrendered to the army of Babylonia came to Gedaliah at Mizpah. ¹⁴ They said to him, "Do you know that Baalis, the king of the people of Ammon, has sent Ishmael son of Nethaniah to assassinate you?" But Gedaliah did not believe what they said.

¹⁵ Later Johanan talked with Gedaliah privately. He said, "Allow me to go and murder Ishmael secretly. It would not be good to allow him to come and murder you! If you are killed, what will happen to all the Jews who have returned to

this area? They will be scattered, and the other people who remain in Judah will all be killed!"

¹⁶ But Gedaliah said to Johanan, "No, I will not allow you to do that. I think that you are lying about Ishmael."

Chapter 41

¹ Ishmael son of Nethaniah was a member of the king's family. He had been one of King Zedekiah's important officials. In the seventh month of that year, he went to Mizpah with ten other men to talk with Gedaliah. While they were eating together, ² Ishmael and the other ten men jumped up, and with their swords they killed Gedaliah—the man whom the king of Babylon had appointed to be their governor! ³ Ishmael and the other men also killed all the Jews and the Babylonians who his soldiers found with Gedaliah at Mizpah.

⁴ The next day, before anyone had found out that Gedaliah had been murdered, ⁵ eighty men from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria came to worship at the temple of Yahweh in Mizpah. They had shaved off their beards and torn their clothes and cut themselves to show that they were mourning. And they had brought grain offerings and incense to burn on the altar. ⁶ Ishmael son of Nethaniah went out of the city to meet them, weeping as he went. When he reached them, he said, "Come and see what has happened to Gedaliah!"

⁷ But as soon as they had all entered the town, Ishmael and his men killed most of them and threw their corpses into a well. ⁸ There were only ten of them whom they spared. They were not killed because they promised to Ishmael that if he allowed them to remain alive, they

would bring him lots of wheat and barley and olive oil and honey that they had hidden. ⁹ The well where Ishmael's men had thrown the corpses of the men whom they had murdered was the deep well that King Asa's men had dug in order that they would have water in the city if the army of King Baasha of Israel would surround the city. Ishmael's men filled that well with corpses.

¹⁰ Then Ishmael and his men captured the king's daughters and some of the other people who had been left in Mizpah by the chief Babylonian guard Nebuzaradan so that Gedaliah would take care of them. Ishmael and his men took those people and started back toward the Ammon area.

¹¹ But Johanan son of Kareah and all the other leaders of the Israelite soldiers who had not surrendered to the army of Babylon heard about what Ishmael son of Nethaniah and his men had done. ¹² So they immediately went with all their men to stop them. They caught up with them at the large pool near the city of Gibeon. ¹³ When all the people whom Ishmael and his men had captured saw Johanan and the soldiers who were with him, they shouted joyfully. ¹⁴ So all those who had been captured in Mizpah escaped, and they started to help Johanan. ¹⁵ But Ishmael son of Nethaniah and eight of his men escaped and fled to the Ammon area. ¹⁶ Then Johanan son of Kareah and the men who were with him gathered together all the people whom they had rescued at Gibeon. They included soldiers and women and children and some of the king's palace officials. They were all people whom Ishmael and his men had captured after they had killed Gedaliah. ¹⁷ They took them all to Geruth Kimham village near Bethlehem. And they all prepared to go to Egypt. ¹⁸ They were wor-

ried about what the soldiers of Babylon would do to them when they found out that Ishmael had killed Gedaliah, who had been appointed by the king of Babylon to be their governor.

Chapter 42

¹ Then Johanan son of Kareah and Jezeaniah son of Hoshai, and all the other leaders of the Israelite soldiers who had not surrendered to the army of Babylon, and many other people, including those who were important and those who were not important, came to me. ² They said, "Please listen to our request and pray to Yahweh our God for all of us. Although we were previously a huge number of people, you can see that now we are only a small number of people who have survived. ³ Pray that Yahweh our God will show us what we should do and where we should go."

⁴ I replied, "Okay, I will pray to Yahweh our God, like you have requested, and I will tell you what he says. I will tell you everything."

⁵ They replied to me, "We know that Yahweh our God will be a faithful witness against us if we refuse to do everything that he tells us to do. ⁶ We are requesting you to ask Yahweh our God what we should do. When he replies, we will obey him, whether we like what he says or not. We will do that because we know that things will go well for us if we obey him."

⁷ So I prayed to Yahweh, and ten days later he gave me his reply. ⁸ So I summoned Johanan son of Kareah and all the other leaders of the and all the other people, including those who were important and those who were not important. ⁹ I said to them, "You told me to tell Yahweh, the God of Israel what you were requesting. This

is what he replied: ¹⁰ 'You should stay here in this land. If you do that, I will cause your nation to be strong and not be weak. I will cause you to prosper and not be exiled again. I will stop the disasters that I made you experience. ¹¹ But do not be afraid of the king of Babylon anymore, because I will be with you. I will rescue you from his power. ¹² I will be merciful to you by causing him to act kindly toward you. So as a result, he will allow you to stay here in your land.'

¹³ But if you refuse to obey Yahweh our God, and if you say 'We will not stay here; ¹⁴ instead, we will go to Egypt. There we will not experience any wars, we will not hear trumpets signaling our soldiers to prepare for battles, and we will not be hungry.' ¹⁵ Listen now! you people who are left in Judah! Listen to what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, says to you: 'If you are determined to go to Egypt, and if you go and live there, ¹⁶ you will experience those wars and famines that you are afraid of, and you will all die there. ¹⁷ That is what will happen to all you who are determined to go to Egypt and live there. Some of you will be killed by the swords of your enemies, and others of you will die from famines and from diseases. None of you will escape the disasters that I will bring on you.'

¹⁸ And Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, also says this: 'Because I was very angry, I severely punished all the people of Jerusalem. I will do the same things to you when you go to Egypt. The result will be that people will curse you. They will be horrified about what has happened to you. They will make fun of you, and you will never see this land again.'

¹⁹ You little group of people of Judah who are still alive, listen to me: Yahweh has

told you, 'Do not go to Egypt.' So do not forget what I have warned you today. ²⁰ You made a life-and-death mistake when you requested me to pray to Yahweh our God and claimed to be willing to obey everything he said. ²¹ So today I have told you exactly what he said, but I know that you will not obey Yahweh our God now, just as you have not obeyed him previously. ²² You want to go to Egypt and live there. So now, you can be sure of this: All of you will die there. Some of you will be killed by the swords of your enemies and others will die from famines or from diseases."

Chapter 43

¹ So I finished telling to the people that message from Yahweh our God. ² But then Johanan son of Kareah and Azariah son of Hoshaiah and some other insolent men said to me, "You are lying! Yahweh our God has not told us that we should not go to Egypt! ³ We think that Baruch son of Neriah has urged you to say this, in order that if we stay here, the soldiers from Babylonia will seize us and kill us or take us to Babylonia."

⁴ So Johanan and the other leaders of the Judean soldiers and many of the other people who were there refused to obey Yahweh's command to stay in Judah. ⁵ Johanan and all the other leaders gathered together all the people who had returned from the other countries to which they had been scattered. ⁶ They included men, women, children, the king's daughters, and all those whom Nebuzaradan had left with Gedaliah, and they also took Baruch and me. ⁷ They refused to obey Yahweh, and they took us all to Egypt, as far as the city of Tahpanhes.

⁸ While we were at Tachpanches, Yahweh gave me another message. He said,

⁹ "While the people of Judah are watching you, take some large rocks and bury them under the brick pavement at the entrance to the king's palace there at Tachpanches. ¹⁰ Then say to the people of Judah, 'This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, says: "I will summon Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, who does my work, to come with his army to Egypt. I will set up his throne over these stones that I told Jeremiah to bury. And Nebuchadnezzar will set up his tent there to show that he has become the king of Egypt. ¹¹ When his army comes, they will attack Egypt. Then those will die who I have determined must die, those who I have determined must be captured will be captured, and those who I have determined must be killed by swords will be killed by swords. ¹² Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers will burn down the temples of the gods of Egypt and take away their idols as souvenirs. His troops will clean Egypt like a shepherd cleans lice from his cloak and leave without having been harmed. ¹³ But before they leave, they will have torn down the pillars that are in the temple of their sun god and burned all of the temple of the false Egyptian gods.'"

Chapter 44

¹ This is the message that Yahweh gave me concerning the Judeans who were living in northern Egypt—in Migdol, Tachpanches, and Memphis—and in the region of Pathros in southern Egypt: ² "This is what I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, say: You saw the disaster that I caused the people in Jerusalem and the other towns in Judah to experience. Those towns are now ruined and deserted. ³ That happened because I was extremely

angry with them on account of their being very wicked. They burned incense to other gods and worshiped them. They were gods that you previously did not know about, and your ancestors also did not know about them. ⁴ Many times I sent my prophets who served me, to say to them, 'Do not do those abominable things that I hate!' ⁵ But my people would not pay any attention to what I said to them. They would not turn away from their wicked behavior, or stop burning incense to worship other gods. ⁶ So I poured out the consequences of my great anger on them. My punishment fell on the streets of Jerusalem and on the other towns in Judah like a fire. It caused those towns to be ruined and deserted, and they are still like that.

⁷ So now I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, ask you: Why are you causing yourselves to experience these disasters? Do you not realize that because of what you are doing, soon there will be no more men or women or children or infants left among you who have come here to Egypt from Judah? ⁸ Why are you provoking me and causing me to be very angry by burning incense to the idols that you have made here in Egypt? If you continue doing this, you will destroy yourselves, and you will cause yourselves to be people whom all the nations on the earth will curse and despise. ⁹ Have you forgotten how I punished your ancestors for the wicked things that they did, and how I punished the kings and queens of Judah for what they did, and you and your wives for the sins that you committed in the streets of Jerusalem and the other towns in Judah? ¹⁰ Up until this day you have not humbled yourselves or revered me. You have not obeyed the laws and decrees that I gave to you and your ancestors.

¹¹ Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, say: I am determined to cause all of you to experience disasters and to get rid of everyone in Judah.

¹² You people from Judah who have survived were determined to come and live here in Egypt. So I will get rid of all of you here in Egypt. Every one of you will die, including those who are important and those who are not important. Some of you will be killed by your enemies' swords, some will die from famines. You will become people whom others curse, be horrified about, and make fun of. ¹³ I will punish you here in Egypt like I punished others in Jerusalem, some of whom were killed by their enemies' swords and some of whom died from famines or diseases.

¹⁴ None of you people who came from Judah and now live in Egypt, none of you will be successful in any attempt to escape from Egypt, you will not grow in numbers while you live in Egypt, and you will not be able to return to Judah, even though you desire to return to Judah, you will not be able to go back there to live and make your homes. None of you will be able to return to Judah, except only a very small number of you who will be able to escape from Egypt and to return Judah and live there."

¹⁵ Then a large group of the people who had started to live in northern Egypt and southern Egypt, including all the men who knew that their wives had been burning incense to other gods, and all the women who were standing there, said this to me:

¹⁶ "You are saying that Yahweh gave messages to you, but we will not pay any attention to your messages! ¹⁷ We will certainly do everything that we said that we would do. We will burn incense to worship our goddess Asherah, the Queen of Heaven, and we will pour out offerings of wine to her, just like we and our ancestors and

our kings and their officials have always done in the streets of Jerusalem and in the other towns in Judah. At that time, we had plenty of food, and we were prosperous and we did not have any troubles. ¹⁸ But ever since we stopped burning incense to the Queen of Heaven and giving her offerings of wine, we have had many troubles, and some of our people have been killed by our enemies or died from hunger."

¹⁹ And the women said, "Furthermore, we burned incense and poured out wine offerings to the Queen of Heaven, and we also made small cakes that resembled her idol, to offer to her, and we poured drinks to honor her. But our husbands certainly knew about and approved of what we were doing!"

²⁰ Then I said to all the men and women who had answered me, ²¹ "Do not think that Yahweh did not know that you and your ancestors and your kings and their officials and all the other people in Judah were burning incense to worship idols in the streets of Jerusalem and in the other towns in Judah! He knew about it! ²² It was because Yahweh could no longer endure your wicked actions and the detestable things that you were doing that he caused your land to be a place whose name people say when they curse someone, a land that is ruined and which has no one living in it. And your land is still like that. ²³ It is because you burned incense to worship idols and committed other sins against Yahweh that you experienced all those disasters. It is because you have not obeyed him or obeyed his laws and decrees and commandments."

²⁴ Then Jeremiah said to all of them, including the women, "All you people of Judah who are here in Egypt, listen to this message from Yahweh. ²⁵ This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, says to

you men: 'You and your wives have said that you would continue to do what you promised, to burn incense and pour out wine to the goddess whom you call the Queen of Heaven. And you have proved by your actions that you intend to continue to do that. So go ahead and continue doing what you have promised to do for her.'

²⁶ But now, all you people from Judah who are now living here in Egypt, listen to this message from Yahweh. He says, 'I have solemnly declared, using my great name, that soon none of you people from Judah who are here in Egypt will ever again use my name. There will be none of you who, when you solemnly promise to do something, will ever again say, "I will do it as surely as Yahweh lives."²⁷ Because I will be watching over you, not to cause good things to happen to you but to cause things to happen that will harm you. Almost everyone from Judah who is now here in Egypt will be killed by their enemies' swords or die from famine until almost all of you have come to an end.²⁸ Only a very few of you will not die by the sword and will return to Judah. When that happens, all those who came to Egypt will find out whose words were true, theirs or mine.'

²⁹ And Yahweh also says, 'I will do something that will prove to you that everything that I have said will happen, and that I will punish you here in this place.³⁰ I will cause Hophra, the king of Egypt, to be captured by his enemies who want to kill him, just like I caused King Zedekiah of Judah to be captured by the soldiers of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.'

Chapter 45

¹ After Jehoiakim son of King Josiah had been ruling Judah for almost four years,

Baruch son of Neriah wrote down all the messages that the prophet Jeremiah had dictated. Jeremiah gave a message and he said,² "Baruch, Yahweh, the God of Israel, has a message for you.³ You have said, 'Terrible things are happening to me! I have endured much pain already. And now Yahweh is causing me to be very sad, in addition to my having pain. I am exhausted from my groaning, and I am unable to rest!'

⁴ But Baruch, this is what Yahweh says: 'I will destroy this nation that I established. This nation is like a tree that I planted and that I will now pull up with its roots. I will do this everywhere in the world.⁵ So, should you desire that people do things to honor you in a special way? Do not desire that. It is true that I will cause all these people to experience a great disaster, but wherever you go, I will protect you, and you will not be killed.'

Chapter 46

¹ These are messages that Yahweh gave to the prophet Jeremiah about other nations.

² After Jehoiakim son of King Josiah, had been ruling Judah for almost four years, this message about Egypt was given to me by Yahweh. It was when the army of King Necho of Egypt was defeated by the army of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon at Carchemish by the Euphrates River.

This is what Yahweh said: "The officers of the army of Egypt are saying to their troops,

³ 'Prepare your small and large shields and march out to fight the battle!

⁴ Put harnesses on your horses, and get on their backs.

Get into your positions for the battle;

put on your helmets.
Sharpen your spears,
and put on your armor!’

⁵ But what do I see?

I see that the soldiers of Egypt will be terrified and will be fleeing.

Even the bravest of their soldiers will be running away,

without even looking backward!

I, Yahweh, say that their soldiers will be terrified on all sides!

⁶ Even the fastest runners will try to run away,

but even the greatest of their warriors will not escape.

In the north, by the Euphrates River,
they will stumble and fall.

⁷ What group is this that will be covering the land

like the water of the Nile River covers the land when it floods and its waves surge?

⁸ The kingdom of Egypt rises and falls
like the Nile that surging with a flood of water,

and Egypt will boast that they will cover the earth

and will destroy cities and the people who live in them.

⁹ You riders of horses, charge into the battle!

You drivers of chariots, drive furiously like a crazy person!

All you warriors from Ethiopia and Libya

who carry your shields,
you warriors from Lydia

who shoot arrows,
you come!

¹⁰ But, you need to know that this is the day when I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will get revenge on my enemies.

With my sword I will kill my enemies until I am satisfied;

my sword will be like a monster that drinks the blood of the animals it kills until it is no longer thirsty.

The enemy soldiers who will be killed in the north beside the Euphrates River

will be like a sacrifice to me, the Lord Yahweh, commander of the angel armies.

¹¹ You innocent people of Egypt,
go up to the region of Gilead to obtain medicine;

but it will be useless to take all those medicines;

you will not be healed.

¹² People in the other nations hear how you were humiliated.

People all over the earth hear you wailing.

Your mighty warriors stumble over each other

and they all fall down together.”

¹³ Then Yahweh gave to the prophet Jeremiah this message about King Nebuchadnezzar when he planned to attack Egypt with his army:

¹⁴ “Shout this message throughout Egypt!

Proclaim it in the cities of Migdol, Memphis, and Tahpenes!

’Get into your positions for the battle;

Prepare to defend yourselves,

because everyone around you will be killed.'

¹⁵ Why do those whose strength you trust fall down?

They cannot stand up,

because Yahweh will knock them down.

¹⁶ The soldiers from other countries will stumble and fall over each other,

and then they will say to each other,

"Let us get up and go back to our own people, to our own land.

Let us get away from the swords of our enemies!"

¹⁷ There in Egypt they will say,

"The king of Egypt talks loudly,

but when our army had an opportunity to defeat our enemies, they failed."

¹⁸ I, the King, who is called Yahweh, commander of the angel armies,

say this:

'As surely as I live, an army is coming to fight against the army of Egypt.

They will be extremely powerful,

as though they were as tall as Tabor Hill,

or as high as Mount Carmel, close to the Mediterranean Sea.

¹⁹ All you people who live in Egypt,

pack your possessions and prepare to be exiled.

Memphis will be destroyed;

it will become a ruin, and no people will be living there.

²⁰ Egypt is like a beautiful young cow,

but a powerful king from the northeast is surely coming to attack it

like a horsefly bites a cow.

²¹ The mercenaries that Egypt has hired are like fat calves because of the Egyptians' money;

but they also will turn around and run away;

they will not stand there and fight,

because it will be a day when there will be a great disaster for Egypt,

a day when their people will be greatly punished.

²² The soldiers of Egypt will run away,

as silently as a snake slithers away.

The army of the enemy will advance;

they will march along carrying their axes

like men who cut down trees.

²³ I, Yahweh, say that they will kill the soldiers of Egypt

as though they were cutting down a forest of trees,

because the enemy soldiers will be as numerous as a swarm of locusts.

²⁴ The people of Egypt will be humiliated;

they will be conquered by people from the northeast.'

²⁵ I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, say, 'I will punish Amon, the god whom the people of the city of Thebes worship, and all the other gods in Egypt. I will punish the king of Egypt and all those who trust in him. ²⁶ I will cause them to be captured by those who want to kill them—Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and his army officers. But many years later, people will live in Egypt again. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.'

²⁷ But you people of Israel who serve me,

do not be at all dismayed now,

because some day I will bring you back from distant places;

I will bring your descendants from the land to which they were exiled.

Then you Israelite people will again live peacefully and safely,

and there will not be any nation to cause you to be terrified.

²⁸ I, Yahweh, say to you people of Israel who serve me,

'Do not be afraid,

because I will be with you.

I will completely destroy the nations among whom I have scattered you,

but I will not completely get rid of you.

I will punish you, but I will punish you only as severely as you deserve:

it would be wrong if I did not punish you at all."

Chapter 47

¹ Yahweh gave to the prophet Jeremiah a message about the people of Philistia. The message was given to him before the city of Gaza in Philistia was captured by the army of Egypt.

² This is what Yahweh said:

"An army will be coming from the north-east

that will cover the land like a flood.

They will destroy the land and everything in it;

they will destroy people and cities.

People will scream out for help;

and everyone in the land will wail in mourning.

³ They will hear the sound of the hooves of the enemy horses,

and they will hear the rumble of the wheels of their enemies' chariots.

Men will run away;

they will not stop to help their own children but

will be completely weak and helpless

⁴ It will be the time for all the people of Philistia to be destroyed,

and the time to stop the remaining soldiers from being able to help the people living in the cities of Tyre and Sidon.

I, Yahweh, will destroy the people of Philistia,

those whose ancestors long ago came from Island of Crete.

⁵ The people of Gaza will be humiliated;

they will shave off all the hair on their heads to indicate that they are ashamed.

The people of the city of Ashkelon will all be silent because they will be mourning.

All you people who live along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea who are still alive,

how long will you gash yourselves because you are mourning?"

⁶ The people of Philistia say, "Yahweh, when will you tell our enemies to stop killing us with their swords?

Tell them to put them back into their sheaths and allow them to stay there!"

⁷ But it would not be right for their swords to stay there,

because Yahweh has commanded their enemies to do something more;

Yahweh intends to tell them to attack all the people living in Ashkelon and in other cities along the coast.

Chapter 48

¹ This is a message about Moab. Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, says,

"Terrible things will happen to the city of Nebo;

it will soon be ruined.

the city of Kiriathaim will be put to shame. It is taken!

The defended fortress will be ruined, and its people will become ashamed.

² No one will boast about Moab again;

the enemies of Moab will plan to destroy the capital city, Heshbon.

They will say, 'Come, let us cause Moab to no longer be a nation.'

You also, You Madmen! you also will be silenced;

enemy armies will pursue you to kill you.

³ Listen to the people of Horonaim screaming;

they will be wailing because their town was completely destroyed .

⁴ All of Moab will be ruined;

even the little children will cry loudly.

⁵ They will cry bitterly

as they climb up Luhith hill.

Others will wail on the road down to Horonaim.

They were so very sad because their town was completely destroyed.

⁶ Someone will say to them, 'Flee!

Hide in the desert!'

⁷ But you trusted that because you were rich and powerful, you would be safe;

so you will be captured.

Your god Chemosh and all his priests and officials

will be taken away to distant lands.

⁸ All the towns in Moab will be destroyed;

none of them will escape.

Towns in the valleys and on the plateau will all be destroyed,

because Yahweh has said that is what will happen.

⁹ Someone should help all the people in Moab to run away,

so that their land will be empty,

so that no one will live in it any longer."

¹⁰ May Yahweh punish anyone who will not eagerly do what he desires;

may he curse anyone who refrains from using his sword to kill the people in Moab.

¹¹ The people of Moab have always felt secure;

they have never been exiled.

They are like wine that has been left undisturbed in a container for many days to give it good flavor,

so now it smells good,

and it tastes good.

¹² But Yahweh says that there will be a time when he will send enemies to attack them;

they will get rid of the people of Moab
like people pour out wine on the ground

and then smash the wine jar.

¹³ Then the people of Moab will be
ashamed of their god Chemosh that they
had trusted in, because it did not help
them,

like the Israelite people were ashamed
because their gold statue of a calf was
smashed at Bethel.

¹⁴ The soldiers of Moab previously said,
"We are warriors;

we have fought bravely in battles!"

¹⁵ But now our king, who is called Yah-
weh, commander of the angel armies, says
that the country of Moab and all the towns
in it will be destroyed.

Their fine young men will all be slaugh-
tered.

¹⁶ Moab will very soon be destroyed.

They will soon experience disaster.

¹⁷ You people who live in nations near
Moab,

who know that it is very famous,
should mourn for Moab,

and say, "Its glorious power is com-
pletely ended."

¹⁸ You people of the city of Dibon, stop
being proud because of being honored,

and sit in the dust where you will
thirst for water,

because those who will destroy other
places in Moab will attack your city

and destroy your fortifications.

¹⁹ You people of the city of Aroer,

stand along the road and watch.

Shout to the men and women who will
be fleeing from Moab,

"What has happened there?"

²⁰ They will reply,

"Moab is ruined and we are dis-
graced!"

So weep and wail .

Proclaim to Amon that Moab has been
destroyed.

²¹ Yahweh is punishing the towns of
Moab that are on the plateau:

Holon and Jahaz and Mephaath,

²² Dibon and Nebo and Beth Diblath-
aim,

²³ Kiriathaim and Beth Gamul and
Beth Meon,

²⁴ Kerioth and Bozrah.

He is punishing cities that are near
each other and towns that are far away
from each other.

²⁵ Yahweh says, "The power of Moab
will be finished;

it is as though it will have a broken
arm.

²⁶ You people of Moab thought you were
powerful enough to rebel against me, Yah-
weh;

so now I will cause you all to stagger
like drunken people.

You people of Moab will wallow in your
own vomit

and be ridiculed.

²⁷ Did you not ridicule the people of Is-
rael?

Did you think they were nothing but
thieves,

so that you shook your head at them
with scorn,

and despised them every time you spoke
about them?

²⁸ You people who live in Moab,

you should abandon your towns and go and live in caves.

Be like pigeons that make their nests in the entrances of caves.”

²⁹ We have all heard that the people of Moab are very proud;

they are extremely proud and conceited.

³⁰ But Yahweh says, “I know about that, but it is useless for them to boast because it will accomplish nothing.

³¹ So now I will wail for Moab; I will cry about all its people.

I will moan for the men of the city of Kir Hareseth, the old capital of Moab.

³² You people of the city of Sibmah, you have many vineyards, and I will be sad when they are destroyed.

It is as though the branches of your vines extend across the Dead Sea to the city of Jazer, but the enemies of Moab will take your grapes and wine from you!

³³ But no one will be joyful or happy in Moab now;

your fruit and grapes that ripen in the summer will soon be destroyed.

There will be no grape juice coming from the winepresses,

so there will be no wine.

People will not shout joyfully

as they tread on the grapes;

people will shout,

but they will not be shouting joyfully.

³⁴ Instead, the sound of their wailing will rise from the city of Heshbon to the town of Elealeh and the village of Jahaz,

from the city of Zoar as far as the town of Horonaim Eglath Shelishiyah.

Even the water in the stream of Nimrim will be dried up.

³⁵ I, Yahweh, say that I will get rid of the people who offer sacrifices on the hilltops, those who burn incense to their gods.

³⁶ I moan for the people of Moab and Kir Hareseth

like someone playing a funeral song on a flute,

because all their wealth will disappear.

³⁷ The men will shave their heads and their beards to show that they are mourning.

They all will slash their hands and wear rough cloth around their waists.

³⁸ In every home and in the town plazas in Moab there will be people who are mourning,

because I will have destroyed Moab like someone smashes an old jar that no one wants anymore.

³⁹ Moab will be completely shattered with terror!

And you will hear the people wailing loudly!

They will be disgraced.

Moab will become a nation that people ridicule.

The people in nearby countries will be horrified about what has happened there.

⁴⁰ This is what I, Yahweh, say:

‘Look! Their enemies will be swooping down over Moab

like an eagle swoops down to seize an animal.

⁴¹ Its cities will be captured,

its fortresses will be seized.

Even their warriors will be afraid,

like a woman who is about to give birth.

⁴² Moab boasted against me, Yahweh,
so it will be destroyed.

⁴³ I, Yahweh, say that you people of Moab will be terrified, and fall into pits and traps.

⁴⁴ Those who are terrified and try to run away will fall into deep pits.

Whoever climbs out of a pit will be caught in a trap,

because I will punish them at the time that I have appointed.'

⁴⁵ The people will flee as far as the city of Heshbon,

but they will not be able to go any further,

because a fire will burn in Heshbon,

which is the city where King Sihon lived long ago,

and it will burn up all the people in Moab

who noisily boasted very much.

⁴⁶ You people of Moab, terrible things will happen to you!

You people who worship your god Chemosh, you will be destroyed.

Your sons and your daughters will be captured and taken away to other countries.

⁴⁷ But some day, I will enable the people of Moab to return to their land again.

That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it."

That is the end of what Jeremiah prophesied about Moab.

Chapter 49

¹ This message is about the people who descended from Ammon. This is what Yahweh says:

"There are plenty of Israelite people left to occupy the land of the tribe of Gad.

So, why are the people who worship the god Molech living in those towns?

² There will be a time when I will sound the battle cry

for their enemies to attack their capital city, Rabbah.

Then it will become a heap of ruins,
and all the nearby towns will be burned.

Then the people of Israel will again possess the land

that the people of Ammon took away from them.

³ You people of the city of Heshbon, wail,
because the city of Ai will be destroyed.

You women in the city of Rabbah, weep;
put on rough clothing to show you are mourning;

run back and forth in confusion inside the city walls,

because your god Molech, along with its priests and officials, will be taken away in exile.

⁴ Why do you brag about your valleys,
your valleys that are so fruitful, you faithless daughter?

You think that your wealth will bring you protection against your enemies

and so you dare to ask, "Who is there who can come against me?"

⁵ But listen to this: I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies,

will cause you to become terrified.

You will all be forced to flee to other countries from the enemies all around you,

and no one will be able to bring you together again.

⁶ But some day I will enable the Ammonite people to return to their land.

That will surely happen, because I, Yahweh, have said it."

⁷ This message is about the people of Edom. This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says:

"It seems that there are no longer any wise people in Teman district in Edom!

There are no people left who can give others good advice.

The people who were wise have disappeared.

⁸ You people of the city of Dedan, in the south of Edom,

turn and flee and hide in deep caves, because I am causing disaster to happen to all the people of Edom,

I will punish you!

⁹ Those who harvest grapes always leave some on the vines.

When thieves come at night,

they surely steal only as much as they want.

¹⁰ But I will cause everything in Edom to be destroyed, and there will be nothing left,

and there will be no place for people to hide.

Many of the children, their relatives and their neighbors, will die,

and Edom will not exist anymore.

¹¹ Leave behind the orphans because I will take care of them,

and the widows also will be able to depend on me to help them."

¹² And this is also what Yahweh says: "If those who do not deserve to suffer must suffer, you people of Edom must suffer much more! You will not escape being punished. ¹³ I, Yahweh, have solemnly promised, using my own name, that your chief city Bozrah will become a place that people will be horrified about. It will be a heap of ruins. People will make fun of it and use its name when they curse people. All the nearby towns and villages will be ruined forever."

¹⁴ I heard this message from Yahweh:

"I have sent an ambassador to many nations,

to tell them to gather together to attack Edom.

They must prepare for battle!"

¹⁵ And Yahweh says to the people of Edom,

"I will cause your nation to become very unimportant among the other nations.

They will all despise your country.

¹⁶ You have caused people of other nations to be terrified,

and you have been very proud,

but you have deceived yourselves.

You live in caves in the rock cliffs;

you think that you are safe there because you live high up there.

But even if you make your homes as high up as the eagles' nests,

I will cause you to come crashing down.

¹⁷ Edom will become a place about which people are horrified;

people who pass by will be horrified and will gasp

when they see the destruction.

¹⁸ Edom will be destroyed as completely as Sodom and Gomorrah and the nearby towns were destroyed long ago.

As a result, no one—not a single person—will live there anymore.

¹⁹ I will come to Edom suddenly as a lion comes out of the jungle

and leaps on sheep that are eating in good pastures.

I will quickly chase the people of Edom from their land.

And then I will appoint for them a leader whom I will choose;

I can do that because there is no one like me who can object to what I do.

No ruler can oppose me.

²⁰ Listen to what I have planned to do to the people of Teman and the rest of Edom:

even the little children will be dragged away,

and I will completely get rid of the people who live there.

²¹ When Edom is destroyed, the noise will be extremely great,

with the result that the earth will shake,

and the wailing of the people will be heard as far away as the Sea of Reeds.

²² Look! The enemy troops will swoop down over Bozrah

like an eagle spreads its wings when it swoops down to seize an animal.

On that day, even the strongest warriors of Edom will be afraid

like a woman who is about to give birth."

²³ This message is about Damascus. This is what Yahweh says:

"The people in the nearby cities of Hamath and Arpad are will be ashamed,

because they have heard bad news about Damascus.

They are very anxious and restless, like a sea in a big storm.

²⁴ The people of Damascus have become very weak,

and they all have panicked and run away in terror.

The people are anguished and in pain like a woman experiences who is about to give birth.

²⁵ But even now the people of that famous city have not yet abandoned it. That was the city that gave me joy.

²⁶ Its young men will fall in the streets.

Its soldiers will all be killed in one day.

²⁷ And I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will start a fire to burn the walls that surround Damascus,

and the palaces of King Ben Hadad will be burned down."

²⁸ This is a message about the Kedar people and the kingdom of Hazor that Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon is attacking. This is what Yahweh said:

"I will cause an army to advance to attack Kedar

and destroy those people who live east of Judah.

²⁹ Enemies will capture their tents and their flocks of sheep.

They will take away the curtains of their tents, their camels, and all of their other possessions.

Everywhere men will shout,

'We are terrified because terrible things are happening all around us!'

³⁰ So I, Yahweh, say, 'Run away quickly!

You people who live in Hazor, go and hide in deep caves,

because King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon wants to attack you with his army;

he is planning to destroy you!'

³¹ But I say to Nebuchadnezzar,

'Go up and attack that nation whose people feel secure;

they do not have allies who will help them and do not have walls with gates that have bars in them.

³² Your troops will seize their camels and other livestock.

I will scatter in every direction those people who will be in great mourning .

I will bring disasters to them from every direction.

³³ Hazor will become a place where jackals live,

and it will be deserted forever.

No one will live there again;

no people will settle there. '''

³⁴ The prophet Jeremiah received this message from Yahweh when King Zedekiah was starting to rule Judah.

³⁵ This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says:

"The men of Elam are famous archers;

that is how they have made their country very powerful.

But I will get rid of them .

³⁶ I will bring their enemies from every direction

and they will scatter the people of Elam in all of those directions.

The people of Elam will be exiled to every nation on the earth.

³⁷ Because I am very angry with the people of Elam,

I will enable their enemies to smash Elam;

I will cause the people of Elam to experience great disasters.

I will enable their enemies, who want to kill them, to pursue them and kill them with swords

until I completely get rid of all of them.

³⁸ I, Yahweh, will judge them there ,

and then I will get rid of their king and his officials.

³⁹ But some day, I will enable the people of Elam to return to their land.

That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it."

Chapter 50

¹ Yahweh gave to Jeremiah the prophet a message about Babylon and the country of Babylonia.

² This is what Yahweh says:

"Proclaim a message among the nations;
do not withhold any of it;

raise up a signal flag

to announce that Babylon will be captured.

Its chief god Marduk, whose other name is Bel, will be completely disgraced,

and all the other statues and idols will be shattered.

³ The army of a nation will come from the north to attack Babylon

and destroy the city very thoroughly,

with the result that no one will live there again.

Both people and animals will run away.”

⁴ “But I, Yahweh, say that in the future, when that is about to happen,

the people of Israel and the people of Judah will join together.

They will be weeping

and wanting to worship me, their God.

⁵ They will inquire about the road to Jerusalem,

and then they will start traveling toward it.

They will say to each other,

‘We must return to Yahweh again!’

They will make an everlasting agreement with me that they will never forget.

⁶ My people have been like lost sheep.

Their leaders have caused them to abandon me

like shepherds who have allowed their sheep to wander in the hills and mountains.

My people are like sheep

that do not know the path to return to the sheepfold.

⁷ All their enemies who found them attacked them.

They said, ‘We did not sin by attacking them,

because they sinned against Yahweh;

he is the one who provides what they need;

he is the one to whom they should have remained faithful;

he is the one whom their ancestors confidently expected to help them.’

⁸ But now, I say to the leaders of my people, ‘Depart from Babylon!

Leave the land of Babylonia!

Act like male goats that go in front of the rest of the flock;

lead my people back to their own land.

⁹ Do that because I am going to gather an army of great nations to the north of Babylon.

They will join together to attack Babylon and will capture it.

Their arrows will be like skilled warriors

that always hit what they are aiming at.

¹⁰ Babylonia will be conquered,

and those who conquer it will take away everything they want.

That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.”

¹¹ “You people of Babylon who plundered my chosen people,

now you are very happy.

You run around joyfully like a calf in a meadow,

and are happy like stallions are happy when they are neighing.

¹² But soon your people will be very disgraced as a result of being conquered.

Your country will be the most insignificant nation;

it will be a wilderness, a dry land and a desert plain.

¹³ Because I, Yahweh, am angry with you people of Babylon,

I will cause your city to become completely deserted.

All who pass by will be horrified

and will gasp because of the destruction there.

¹⁴ All you nations that surround Babylon,

prepare to attack it!

Tell your archers to shoot at their enemies;

shoot all of your arrows at them and do not hold back,

because the people of Babylon have sinned against me, Yahweh.

¹⁵ Shout victorious war cries against Babylon from all sides of the city.

The soldiers of Babylon will surrender;

the towers and walls will be torn down.

It is I, Yahweh, who will be getting revenge on the people of Babylon,

and I will use you to get revenge.

Do to the people of Babylon what they have done to others!

¹⁶ Take away from Babylon those who plant crops

and those who reap the harvests!

Because of the swords carried by those who will attack Babylon,

the people in Babylon who have come from other countries

should all run away; they should go back to their own countries."

¹⁷ "The Israelite people are like sheep

that have been scattered by lions.

First the army of the king of Assyria defeated them.

Then the army of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon smashed them.

¹⁸ So this is what I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God whom Israel worships, say:

'Now I will punish the king of Babylon and the people of his land,

like I punished the king of Assyria.

¹⁹ And I will bring the people of Israel back to their own land

where they will eat the food that grows in the fields of the regions of Carmel and Bashan,

and the people in the hill areas of Ephraim and Gilead will have all they want to eat.

²⁰ At that time, there will not be people in Israel and in Judah who are still guilty for having sinned ,

because I will forgive the small group of people whom I enable to still be alive."

²¹ "So, I, Yahweh, say to the enemies of Babylonia, 'Attack the people who live in the region of Merathaim

and the people in the region of Pekod of Babylonia.

Pursue them to kill them, and completely get rid of every single one of them,

as I have commanded you to do.

²² Shout your battle cries throughout the land;

shout when you are causing great destruction.

²³ The army of Babylon is like the most powerful hammer on the earth,

but it will be completely shattered.

Babylon, one of the nations, will be a complete ruin.'

²⁴ You people of Babylon, listen,

because I have set a trap for you without your awareness;

you will be caught in that trap,
because you fought against me.

²⁵ It is as though I have opened the place
where I store my weapons,

and I have brought out all the weapons
to use against the people with whom
I am angry.

I, Yahweh, commander of the angel
armies, have a lot of work to do

to punish the people of Babylonia.

²⁶ So, you enemies of Babylonia, come
from distant lands and attack it.

Break open the places where they
store the grain,

and pile up the rubble like heaps of
grain.

Destroy everything completely;

do not leave anything that is not de-
stroyed.

²⁷ Destroy all the young warriors who
are as strong as bulls;

take them to where you will slaughter
them.

It will be terrible for them,

because it will be time for them to be
punished.

²⁸ Listen to the people who have fled
and escaped from Babylon

while they tell in Jerusalem how I, Yah-
weh, have gotten revenge against those
who destroyed my temple in Jerusalem.

²⁹ Summon archers to come to attack
Babylon;

surround the city

in order that no one will escape.

Do to the people of Babylon what they
have done to others ,

because they have defied me, the Holy
One of the Israelite people.

³⁰ The young men of Babylon will fall in
the streets;

all their soldiers will be killed in one
day. This will happen because I, Yahweh,
have declared it!

³¹ I, Yahweh, commander of the angel
armies, say this:

'You arrogant people,

it is now the time;

it is the day when I will punish you.

³² Your land is full of proud people,

but you will stumble and fall,

and no one will lift you up again.

I will light a fire in the cities of Babylo-
nia

that will burn up everything that is
nearby.'

³³ I, Yahweh, commander of the angel
armies, also say this:

'The people of Israel and Judah were
oppressed;

those who captured them guarded
them carefully and would not allow them
to leave Babylon.

³⁴ But Yahweh is strong, and he will free
them.

Yahweh is the Commander of the
angel armies;

He will defend his people

and enable them to return to their
land where they will have peace,

but the people of Babylonia will not
have peace.

³⁵ He will send enemy soldiers carrying
swords to strike the people of Babylonia;

they will strike the officials and wise men

and all the other people who live in Babylon.

³⁶ They will strike their false prophets with swords

and they will become foolish.

They will strike the strongest warriors of Babylonia,

and they will all be terrified.

³⁷ They will strike their horses and chariots

and the foreign mercenaries who are in the army of Babylonia,

and they will all become as weak as women.

They will seize all the valuable things there in Babylon

and take them away.

³⁸ Yahweh will cause the streams to become dry.

He will do all those things because the entire land of Babylonia is filled with idols,

and those horrible idols have caused the people who worship them to become crazy.

³⁹ Soon only jackals and other wild creatures will live there;

and it will be a place where ostriches live.

People will never live there again;

it will be uninhabited forever .

⁴⁰ Yahweh God will destroy Babylon like he destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and the nearby towns;

no one will ever live there again.

⁴¹ Look! A great army will come from the north.

A great nation far away with many kings is preparing to attack you people of Babylon.

⁴² Their army has bows and arrows and spears;

they are very cruel, and do not act mercifully to anyone.

As they ride along on their horses,

the sound of the horses' hooves is like the roaring of the ocean waves;

they are riding in battle formation

to attack you, you people of Babylon.

⁴³ The king of Babylon heard their report,

"The enemy is approaching."

So he was frightened and became weak.

Fear and anguish gripped him,

like a woman who is about to give birth to a baby."

⁴⁴ I, Yahweh, will come to Babylon suddenly like a lion comes out of the jungle

and leaps on the sheep that are eating the good pastureland.

I will quickly chase the people of Babylonia from their land.

And then I will appoint for them a leader whom I will choose;

I will do that because there is no one like me who can say that what I have done is not right.

No ruler can oppose me.

⁴⁵ Listen to what I have planned to do to the people of Babylon city and the rest of Babylonia:

even the little children will be dragged away,

and I will completely destroy the people who live there.

⁴⁶ When Babylon is destroyed, the noise will be extremely loud,

with the result that the earth will shake,

and the wailing of the people will be heard by the people of other nations.”

Chapter 51

¹ This is what Yahweh says:

”I will inspire an army to destroy Babylon like a powerful wind,

and also to destroy the people of Babylonia in Leb Kamai.

² I will send a foreign army to come to get rid of Babylonia

like a strong wind that blows away chaff.

They will attack from every direction on that day of disaster.

³ I will tell them, ’Do not allow the archers of Babylon to have time to put on their armor

or draw their bows.

Do not spare the young men of Babylon.

Completely destroy their army.’

⁴ Their soldiers will fall dead in Babylonia;

they will die after being impaled by spears in the streets.

⁵ I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, whom Israel worships, have not abandoned Israel and Judah.

Even though their land was filled with people who sinned against me, the Holy God of Israel,

I am still their God.

⁶ You people of Israel and Judah, flee from Babylon!

Run to escape!

Do not stay there and be killed when the people of Babylon are punished!

It will be the time when Yahweh gets revenge;

He will do to them what they deserve.

⁷ Babylon has been like a gold cup in Yahweh’s hand, a cup that is full of wine

that caused people all over the earth who drank some of it to become drunk.

It is as though the rulers of the nations drank the wine from Babylon,

and it caused them to become crazy.

⁸ But suddenly Babylon will be conquered.

Weep for its people!

Give them medicine for their wounds; perhaps they can be healed.”

⁹ We foreigners would have tried to heal them,

but now they cannot be healed.

So we will not try to help them; we will abandon them,

and return to our own lands,

because it is as though the punishment they are receiving reaches up to the clouds in sky;

it is very great, with the result that no one can measure it.

¹⁰ Yahweh has vindicated us;

so let us proclaim in Jerusalem everything that Yahweh our God has done for us.

¹¹ You enemy soldiers, sharpen your arrows!

Fill up your quivers for battle,

because Yahweh has incited your kings
of Media and Persia to march with their
armies to Babylon and to destroy it.

That is how Yahweh will get revenge
on those foreigners who entered his temple
in Jerusalem and defiled it.

¹² Lift up a battle flag close to the walls
of Babylon!

Reinforce the guards,
and tell the watchmen to stand in their
positions!

Prepare an ambush,
because Yahweh is about to accomplish
all that he has planned to do to the
people of Babylon.

¹³ Babylon is a city near the great Euphrates River,

a city in which there are many rich
people,

but it is time for Babylon to be finished;

the time for the city to exist is ended.

¹⁴ Yahweh, commander of the angel
armies has solemnly promised, using his
own name,

"Your cities will be filled with your enemies;

I will cause them to be like a swarm
of locusts;

and they will shout triumphantly
when they conquer your city."

¹⁵ Yahweh created the earth by his
power;

he established it by his wisdom,

and he stretched out the sky by his
understanding.

¹⁶ When he speaks loudly, there is thunder
in the sky;

he causes clouds to form in every part
of the earth.

He sends lightning with the rain
and releases the winds from his store-
houses.

¹⁷ People are as senseless as a beast, and
they know very little;

those who make idols are always disappointed,

because their idols do nothing for
them.

The images that they make are not real
gods;

they are lifeless.

¹⁸ Idols are worthless; they deserve to
be ridiculed;

there will be a time when they will
all be destroyed.

¹⁹ But the God of Israel is not like those
idols;

he is the one who created everything
that exists;

we, the tribe of Israel, belong to him;

his name is Yahweh, commander of
the angel armies.

²⁰ Yahweh says about the army of Babylon,
lonia,

"You are like my weapons of war and
my war club;

with your power I shatter nations

and destroy many kingdoms.

²¹ With your power I shatter armies of
other nations:

I destroy their horses and their riders,
their chariots and their chariot drivers.

²² With your power I shatter men and
women,

old people and children,

young men and young women.

²³ With your power I shatter shepherds
and their flocks of sheep,

farmers and their oxen,
governors and their officials.”

²⁴ But, Yahweh also says,

”Soon I will repay you people in Babylon
and in the rest of Babylonia

for all the evil things that you have
done in Jerusalem.

²⁵ Babylonia is like a great mountain

from which bandits descend to plunder
people all over the earth.

But I, Yahweh, am the enemy of you
people of Babylonia.

I will raise my fist to strike you.

I will knock you down from the cliffs

and cause you to be only a huge pile
of burned rubble.

²⁶ Your city will be abandoned forever;

even the stones in your city will never
again be used for buildings.

Your city will be completely de-
stroyed.”

²⁷ Tell the nations to lift up a battle flag!

Tell them to blow their trumpets of
war!

Gather all their armies to fight against
Babylon!

Prepare the nations to attack Babylon.

Summon the armies of the kingdoms
north of Babylonia—from Ararat, Minni,
and Ashkenaz.

Appoint a commander for them,

and bring a great number of horses;

there must be a huge number of
horses; that huge number will resemble a
swarm of locusts.

²⁸ Prepare the armies of other nations,

armies that will be led by the kings of
Media and Persia,

their governors and their officials.

²⁹ When they attack Babylon, it will be
as though the earth will shake and writhe
in pain,

because those armies will accomplish
everything that Yahweh has planned to do
to Babylon.

Then the nations will destroy it com-
pletely,

with the result that no one will live
there again.

³⁰ When their enemies attack, the
strongest warriors in Babylon will not
fight.

They will remain in their barracks,
without any strength.

They will be as timid as women.

The enemy soldiers will burn the
buildings in the city

and break the bars of the city gates into
pieces.

³¹ Messengers will go quickly, one after
another,

to tell the king that his city has been
captured.

³² The places at which people can cross
the river to escape from the city will be
blocked.

The dry reeds in the marshes will be
set on fire,

and the soldiers of Babylon will be
terrified.

³³ This is what Yahweh, commander of the
angel armies, whom Israel worships, says;

”Babylon is like wheat on the ground
where it is about to be threshed

by animals tramping on it.

Very soon their enemies will trample on the city of Babylon.”

³⁴ The army of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, has attacked and crushed us Israelites,

and we have no strength left.

It is as though they have swallowed us like a great monster

that filled its belly with all our tasty parts,

and then has spit out what it did not like.

³⁵ So the people of Jerusalem say to Yahweh,

”Cause the people of Babylon to suffer like they caused us to suffer!

Cause the people of Babylonia to be punished for killing our people!”

³⁶ And this is what Yahweh replies to the people of Jerusalem:

”I will be like your lawyer to defend you,

and I will avenge you.

I will dry up the river in Babylon

and all the springs of water.

³⁷ Babylon will become a heap of ruins, a place where jackals live.

It will become a place that people are horrified about and will ridicule;

it will be a place where no one lives.

³⁸ The people of Babylon will all roar like young lions;

they will growl like baby lions.

³⁹ But while they are extremely hungry,

I will prepare a different kind of feast for them.

I will cause them to drink wine until they are very drunk,

with the result that they will fall asleep.

But they will never wake up from that sleep!

⁴⁰ I will bring them down to a place where they will be slaughtered,

like someone who takes lambs or rams or goats to where they will be slaughtered for sacrifices.

⁴¹ People all over the earth now honor Babylon;

they say that it is a great city.

But it will become a place about which people of all nations are horrified.

⁴² The enemies of Babylon will cover the city like huge waves of the sea.

⁴³ The towns in Babylonia will be a horror, a dry and desert plain,

and it will be a land in which no one lives

and which no one walks through.

⁴⁴ And I will punish Bel, the god that the people of Babylon worship,

and I will cause the people to give back what they have stolen.

People of other nations will no longer come to worship Bel.

And the walls of Babylon will collapse.”

⁴⁵ Yahweh also says, ”My people, come out of Babylon!

Flee to escape!

Run, because I, Yahweh, am extremely angry with the people of Babylon, and I will get rid of them!

⁴⁶ Do not be discouraged or afraid

when you hear reports about what is happening in Babylon.

People will report rumors like that every year,

rumors about violent things being done in the land,

and rumors about leaders fighting against each other.

⁴⁷ But it will soon be the time for me to get rid of the carved idols in Babylon.

People all over the land will be ashamed because of being defeated,

and the corpses of their soldiers will lie in the streets.

⁴⁸ Then all the angels in heaven and all the people on the earth will rejoice,

because from the north will come armies that will destroy Babylon.

⁴⁹ Like the soldiers of Babylon killed the people of Israel

and also killed others all over the world,

the people of Babylon must also be killed.

⁵⁰ You Israelite people who have not been killed, get out of Babylon!

Do not wait!

Even though you are in a land far away from Israel,

think about Yahweh, and think about Jerusalem!"

⁵¹ The Israelite people say,

"We are ashamed.

We are completely disgraced,

because foreigners have entered Yahweh's temple and defiled it."

⁵² Yahweh replies, "That is true, but there will soon be a time when I will destroy the carved idols in Babylon,

and throughout Babylonia there will be wounded people who will groan.

⁵³ Even if the walls around Babylon could extend up to the sky,

and if its walls were extremely strong, I will send armies that will destroy the city.

That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it."

⁵⁴ Listen to the people of Babylon shouting for help!

And listen to the sounds of things being destroyed all over Babylonia!

⁵⁵ Yahweh will be destroying Babylon.

He will cause the loud noises in the city to cease.

⁵⁶ Enemy troops will surge against the city like a great wave.

They will capture the city's mighty soldiers

and break their weapons.

That will happen because Yahweh is a God who punishes his enemies justly;

he will punish them as they deserve.

⁵⁷ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says,

"I will cause the city officials and wise men, the army captains and soldiers, to become drunk.

They will fall asleep,

but they will never wake up again!"

⁵⁸ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, also says,

"The thick walls around Babylon will be flattened to the ground.

The city gates will be burned.

People from other countries will work hard to save the city,

but it will be in vain,

because everything that they have built will be destroyed by fire.”

⁵⁹ Seraiah, son of Neraiah and grandson of Mahseiah, was an important servant of King Zedekiah. After Zedekiah had been ruling Judah for almost four years, the prophet Jeremiah gave him a message. This was when Seraiah was about to go to Babylon with the king. ⁶⁰ Now Jeremiah had written on a scroll a list of all the disasters that he had written about, disasters that would soon happen to Babylon. ⁶¹ Jeremiah said to Seraiah, “When you arrive in Babylon, read aloud everything that I have written on this scroll. ⁶² Then pray, ‘Yahweh, you said that you will thoroughly destroy Babylon, with the result that people and animals will no longer live there. You said that it will be desolate forever.’ ⁶³ Then, when you have finished reading what is written on the scroll, tie it to a heavy stone and throw it into the Euphrates River. ⁶⁴ Then say, ‘In the same way, Babylon and its people will disappear and never exist again, because of the disasters that Yahweh will bring to it.’”

This is the end of Jeremiah’s messages.

Chapter 52

¹ Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became the king of Judah. He ruled in Jerusalem for eleven years. His mother was Hamutal, the daughter of a man named Jeremiah from Libnah. ² Zedekiah did many things that Yahweh says are evil, like his father Jehoiakim had done. ³ The events described here happened because Yahweh was angry with the people of Jerusalem and of other places in Judah, and finally he exiled them and said that he did not want to have anything to do with them anymore.

Then Zedekiah rebelled against the king

of Babylon. ⁴ So, on the tenth day of the tenth month, when Zedekiah had been ruling for almost nine years, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon led his entire army to attack Jerusalem. They surrounded the city and built dirt ramps up to the top of the city walls to enable them to attack the city. ⁵ They continued to surround Jerusalem until Zedekiah had been ruling for almost eleven years.

⁶ When Zedekiah had been ruling for almost eleven years, on the ninth day of the fourth month of that year, the famine in the city had become very severe, and there was no more food for the people to eat. ⁷ Then the soldiers of Babylonia broke through a section of the city wall, and all the Israelite soldiers fled. But because the city was surrounded by soldiers from Babylonia, Zedekiah and the Israelite soldiers waited until it became dark. Then they left the city through the gate between the two walls behind the king’s garden. Then they ran toward the plain along the Jordan. ⁸ But the soldiers of Babylonia pursued King Zedekiah, and they caught up with him on the plains near Jericho. He was alone because all his men had all deserted him and had scattered. ⁹ The soldiers of Babylonia took him to the king of Babylon, who was at Riblah in the region of Hamath. There the king of Babylon told his soldiers what they should do to punish Zedekiah. ¹⁰ They forced Zedekiah to watch while they killed his sons and all the officials from Judah. ¹¹ Then they gouged out Zedekiah’s eyes. They fastened him with bronze chains and took him to Babylon. They put him in a prison, and he remained there until the day that he died.

¹² On the tenth day of the fifth month of that year, which was when King Nebuchadnezzar had been ruling for almost nineteen years, Nebuzaradan, who was the captain of the king’s bodyguards and

one of the king's officials, arrived in Jerusalem. ¹³ He commanded his soldiers to burn down the temple of Yahweh, the king's palace, and all the houses in Jerusalem. They also destroyed all the important buildings in the city. ¹⁴ Then he supervised the soldiers from Babylonia while they tore down the walls on all sides of Jerusalem. ¹⁵ Then Nebuzaradan forced to go to Babylon some of the poorest people, those Israelites who had said they would support the king of Babylon, the rest of the craftsmen, and other people who had remained in Jerusalem. ¹⁶ But Nebuzaradan allowed some of the very poor people to remain in Judah to take care of the vineyards and fields.

¹⁷ The soldiers from Babylonia broke into pieces the huge bronze pillars that were in front of the temple, and the large bronze water tank called "The Sea," and the ten bronze water carts, and they took all the bronze to Babylon. ¹⁸ They also took away the basins for holding the ashes from the burned sacrifices, the shovels for cleaning out the ashes, the tools for snuffing out the wicks of the lamps, the basins for holding the blood of the sacrificed animals, the dishes for incense, and all the other bronze items that were used when they made sacrifices at the temple. ¹⁹ Nebuzaradan also told his soldiers to take away the small bowls, the dishes for burning incense, the basins, pots, lampstands, bowls for incense, and the bowls used for pouring out the wine offerings. They took all the other items that were made of pure gold or silver.

²⁰ The bronze from the two pillars, the large water tank called "The Sea" and the twelve statues of oxen that were beneath it, and the water carts, was more than they could weigh. Those things had been made for the temple during the time that Solomon was the king. ²¹ Each of the pil-

lars was 27 feet tall and 18 feet around. They were hollow, and each had sides that were 3 inches thick. ²² The bronze head on the top of each pillar was seven and one-half feet high and was decorated all around with a bronze network of figures that represented pomegranates. ²³ There was a total of one hundred figures of pomegranates on the network at the top, 96 of which could be seen from the ground.

²⁴ When Nebuzaradan returned to Babylon, he took with him as prisoners Seraiah the high priest, Zephaniah who was Seraiah's deputy, and the three men who guarded the entrances to the temple. ²⁵ He found some other people who were hiding in the city. So from them he took a commander of the army of Judah, seven of the king's advisors, the army commander's chief secretary who was in charge of recruiting soldiers for the army, and sixty other soldiers. ²⁶ Nebuzaradan took them all to the king of Babylon, who was still at Riblah. ²⁷ There at Riblah in the Hamath region, the king of Babylon commanded that they all be executed.

Many of the people of Judah were forced to leave their own land. ²⁸ The number of people who were captured and sent to Babylon at that time, when Nebuchadnezzar had been ruling for almost seven years, was 3,023. ²⁹ Then, when he had been ruling for almost eighteen years, his soldiers took 832 more from Jerusalem to Babylonia. ³⁰ When he had been ruling almost twenty-three years, he sent Nebuzaradan to Jerusalem again, and he brought back 745 more Israelites to Babylonia. That was a total of 4,600 Israelites who were taken to Babylonia.

³¹ After King Jehoiachin of Judah had been in prison in Babylon for almost thirty-seven years, Awel-Marduk became the king of Babylon. He was kind to Je-

hoiachin and ordered that he be released from prison. That was on the twenty-fifth day of the twelfth month of the year that Awel-Marduk became king. ³² He always spoke kindly to Jehoiachin and gave him a position in which he was honored more than all the other kings who had been exiled to Babylon. ³³ He supplied new clothes for Jehoiachin, to replace the clothes that he had been wearing in prison. He also allowed Jehoiachin to eat with him every day, all during the rest of his life. ³⁴ Every day, the king of Babylon gave him some money to buy the things that he needed. That continued until the day that Jehoiachin died.

LAMENTATIONS

Chapter 1

¹ Jerusalem was once full of people,
but now it is completely deserted.
Once it was a powerful nation,
but now it is alone, like a widow.
Once everyone in the world honored it
like a king's daughter,
but now it is like a slave.

² We in the city weep bitterly all during
the nights,
with tears flowing down our cheeks.
We did not trust Yahweh to help us, and
the people groups that we did trust failed
to help us;
none of those people comfort us now.
All the people groups that were friends
with us have betrayed us;
they are all now our enemies.

³ The people of Judah have become poor
and have suffered greatly.
Almost all of our people
were forced to leave our land.
We now live in another country
and we have no peace.
When the people Judah were unable to
defend ourselves,
that was when our enemies captured
us.

⁴ The roads to Mount Zion are empty
because no one comes here to cele-
brate the sacred festivals any longer.
No elders or leaders sit under the city
gates to talk any more,

and Jerusalem's priests groan in sor-
row.

The young women left in Jerusalem cry
because they are suffering greatly.

⁵ Our enemies are now masters of our
city,
and they prosper.

Yahweh has punished us, the people of
Jerusalem,

because of all the sins that we have
committed.

Our enemies have taken all our children
and made them go to other countries.

⁶ Jerusalem was a beautiful city,
but it is not beautiful now.

The leaders of our city are like deer that
are starving

because they can find no grass to eat.

They are very weak

and cannot run from our enemies.

⁷ We, the people of Jerusalem, are sad
and have no more homes to live in;

we think about all the splendid things
that once filled our city.

But now our enemies have captured the
city,

and there is no one to help us.

Our enemies destroyed our city

and laughed while they were doing

it.

⁸ We, the people of Jerusalem, have
sinned very much;

our city has become like a bloody rag
between a woman's legs.

Everyone who previously honored our
city now despise it;

they are like people who strip a
woman bare and then mock her.

Now we groan in the city;

we are like a woman without clothes
who tries to cover herself with her hands.

⁹ It is as if our city has become filthy
because we have sinned so greatly;

we did not think about how God would
punish us.

We did not imagine how we would suf-
fer;

there is no one to comfort us.

We all call out to God, "Yahweh, look at
how we are suffering

because our enemies have defeated
us!"

¹⁰ Our enemies have taken away all our
treasures,

all the valuable things that we owned.

People who do not worship you, Yah-
weh, are going into our sacred temple,

where you had said no foreigner must
go into the place where your people wor-
ship you.

¹¹ All the people in the city cry out with
pain

while they search for food.

They have given their most valuable
things

to get food to eat to restore their
strength.

Yahweh, look at me,

no one values my life.

¹² You people who pass by,

you do not seem to care at all about
what has happened to me.

Look around and see that there are no
other people who are suffering as I do.

Yahweh has caused me to suffer

because he has punished me on the
day he was angry with us, his people.

¹³ It is as though he sent a fire from
heaven

that burned in my bones;

it is as though he has placed a trap to
entangle my feet,

and made me turn back.

He has abandoned me;

I am weak and alone every day, all
during the day.

¹⁴ He turned the sins that I have com-
mitted into a heavy load for me to carry;

it is as though he tied them around
my neck.

Previously we were strong,

but he has caused me to become weak.

He has allowed my enemies to capture
me,

and I was not able to do anything to
resist them.

¹⁵ The Lord looked at my mighty sol-
diers, who kept me safe.

He summoned a great army

to come and crush me to defeat my
strong young soldiers.

The Lord has trampled on the people of
Judah

as people trample on grapes in a pit
to make juice.

¹⁶ I weep because of all these things.

My eyes are filled with tears.

There is no one to comfort me.

The one who comforts me is far away
from me.

My children have no hope

because the enemy has taken us all captive.

¹⁷ The people who lived in Zion (the city of Jerusalem)

have no one to give them comfort.

Yahweh has given the order that the people in nearby nations

will become the enemies of the descendants of our father Jacob (who are also called the Israelites).

Jerusalem has become disgusting to them.

¹⁸ But what Yahweh has done to me is fair,

for I had refused to obey what he told me to do.

You people everywhere, listen to me!

Look and see that I am suffering greatly.

My young daughters and brave sons

have been taken away to far off lands.

¹⁹ I pleaded with our allies, in whom we trusted, to help,

but they all refused,

they told lies and did not keep their promises.

My priests and my leaders

died within the walls of the city

while they searched for food to eat.

²⁰ Yahweh, see that I am suffering very much!

Inside of my body I am in great distress.

I am sad in the center of my being,

because I have rebelled against you

and have caused you great sadness!

Our enemies kill people in the streets with their swords;

and that makes our homes the places where the dead are kept.

²¹ Hear my groaning!

but no one came to comfort me.

All our enemies know what happened to me;

they were all happy to hear

about what Yahweh has done to his people.

Please do soon what you have promised, when our enemies will suffer like we have suffered!

²² Yahweh, let those evil deeds come near to you

so you may see them all!

Punish them as you have punished me

for all my sins!

I suffer and groan very much,

and I faint within my inner self.

Chapter 2

¹ The Lord was extremely angry with us;

it was as though he covered Jerusalem with a dark cloud.

Previously it was a beautiful city,

but he has caused it to become a ruin.

At the time he punished Israel,

he even abandoned his temple in Jerusalem.

² The Lord destroyed the homes of the people of Judah;

he did not act mercifully.

Because he was very angry,
he broke down the fortresses of Judah.

He has made our kingdom to be completely helpless, and

he has caused our rulers to lose all honor.

³ Because he was extremely angry,
he has caused Israel to not be powerful anymore.

He has refused to assist us
when our enemies attacked us.

He has destroyed Israel
like a raging fire destroys everything.

⁴ He has gotten ready to kill us, his people,

as though we were his enemies.

He prepared to kill the people whom
we love the most,

members of our own families.

He is extremely angry with us people of
Jerusalem;

his anger is like a fire.

⁵ The Lord has become like an enemy
to us Israelites; he has destroyed us;
he has destroyed our palaces
and made our fortresses into ruins.

He has gotten rid of many people in
Jerusalem,

and caused us to mourn and weep for
those who were killed.

⁶ He has caused our enemies to smash
his temple

as easily as if it had been a hut in a
garden.

He has caused us, his people, to forget
all our sacred festivals and Sabbath
days.

He has hated our kings and priests

because he was extremely angry with
them.

⁷ Yahweh has rejected the very altar on
which we had sacrificed animals to him;

he has abandoned his temple.

He has allowed our enemies to tear
down the walls

of our temple and our palaces.

They shout victoriously in the temple of
Yahweh,

like we previously shouted during our
sacred festivals.

⁸ Yahweh was determined

that our enemies would tear down
our city wall.

It was as though he had first measured
the walls

and then completely destroyed them.

It was as though he caused the towers
and walls to lament

because they were now ruins.

⁹ The city gates have collapsed;

the enemy has destroyed the bars that
fastened the gates shut.

The king and his officials have been
forced to go to other countries,

where no one teaches the laws that
God gave to Moses.

The prophets do not receive any visions
because Yahweh does not give them
any.

¹⁰ The old men of Jerusalem sit on the
ground,

and they say nothing.

They are so sad that they wear rough
sackcloth

and throw dust on their heads.

The young girls of Jerusalem bow down
sorrowfully,

their faces touch the ground.

¹¹ My eyes are very tired because of my
tears;

I am very grieved within my inner
being.

Because very many of my people have
died,

in my inner being I grieve and am
exhausted.

Even children and babies are fainting
and dying in the streets because they
have no food.

¹² They cry out to their mothers,
“We need something to eat and drink!”

They collapse like wounded men
in the streets of the city.

They slowly die
in the arms of their mothers.

¹³ You people of Jerusalem,
I cannot say anything to help you.

No people have suffered like you are
suffering;

I do not know what I can do to comfort
you.

You have fallen just as far
as if you had sunk in the ocean;
there is no one who can bring your
city back to what it was.

¹⁴ The prophets among you claimed that
they had seen visions from Yahweh,

but what they said was false and
worthless.

They did not work to save you from your
enemies;

they did not tell you that you had
sinned.

Instead, they announced to you things
that they said Yahweh had told them;

they tempted you to believe them, and
you did.

¹⁵ All those who pass by you
make fun of you by clapping their
hands;

they shake their heads and hiss at
you;

They say, “Is this the great city of
Jerusalem?”

Is it the city that people said was the
most beautiful city in the world,

the city that caused all the people on
the earth to rejoice?”

¹⁶ Now all our enemies laugh at you;
they hate you so much that they hiss
at you and grind their teeth at you.

They say, “We have destroyed Israel!
This is what we longed for,
and now it has happened!”

¹⁷ Yahweh has done what he planned;
long ago he threatened to destroy you,
and now he has done it.

He has destroyed your city without act-
ing mercifully toward you;

he has enabled your enemies to be
happy about defeating you;

he has enabled your enemies to con-
tinually become stronger.

¹⁸ I wish the city walls could speak like
the people who

cry out to Yahweh!

I would tell the walls, “Cry out for help
to Yahweh!”

Let your tears flow day and night!
Let them flow like rivers.

Do not stop grieving;
do not stop crying.”

¹⁹ Get up during every night and cry out;
tell Yahweh what you feel in your
inner beings.

Raise your arms to plead to him
to act mercifully to prevent our chil-
dren from dying;

they are fainting on the street corners
because they have no food to eat.

²⁰ Yahweh, look at your people and have
mercy on us.

Have you ever caused people to suffer
like this before?

It is certainly not right that women are
eating the flesh of their own children,

the children whom they have always
taken care of.

It is not right that our enemies are
killing priests and prophets

in your own temple!

²¹ The corpses of people of all ages lie
in the streets;

there are even corpses of young
men and young women whom our ene-
mies have killed with their swords.

Because you were very angry,
you caused them to be killed;
you have slaughtered them
without pitying them at all.

²² You summoned my enemies to attack
from every direction,

as though you were calling them to
come to a feast.

At that time you showed that you were
very angry,

and no one escaped.

Our enemies murdered our little chil-
dren,

the ones whom we took care of and
reared up.

Chapter 3

¹ I, the one who am writing this, am a
man whom Yahweh made to suffer,

because he was angry.

² It was as though he caused me to walk
in a very dark place

without any light at all.

³ He has punished me many times,
many times during each day.

⁴ He has caused my skin and my flesh
to become old.

He has broken my bones.

⁵ He has surrounded me with things
that make me suffer very bitterly.

⁶ It is as though he has buried me in a
dark place

like those who have been dead for a
long time.

⁷ It is as though he has built a prison
wall around me,

and fastened me with heavy chains,
so I cannot escape.

⁸ Although I call out and cry out for him
to help me,

he does not pay attention to me.

⁹ It is as though he has blocked my path
with a high stone wall

and has caused me to wander everywhere to try to get out.

¹⁰ He has waited to attack me

like a bear or a lion hides and waits to attack a man.

¹¹ It is as though a bear has dragged me off the path and mauled me,

and left me alone without help.

¹² It is as though he strung his bow and made me the target

to shoot at with his arrows.

¹³ It is as though he shot his arrows deep into my body.

¹⁴ All my relatives laugh at me;

all during each day they sing songs that make fun of me.

¹⁵ Yahweh has made me suffer greatly,

like someone suffers after drinking something very bitter.

¹⁶ It is as though he has caused me to chew gravel that broke my teeth;

it is as though he has trampled me in the ground.

¹⁷ Things no longer go well for me;

I no longer remember being prosperous.

¹⁸ I continue to say to myself, "I am not strong enough to bear any more hardships.

I no longer expect that Yahweh will rescue me."

¹⁹ When I think about how I suffer and how I wander far from home,

it is like drinking a very bitter liquid.

²⁰ I will never forget this time

when I feel very depressed.

²¹ However, I confidently expect Yahweh to do good things for me again,

and this I know is true.

²² Yahweh never stops faithfully loving us, and he shows his compassion for us forever.

He never stops acting kindly toward us.

²³ Every morning he acts mercifully toward us again.

He is the one in whom we can always trust.

²⁴ So I sincerely say to myself, "Yahweh gives me what I need!"

Because I believe this, I will confidently wait for him to do good things for me.

²⁵ Yahweh is good to all those who depend on him,

to those who seek him to help them.

²⁶ So it is good for us to wait quietly for Yahweh to save us.

²⁷ And it is good for us to suffer patiently while we are young.

²⁸ Those who seek him to help them should sit by themselves and not complain,

because they know that it is Yahweh who has allowed them to suffer.

²⁹ They should lie in the dirt, with their faces on the ground,

because they can still hope that Yahweh will help them.

³⁰ If someone strikes us on one cheek,

we should turn the other cheek toward that person in order that he may strike it, too,

and accept it when others insult us.

³¹ The Lord does not abandon his people forever.

³² Sometimes he causes us to suffer,
but he also acts kindly toward us
because he continually and faithfully loves us.

³³ And he does not take pleasure when he causes people to suffer
or be sad.

³⁴ If people mistreat and oppress all the prisoners,

³⁵ or if they rebel against God
by refusing to do for others what is right,

³⁶ or if they cause judges to decide matters unjustly,

the Lord certainly sees all these things.

³⁷ No one can make something happen
unless Yahweh has already decided that it should happen.

³⁸ God in heaven is the one who commands that disasters should happen,
and he also causes good things to happen.

³⁹ So it is certainly not right for us, who are only people on earth, to complain

when he punishes us for the sins that we have committed.

⁴⁰ Instead, we should think carefully about how we behave;

we should turn back to Yahweh.

⁴¹ We should pray with all our inner beings and lift up our arms

toward God in heaven, and say,

⁴² "We have sinned and rebelled against you,

and you have not forgiven us.

⁴³ You have been very angry and chased after us;

you have slaughtered us without pitying us.

⁴⁴ You have hidden yourself away, as if you were in a cloud,

so that you will not hear us when we pray.

⁴⁵ You have made us go among the foreign peoples,

and they think we are only garbage.

⁴⁶ All our enemies have spoken things to insult us.

⁴⁷ We are constantly afraid that people will trap us,

because we have experienced so many disasters and so much ruin.

⁴⁸ Many tears flow from my eyes

because my people have been destroyed.

⁴⁹ My tears continually flow;

they will not stop

⁵⁰ until Yahweh looks down from heaven and sees us.

⁵¹ I am very grieved

because of what has happened to the women of my city.

⁵² My enemies hunted for me

like people hunt for a bird to kill it
even though there was no reason for them to do that.

⁵³ They threw me into a pit to kill me,

and placed a heavy stone over the top of it.

⁵⁴ The water in the pit rose above my head,

and I said to myself, 'I am about to die!'

⁵⁵ But from the bottom of the pit I cried out to you,

‘Yahweh, help me!’

⁵⁶ I pleaded with you,

‘Do not refuse to hear me when I cry out to you!’

⁵⁷ Then you answered me

and said, ‘Do not be afraid!’

⁵⁸ Yahweh, you argued for me when people wanted to condemn me and execute me;

you did not allow me to die.

⁵⁹ Now, Yahweh, you have seen the evil things that my enemies have done to me,

so judge my case and show that I have done nothing wrong.

⁶⁰ You know the evil things

that they are planning to do to me.

⁶¹ Yahweh, you have heard them insult me;

you have heard what they plan to do to me.

⁶² Every day they whisper and mutter things about me,

all during the day.

⁶³ Look at them! Whatever they are doing at the moment,

they make fun of me by the songs that they sing.

⁶⁴ Yahweh, give them what they deserve!

Pay them back for what they have done to me!

⁶⁵ You permit them to do whatever they want,

and you punish them by taking away their shame.

That is why your curse is upon them.

⁶⁶ Because you are angry with them, pursue them and get rid of them,

until none of them remain on the earth.”

Chapter 4

¹ Previously our people were like pure gold,

but now they are worthless.

Just as our enemies have scattered the sacred stones in the temple,

so they have also scattered our young men.

² The young men of Jerusalem were as valuable as large amounts of gold,

but now people consider them to be as worthless as ordinary clay pots.

³ Even the female jackals feed their pups,

but my people act cruelly toward their own children;

the mothers are like ostriches in the desert that abandon their eggs.

⁴ My people’s infants’ tongues cling to the roofs of their mouths

because they are extremely thirsty;

the children plead for some food,

but no one gives them any.

⁵ People who previously ate fine food

are now starving in the streets;

those who previously wore fine clothes

now lie upon the rubbish heaps with nothing to eat.

⁶ The people of Sodom died very suddenly in a disaster.

But God punished my people

more severely than the people of Sodom,

and no one was concerned about all that we suffered.

⁷ Our leaders used to be like pure snow or white milk,

they were so clean and spotless.

Their bodies were healthy,

pink like coral and brilliant like sapphires.

⁸ Now our leaders' faces are blacker than soot,

and no one recognizes them when they walk in the streets.

Their skin has shriveled and it hangs on their bones,

and it has become as dry as a stick of wood.

⁹ It is better to die in a battle than to die of hunger.

There was no food to harvest in the fields,

so the people slowly starved until they died.

¹⁰ Women who usually acted with love and compassion

have killed and cooked their own children;

they ate them when there was no other food,

when Jerusalem was being destroyed by attacking armies.

¹¹ Yahweh has shown to everyone how angry he was with his people!

His anger spread like a fire in Zion (the city of Jerusalem)

that burned the city down to its rock foundations.

¹² None of the kings on the earth or anyone else

believed that any of our enemies could enter the gates of Jerusalem.

¹³ But that is what happened;

it happened because the prophets sinned;

the priests also sinned

by causing innocent people to die.

¹⁴ The priests and prophets wander through the streets

as though they were blind.

No one will touch them

because their clothes are stained with the blood of those innocent people.

¹⁵ These people shouted at the priests and prophets, saying,

"Stay away from us! Do not touch us!"

So the priests and prophets have fled from Israel,

and they wander around from one country to another,

but people in each country keep saying to them, "You cannot stay here!"

¹⁶ It is Yahweh himself who has scattered them;

he no longer is concerned about them.

People do not welcome our priests any longer, and they care nothing for the elders.

¹⁷ We continued to look for someone to help us before it was too late,

but it was useless.

We continued to watch to see if one of our allies would save us,

but none of the nations that we were waiting for was willing to help us.

¹⁸ Our enemies were pursuing us,

so we could not even walk in our streets because they could take us as prisoners.

Our enemies were about to capture us;
it was time for them to kill us.

¹⁹ Those who ran after us were faster than eagles flying in the sky.

Even if we fled to the mountains
or hid in the desert,

they went there ahead of us and waited to attack us.

²⁰ Our king, whom Yahweh had appointed,

the one who enabled us to live,

the one whom we trusted to protect us

when we had to live in the other nations as slaves—

the enemy captured him,

as you would capture an animal in a pit.

²¹ You people of Edom and Uz,
you should be happy while you can,
but Yahweh will punish you also.

You will become so drunk that you will strip off your own clothes.

²² You people of Zion (whose home is in Jerusalem),

the time when Yahweh punishes you for your sins will come to an end.

He will bring an end to the time you must spend in exile.

But you people who are from Edom, Yahweh will punish you for your sins

and he will make known to everyone the wicked things you have done.

Chapter 5

¹ Yahweh, think about what has happened to us.

See how no one respects us any longer.

² Foreigners have seized our property,
and now they live in our homes.

³ Our enemies have killed our fathers,
and caused our mothers to become widows.

⁴ Now they make us pay for water to drink,
and pay for firewood.

⁵ The enemy runs after us and is very close to us;

we are exhausted, but they do not allow us to rest.

⁶ In order to get enough food to remain alive,
we begged Egypt and Assyria to help us.

⁷ Our ancestors sinned, and now they are dead,
but we are suffering for the sins that they committed.

⁸ Now the people who rule over us are themselves slaves to their own masters in Babylon.

There is no one who can rescue us from their power.

⁹ We go far to look for food, but we are in danger of dying when we do so,

because of the robbers who live in the wilderness.

¹⁰ Our skin has become hot like an oven,
and we have a very high fever because we are extremely hungry.

¹¹ Our enemies have violated the women in Jerusalem,

and they have done that to the young women in all the towns of Judea.

¹² Our enemies have hanged our leaders,

and they have not respected our elders.

¹³ They force our young men to grind flour with millstones,

and young boys stagger while they are forced to carry heavy loads of firewood.

¹⁴ Our elders no longer sit at the city gates to make important decisions;

the young men no longer play their musical instruments.

¹⁵ We are no longer joyful;

instead of dancing joyfully, we now mourn.

¹⁶ The wreaths of flowers have fallen off our heads.

Terrible things have happened to us because of the sins that we committed.

¹⁷ We are tired and discouraged,

and we cannot see well because our eyes are full of tears.

¹⁸ Jerusalem has no one living any more in it,

and jackals prowl around in it.

¹⁹ But Yahweh, you rule forever!

You continue to rule from one generation to the next generation.

²⁰ So why have you forgotten us?

Will you abandon us for a very long time?

²¹ Please enable us to return to you,

and enable us to prosper as we did previously.

²² Please do that, or is it really true that you have rejected us forever?

Is it really true that you will never stop being extremely angry with us?

EZEKIEL

Chapter 1

¹⁻² "When I, Ezekiel, was thirty years old, I was living among the Israelite people by the Kebar Canal, which was south of Babylon. The Babylonians had taken us from the land of Judah and brought us here. On the fifth day of the fourth month of that year, it was as though the sky opened and I saw visions from God.

The fifth day of the fourth month was almost five years after King Jehoiachin had been exiled." ³ So God gave Ezekiel the priest, son of Buzi, messages in Babylonia while he was beside the Kebar Canal. Yahweh's power went to him there.

⁴ In one of the visions, I saw a wind-storm coming from the north. There was a huge cloud, and lightning was flashing within it continually, and a brilliant light surrounded the cloud. In the center of where the lightning was flashing, there was amber-colored fire. ⁵ In the center of the storm I saw what resembled four living creatures. They resembled humans, ⁶ but each of them had four faces and four wings. ⁷ Their legs were like human legs, but their feet resembled the hooves of calves that shined like polished bronze. ⁸ On the four sides of their bodies under their wings there were hands like humans have. ⁹ As the four creatures stood there, they formed a circle, with their wings touching each other. They did not turn when they were moving; they went straight ahead.

¹⁰ Each of the creatures had four faces. In front there was a face that resembled a human face. The face on the right side resembled a lion's face. The face on the left side resembled an ox's face. The face

in back resembled an eagle's face. ¹¹ Two of each creature's wings were lifted up and touched the wings of the creatures that were on either side of it. The other two wings were folded against the creature's body. ¹² The creatures went straight ahead in whatever direction the Spirit of God, who controlled them, wanted them to go, without changing directions while they were moving. ¹³ The four creatures resembled burning coals or torches. A blazing fire moved back and forth among the creatures, and lightning flashed from among them. ¹⁴ The creatures were moving back and forth very rapidly, so that they looked like flashes of lightning.

¹⁵ While I looked at the four living creatures, I saw a wheel on the ground beside each of them. ¹⁶ Each of the wheels was the same, and they all shone like beryl. Each wheel seemed to have one wheel inside another wheel. ¹⁷ Whenever they moved, they would go straight in one of the four directions that the creatures were facing; they did not turn in another direction while they moved. ¹⁸ The rims of the wheels were imposing and frightening, and they were covered with eyes.

¹⁹ Whenever the living creatures moved, the wheels moved with them. So whenever the creatures rose up from the ground, the wheels also rose up. ²⁰ Wherever the Spirit of God, who controlled the creatures, wanted them to go, they went; and the wheels went with them, because their spirit controlled the wheels. ²¹ Whenever the creatures moved, the wheels moved. Whenever the creatures stood still, the wheels stopped. Whenever the creatures rose up from the ground, the wheels rose up with them.

²² Above the heads of the creatures there was something that resembled a dome. It glistened as ice shines, and it was awesome. ²³ Under the dome, the creatures

stretched out their wings. Each one had two wings that touched the wings of the creatures on either side, and two wings that covered his own body. ²⁴ Whenever the creatures moved, their wings made a sound that resembled the crashing of waves in the sea. It also sounded like the voice of Almighty God, and like the noise of a huge army marching. Whenever the creatures stood still on the ground, they lowered their wings. ²⁵ While they stood on the ground with their wings lowered, there was a voice from the dome that was over their heads.

²⁶ Above the dome was something that resembled a huge throne that was made of a huge sapphire. Sitting on the throne was someone who resembled a human. ²⁷

I saw that above his waist he resembled metal that was glowing as though it had a very hot fire inside it. And I saw that below his waist there was a very brilliant light that surrounded him. ²⁸ It shone like a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day.

That was the brilliant light that represented the presence of Yahweh. When I saw it, I threw myself flat onto the ground, and I heard him speak!

Chapter 2

¹ The voice said to me, "Son of man, stand up while I speak to you." ² While he spoke to me, God's Spirit entered me and enabled me to stand up. Then I heard him speak to me.

³ He said, "Son of man, I will send you to the Israelite people. They are people who have turned away from me and rebelled against me. Their ancestors rebelled against me, and they themselves are still rebelling against me. ⁴ The people to whom I will send you are very stubborn. But say to them, 'This is what Yah-

weh the Lord says to you.' ⁵ And when you tell them my messages, perhaps those rebellious people will heed those messages and perhaps they will not heed them; but they will know that a prophet has been among them! ⁶ And you, son of man, you must not be afraid of them or afraid of what they say. Living among them will be like living in the midst of briars or scorpions, but do not be afraid of them. They are rebellious people, but do not allow them to frighten you. ⁷ Tell them my message, but do not expect them to pay attention to it, because they are very rebellious. ⁸ But son of man, you must pay attention to what I say. Do not be rebellious like they are. Now open your mouth and eat what I give to you."

⁹ Then, as I watched, I saw his hand that was stretched toward me. In his hand was a scroll. ¹⁰ He unrolled the scroll. On both sides of it were written words that expressed sorrow and mourning and words about trouble.

Chapter 3

¹ He said to me, "Son of Man, eat this scroll that is in front of you. Then go and speak to the Israelite people." ² So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat it.

³ Then he said to me, "Son of Man, eat the scroll that I have given to you. Fill your stomach with it." So I ate it, and in my mouth it tasted as sweet as honey.

⁴ Then he said to me, "Son of Man, go to the Israelite people and tell them my message. ⁵ The people to whom I am sending you are not people whose language is very difficult to learn, a language which you do not understand. I am sending you to your Israelite people. ⁶ I am sending you to people whose language you understand

very well. If I were sending you to people whose language was difficult for you to understand, they would pay attention to what you say to them. ⁷ But because the Israelite people do not want to listen to me, they will not want to listen to you. They do not want to listen because they are all very rebellious. ⁸ But you—I will enable you to be as stubborn and tough as they are. ⁹ I will cause you to be as firm as the hardest stone, like flint. So, even though they are very rebellious people, do not be afraid of them; do not allow them to frighten you.”

¹⁰ He also said to me, “Son of Man, listen very carefully to what I say, and keep thinking about it. ¹¹ Go to your fellow Israelites who are here after being exiled, and speak to them. Say to them, ‘This is what Yahweh the Lord says’ and then tell them my message, whether they want to hear it or whether they would rather cease to exist.”

¹² Then in the vision the Spirit of God lifted me up, and I heard behind me the sound of a large earthquake. (Praise our glorious Yahweh in the place where he lives in heaven!) ¹³ I heard the sound of the wings of the four living creatures brushing against each other, and I also heard the sound of the wheels that were beside them. It was a loud sound like an earthquake. ¹⁴ The Spirit took me away. Within me I was very bitter and angry, and I felt unable to do anything, as though Yahweh were pushing down on me very powerfully. ¹⁵ I came to the exiles who lived at the town of Tel Aviv near the Kebar Canal in Babylon. Then, where they were living, I sat for seven days. I was shocked about everything that I had seen.

¹⁶ After those seven days had ended, Yahweh gave me this message: ¹⁷ “Son of Man, I am appointing you to be like a watchman. So listen to these messages that I will give you, and tell them those messages to warn

them. ¹⁸ When I say about some wicked people, ‘They will surely die because of their sins,’ if you do not warn them or tell them that they must turn from their wicked behavior if they want to save their lives, they will die because of their sin, and it will be your responsibility since you did not act to prevent it. ¹⁹ But if you warn wicked people and they do not turn from all their wicked behavior, they will die because of their sins, but you will have saved yourself from my punishment.

²⁰ Similarly, when righteous people turn from their righteous behavior and do evil deeds, and I cause bad things to happen to them, they will die. But you must warn them. If they do not stop their sinful behavior, they will die because of their sins. I will not think about the righteous things that they did previously. But if you have not warned them, I will hold you responsible for their deaths. ²¹ But if you warn righteous people not to sin, and they do not sin; they will surely remain alive because they heeded your warning, and you will have saved yourself from my punishment.”

²² I felt Yahweh take control, and he spoke to me and said, “Get up and go to the plain, and I will speak to you there.” ²³ So I got up and went out to the plain. And I saw the glory of Yahweh there, like the glory that I had seen along the Kebar Canal. And I threw myself flat onto the ground.

²⁴ Then the Spirit of God entered me and enabled me to stand up. He said to me, “Go into your house and stay inside it. ²⁵ People will tie you with ropes, with the result that you will be unable to go out among the people. ²⁶ Even though they are very rebellious people, I will cause your tongue to stick to the roof of your mouth, with the result that you will be unable to talk and to rebuke them. ²⁷ But then when I speak to you again, I will en-

able you to talk and tell them ‘This is what the Lord Yahweh is saying to you.’ The one who wants to hear me will hear me, but the one who ignores the message will come to an end, since they are a rebellious people!”

Chapter 4

¹ Yahweh continued and said, “Son of man, take a large clay tablet and scrape lines on it that represent Jerusalem. ² Then draw figures around it to represent enemy soldiers who will build earthworks and forts around the city in order to take it. Set figures around it that represent battering rams. ³ Then take an iron pan, and place it to be like an iron wall between you and the carving of the city. Then stare at the image of the city. This means that enemy troops will surround the city to attack it. This will be a warning to the Israelite people.

⁴⁻⁵ Then lie on your left side, and stay like that for 390 days. You will be symbolically bearing the punishment for the sins of the Israelites, the northern kingdom; you must lie like that one day for each year that I will punish them.

⁶ After that, lie down again. This time, lie on your right side for forty days. That will symbolize that the Judean people, the southern kingdom, will be punished for their sins, one year for each day that you lie there. ⁷ Turn your face toward the drawing of Jerusalem and bare your arm like a soldier does who prepares to go into battle, and prophesy about what will happen to the city. ⁸ You will not be able to move; it will be as though I have tied you with ropes so that you cannot turn from one side to the other until you have finished symbolizing how many years the city will be besieged.

⁹ Before you do that, take some wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and spelt; and put them in a storage jar, and use that to bake bread for yourself. That is what you will eat during the 390 days while you lie on your left side. ¹⁰ You will eat about two hundred grams of bread each day throughout the day. ¹¹ Also measure out about one-half liter of water to drink each day throughout the day. ¹² Eat that bread like you would eat a loaf of barley bread. But use your own dried dung for fuel to bake the bread while people are watching. ¹³ That will symbolize that the Israelite people will be forced to eat food that is unacceptable to me when they are living in the nations to which I will force them to go.”

¹⁴ Then I said, “No, Lord Yahweh! Do not force me to do that! I have never caused myself to become unacceptable to you. From the time when I was young, I have never eaten meat of any animal that was found dead or that had been killed by wild animals. And I have never eaten any meat that is unacceptable to you.”

¹⁵ Yahweh replied, “Because of that, I will allow you to bake your bread using dried cow manure instead of human dung for fuel.”

¹⁶ Then he said to me, “Son of man, I will cause the supply of food to Jerusalem to be cut off. Then the people will eat the small amounts of food and drink the small amounts of water that their leaders permit them to have, and they will be very distressed and anxious as they do that, ¹⁷ because water and food will be very scarce. They will see each other becoming extremely thin, and they will be appalled; but this will happen because they are being punished for the sins that they have committed.”

Chapter 5

¹ "Then, son of man, when you start doing those things, take a sharp sword and use it like a barber's razor to shave your head and your beard. Put the hair that you shaved off on scales, and divide the hair into three equal parts. ² When the time during which you will symbolize that the city will be surrounded by enemy troops ends, put a third of the hair inside the drawing of the city and burn it. Take another third of the hair, scatter it all around the drawing of the city, and then strike it with your sword. That will symbolize that I will strike the people of Jerusalem with their enemies' swords. Then allow the wind to scatter the other third of the hair. That will symbolize that even if they flee from the city, I will still cause their enemies to pursue them and attack them with swords. ³ But take a few your hairs and tie them to your sleeves. ⁴ Then take a few of those hairs, throw them into the fire, and burn them up. That will symbolize that a fire will spread from Jerusalem and destroy things throughout Israel.

⁵ This is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: This drawing will represent Jerusalem, the city that I have placed in the center of the nations, with other countries around it. ⁶ But the wicked people of Jerusalem rebel against obeying my commands, and they show that they are more wicked than the people of the surrounding countries. They rejected my laws and refused to obey my commands.

⁷ Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: You people of Jerusalem have been more rebellious than the people of the nations around you; you have not obeyed any of my laws. You have not even obeyed the laws of the nations around you!

⁸ Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh the

Lord, say: I am opposed to you people of Jerusalem. I will punish you, and the people of other nations will see it. ⁹ Because of all your detestable idols and practices, I will punish you people of Jerusalem like I have never done before and will never do again. ¹⁰ As a result, parents among you will eat their children, and children will eat their parents because there will be nothing else to eat. I will punish you severely, and I will cause those who will still be alive to be scattered in every direction. ¹¹ Therefore, I, Yahweh the Lord, make this declaration! That as surely as I am alive, because you have polluted my temple with all your disgusting idols and with the other awful things that you do, I will no longer bless you. I will not pity you or act mercifully toward you. ¹² One-third of your people will die inside the city because of the plagues they will experience, or by famine. One-third of your people will be killed by your enemies' swords outside the city. And one-third I will scatter in every direction, but your enemies will still pursue you and kill you with their swords.

¹³ Then I will no longer be angry with you; I will stop punishing you after I have avenged myself against you. And when I stop punishing you, you will know that I, Yahweh, have spoken to you because I have finished punishing you in my anger.

¹⁴ I will cause your city to be a ruins, so that people of other nations that are around you will pass by and see it and sneer at you. ¹⁵ They will scorn you and taunt you. When I severely punish you because of my great anger, they will be horrified and you will be a warning to them. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it. ¹⁶ And when I cut off your food supply and cause there to be more famine, it will be as though I am shooting at you with my arrows that will

destroy you. ¹⁷ So I will cause you to experience a famine, and I will send wild beasts to attack you and your children, and all your children will be killed. You will experience plagues and wars, and I will cause your enemies to attack you with their swords. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.”

Chapter 6

¹ Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ² “Son of man, turn toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy about what will happen to them, and say, ³ ‘Mountains of Israel, listen to what Yahweh the Lord says to you! He says this to the mountains and the high hills and to the streambeds and the low valleys. He says: I am about to send enemy soldiers with swords to destroy all the hilltops where you worship idols. ⁴ They will smash all your altars for worshiping idols and your pillars you use for astronomy, and they will kill many Israelite people in front of their idols. ⁵ Their corpses will lie in front of their idols, and their bones will be scattered around their altars. ⁶ Wherever you live, your towns will be ruined and the places where idols were worshiped on the hilltops will be smashed. Your altars will be completely smashed, and everything that you own will become a pile of ruins. ⁷ Many of your people will be killed right in front of you, and then you will know that I am Yahweh and I do what I say I will do.

⁸ But I will allow some of you to remain alive. They will escape death when your enemies scatter you among many other nations. ⁹ When that happens, in those nations to which you have been forced to go, those of you who have escaped death will think about me. You will remember that

I was very grieved because you turned away from me, because you were disloyal to me, and because you desired to worship your idols. You will hate yourselves because of the evil and detestable things that you have done. ¹⁰ And you will realize that I, Yahweh, have punished you. You will realize that when I threatened to punish you, I surely intended to do that.

¹¹ So this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say to you, Ezekiel: Slap your hands and stamp your feet and cry out to show that you are distressed, and groan about what will happen to the Israelite people because of all their wicked and detestable behavior. They will be killed by their enemies’ swords, they will die from hunger, and they will die from plagues. ¹² Those who are far from Jerusalem will die from plagues, those who are close to Jerusalem will be killed by their enemies’ swords. Those who are still alive after that will die from hunger. That is how I will punish them. ¹³ Some of your people’s corpses will lie among their idols around their altars, on every high hilltop and on all the mountaintops, under every big tree—at all the places where they burned incense to honor their idols. When this happens you will realize that I, Yahweh, have done this. ¹⁴ For I will display my power and cause every area in which they live in your country to become an empty wasteland, from the desert in the far south to the town of Diblah in the far north. Then they will realize that I, Yahweh, have done this.”

Chapter 7

¹ Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ² “You, son of man, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say to the people of Israel: All of Israel, everything within its

borders, will soon be destroyed. ³ You people of Israel, the end has come. I will punish you severely. I will judge you for all the wicked things that you have done, and pay you back for your disgusting behavior. ⁴ I will not pity you or act mercifully toward you. I will surely punish you for your wicked behavior. Then you will know that it has happened because I, Yahweh, have done it.

⁵ This is also what Yahweh the Lord says: You will soon experience many terrible disasters! ⁶ This will be the end of Israel; your country will be finished! And your lives will be ended! ⁷ It will be the end of you people who live in the land of Israel. The time has come; the day when you will be destroyed is near. At that time the people who worship idols on the mountains will not be happy; they will panic. ⁸ I am very angry with you and am about to pour out my punishment on you. I will judge you for all the wicked things that you have done and pay you back for your disgusting behavior. ⁹ I will not pity you or act mercifully toward you. I will surely punish you for your wicked behavior. Then you will know that it is I, Yahweh, who have punished you.

¹⁰ The day of your punishment is here! It has arrived! Disasters have come as a result of your pride. ¹¹ People are acting violently and doing more wicked things. And nothing that belongs to those people will be left, none of their money, and they will not be respected by anyone. ¹² Now is the time; that day has arrived. People who buy things should not rejoice because they bought things very cheaply and those who sell things should not be sad because they had to sell things cheaply, because Yahweh will be punishing everyone. ¹³ People who sell some of their property will never be able to buy it back—they will not even be able to return to see it; because they

have sinned, not one of them will succeed in staying alive. ¹⁴ Your commanders will blow trumpets to get the army ready to fight, but no one will respond, because I will be angry at all the people.

¹⁵ When those things happen, your enemies will be outside the city with their swords, and there will be plagues and famines inside the city. Those who are caught outside of the city in the fields will be killed by their enemies' swords, and those who are in the city will die from famines and plagues. ¹⁶ Those who survive and escape will flee to the mountains, and they all will moan because of their sins, as pigeons moan. ¹⁷ Because they will be very afraid, all the people's hands will become limp and weak, and their knees will become very weak and unable to hold them up. ¹⁸ They will put on clothes made from rough cloth, and they will be terrified. Their faces will show that they are ashamed, and they will shave their heads to show that they are very sad. ¹⁹ They will throw their silver into the streets, and consider their gold the same way they would consider garbage, because they will realize that their silver and gold will not be able to rescue them when Yahweh punishes them. They will not be able to buy food to fill their stomachs, because having a lot of gold and silver has led them to sin. ²⁰ They were proud, so they used their beautiful jewelry to make detestable and disgusting idols of their false gods. So I will make them see how disgusting and unacceptable these things are. ²¹ I will give their silver and gold to foreigners who invade your country and take away your valuable treasures. I will give those things to wicked people, and I will not interfere when they will do disgraceful things to the things that they take. ²² I will allow robbers to enter the temple I love and protect, and they will desecrate it.

²³ Prepare chains to be fastened on you when your enemies capture you as punishment because the people throughout the country are committing murder, and people in the city are being violent. ²⁴ So I will bring armies of the nations whose people are extremely wicked to take the houses of the Israelite people. I will make Israelite people realize that they are to no longer be proud. Your enemies will cause your places of worship to no longer be acceptable to be used. ²⁵ When your enemies cause you to be terrified, you will plead for them to make peace, but there will be no peace. ²⁶ You will experience many disasters, and you will continually hear rumors about disasters that are happening in other places. People will plead with prophets to tell them what visions they have received, but the prophets will not have received any visions. Priests will no longer teach people the laws that I gave to Moses. Even the wise older people will not have any answers. ²⁷ Your king will mourn, and his son will no longer expect that good things will happen. The hands of people throughout the country will tremble. And I will do to them what they deserve for their wicked behavior. I will judge and condemn them the same way they have judged and condemned others. Then they will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do."

Chapter 8

¹ On the fifth day of the sixth month, almost six years after the Babylonians had taken us Israelites to their land, I was sitting with the leaders of Judah in my house when I felt the presence of Yahweh the Lord come on me again. ² Then in a vision I saw someone who resembled a man, but below his waist his body was like fire and

above his waist his body was glowing like very hot metal. ³ He reached out what seemed to be a hand and grabbed me by the hair of my head. The Spirit lifted me up high above the earth, and in visions God took me from Babylon to Jerusalem. He took me to the temple, to the inner north gate, to the place where there was an idol that caused Yahweh to be very disgusted and furious. ⁴ And there in front of me was the very bright light of God himself whom the Israelite people previously worshiped. It was like the vision that I had seen in the plain.

⁵ God said to me, "Son of man, look toward the north!" So I looked, and I saw at the entrance of the gate near the altar that idol that caused Yahweh to be disgusted and furious.

⁶ He said to me, "Son of man, do you see what the Israelite people are doing? They are doing detestable things here, things that will cause me to abandon my temple. But you will see things that are even more detestable."

⁷ Then he brought me to the entrance of the courtyard. I looked and saw a hole in the wall. ⁸ He said to me, "Son of man, dig through the wall here." So I dug through the wall, and I saw a doorway inside.

⁹ He said to me, "Go in and see the wicked and detestable things that they are doing here!" ¹⁰ So I went in through the doorway and looked, and I saw all over the walls of a big room, drawings of all kinds of creatures that crawl along the ground and other detestable animals, and drawings of all the idols that the people of Israel were worshiping. ¹¹ In front of them stood seventy elders of Israel. Jaazaniah son of Shaphan, was standing among them. Each of them was holding a pan in which incense was burning, and fragrant smoke of burning incense was rising up.

¹² God said to me, "Son of man, look at what the Israelite elders are doing here in the darkness, each of them standing in his rooms with the carved images, worshipping his own idols! They are saying, 'Yahweh does not see us; Yahweh has deserted this country.'" ¹³ He also said, "But you will see things that are even more detestable!"

¹⁴ Then he took me to the entrance at the outer north gate of the temple. I saw women sitting there, mourning for the death of the god of the people of Babylonia, Tammuz. ¹⁵ He said to me, "Son of man, do you see this? And you will see things that are more detestable than this!"

¹⁶ Then he took me into the inner courtyard inside the temple. There at the entrance of the temple, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men. Their backs were toward the temple, and their faces were toward the east; they were bowing down to worship the sun as it rose in the east.

¹⁷ He said to me, "Son of man, do you see what they are doing? Do you think that it is not a serious thing that these men of Judah are doing, worshipping these detestable things here? But they are doing other terrible things. They are acting violently throughout their country, and continually provoking my anger. Look at them! They are insulting me by their actions of false worship! ¹⁸ So I will show them that I am very angry. I will not pity them or act mercifully toward them. And even if they shout loudly to me to help them, I will not pay attention to them."

Chapter 9

¹ Then Yahweh called out loudly, "You men who are going to punish this city,

bring your tools of destruction here." ² Then I saw six men coming from the north gate of the temple. Each one was carrying a weapon. With them was a man wearing a white linen robe. He carried at his side a case containing things to write with. They all came in and stood beside the bronze altar.

³ Then the glory that symbolized the presence of the God of Israel rose up from above the four winged creatures and moved to the entrance of the temple, and Yahweh called to the man wearing the linen robe, ⁴ and said to him, "Go throughout Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of those who are very sad because of the detestable things that are being done inside the city."

⁵ While I was listening, he said to the other six men, "Follow the man wearing the white robe, and kill people. Do not pity them or act mercifully toward them. ⁶ Slaughter old men, young men and women, older women and children; but do not harm any of those who have that mark on their forehead. Start at my temple." So they began by killing the elders who were worshipping idols in front of the temple.

⁷ Then Yahweh said to those men, "Pollute the temple by filling the courtyard with the corpses of those whom you kill! Start now!" So they went out and started killing people throughout the city. ⁸ While they were doing that, I was left alone. I prostrated myself on the ground and cried out, "Yahweh my Lord, are you going to get rid of all the other people of Israel who are still alive, while you are severely punishing the people of Jerusalem?"

⁹ He replied, "The sins of the people are numerous and severe! There is murder everywhere in this country, and this city is full of people who act unjustly. They say, 'Yahweh has abandoned this country, and

he does not see what we are doing.’ ¹⁰ So I will not pity them or act mercifully toward them. I will do to them the evil things that they have done to other people.”

¹¹ Then the man wearing the linen robe returned, saying, “I have done what you commanded me to do.”

Chapter 10

¹ Then I saw what resembled a throne made of sapphire above the thing that resembled a dome that was above the heads of the four winged creatures. ² Yahweh said to the man wearing the linen robe, “Go between the wheels that are under the winged creatures. Pick up as many hot coals as you can, and scatter them over the city.” And while I watched, the man wearing the white robe left.

³ The four winged creatures were standing on the south side of the temple when the man wearing the white robe entered. Then a cloud filled the inner courtyard of the temple. ⁴ And the glory of Yahweh went up from directly over the winged creatures and stood over the doorway of the temple. It filled the entire temple with a cloud and everything in the courtyard was bright because of Yahweh’s glorious presence. ⁵ I also heard the sound made by the wings of the winged creatures in the courtyard outside the temple. It was very loud, like the voice of Almighty God when he speaks.

⁶ When Yahweh commanded the man wearing the linen robe to take burning coals from among those winged creatures, the man went into the courtyard and stood beside one of the wheels. ⁷ Then one of those winged creatures reached out his hand to the fire that was there among them. He picked up some of the coals and put them in the hands of the man wearing

the linen robe, and that man took them and left. ⁸ Under the wings of the winged creatures was something that resembled a human’s hands.

⁹ Then I saw four wheels alongside the winged creatures. There was one wheel beside each of the winged creatures. The wheels shone like very valuable stones. ¹⁰ The wheels were all alike: Each had one wheel inside another wheel. ¹¹ Whenever they moved, they went straight in whatever direction one of the winged creatures faced. The wheels did not turn in another direction while the winged creatures flew. ¹² Their bodies, including their backs and hands and wings, were covered with eyes. The wheels were also covered with eyes. ¹³ I heard someone call them ‘the whirling wheels.’ ¹⁴ Each of the winged creatures had four faces. One face was like the face of a bull, one face was like the face of a human, one face was like the face of a lion, and one face was like the face of an eagle.

¹⁵ Then the winged creatures rose up. They were the same living creatures that I had seen alongside the Kebar Canal. ¹⁶ When the winged creatures moved, the wheels moved with them. When the winged creatures spread their wings to fly over the ground, the wheels did not leave them but stayed beside them. ¹⁷ When the winged creatures stopped, the wheels stopped. When the winged creatures started to fly, the wheels flew with them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.

¹⁸ Then the glory of Yahweh left the entrance of the temple and stopped above the winged creatures. ¹⁹ While I watched, the winged creatures spread their wings and started to fly, and the wheels went with them. They stopped at the gate on the east side of the temple, and the glory of God, the one whom the Israelites had worshiped, was above them.

²⁰ These were the same four living creatures that I had seen alongside the Kebar Canal, and I realized that they were the winged creatures. ²¹ Each of them had four faces and four wings, and under their wings was what resembled a human's hands. ²² Their faces were the same as the faces that I had seen at the Kebar Canal. Each of them flew straight ahead.

Chapter 11

¹ Then God's Spirit lifted me up and took me to the gate on the east side of the temple. There at the gate were twenty-five men. Among them I saw Jaazaniah son of Azzur, and Pelatiah son of Benaiah, who were leaders of the people. ² Yahweh said to me, "Son of man, these are the new leaders in Jerusalem who are planning to do evil things and who are giving wicked advice to people in this city. ³ They say, 'It is not the time to build houses yet, but just as pieces of meat are carefully stored in covered pots we will be protected from the bad things that will happen to others.' ⁴ So, son of man, prophesy about the terrible things that will happen to them."

⁵ Then the Spirit of Yahweh came upon me and told me to say to the people, "This is what Yahweh says, 'You Israelite people say those things, and I know what you are thinking. ⁶ You have killed many people in this city and filled the streets with their corpses.

⁷ Therefore this is what Yahweh the Lord says, 'The corpses of the people whom you have killed here are like the meat and Jerusalem is the cauldron, but I will expel you people from this city! ⁸ You are afraid of being killed by enemies' swords, so that is what I will cause to happen to you. ⁹ I will expel you from this city and enable foreigners to capture you and pun-

ish you. ¹⁰ They will kill you with their swords; you will be punished right here in Israel! Then people will realize that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do. ¹¹ This city will not be a place where you will be protected like meat in a covered pot. I will punish you wherever you are in Israel. ¹² Then you will know that I, Yahweh, have predicted that would happen, because you have not obeyed my commands and decrees; instead, you have imitated the wicked behavior of the people of the nearby nations."

¹³ While I was prophesying that, Pelatiah son of Benaiah suddenly died. Then I prostrated myself on the ground and cried out loudly, "Yahweh my Lord, are you going to similarly get rid of all the Israelite people who are still alive?"

¹⁴ Then Yahweh gave me this message, ¹⁵ "Son of man, the people who are still in Jerusalem are talking about your relatives, your clan, and all the rest of the Israelites who were exiled and saying, 'They are in Babylonia, far from Yahweh. They have left their property here in Israel, so their property now belongs to us!'"

¹⁶ So tell them, "This is what Yahweh the Lord says: Although I caused them to be taken far away from Israel and scattered them among other nations, for a short time I have become a sanctuary for them in the countries to which they have been taken."

¹⁷ So also tell them, "This is what Yahweh the Lord says: Some day I will gather you from the nations to which you have been taken and bring you back to Israel, and you will live in your country again.

¹⁸ When you return to your country, you will get rid of all the vile statues of gods and detestable idols. ¹⁹ I will give you Israelites one new heart and I will give you a new way of thinking when you return to

Israel. You will not be stubborn, but will be obedient. ²⁰ When I do that, you will carefully obey all my laws. You will be my people, and I will be your God. ²¹ But as for those who are devoted to worshiping their vile statues and detestable idols, I will punish them as they deserve for the evil things that they have done.” This is what Yahweh declared.

²² Then the winged creatures, with their wheels beside them, spread their wings and flew up into the air, and the dazzling brightness of Yahweh was above them. ²³ That light went up away from the city and stopped above the mountain to the east of the city. ²⁴ In the vision that I had been seeing, God’s Spirit lifted me up and brought me back to the exiles in Babylon. Then the vision ended, ²⁵ and I told the exiles everything that Yahweh had shown me in the vision.

Chapter 12

¹ Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ² ”Son of man, you are living among people who are very rebellious. They have eyes, but they do not see what I want them to see; they have ears, but they do not listen to what I want them to hear, because they are such a rebellious people.

³ Therefore, son of man, pack your belongings as though you were going into exile. Then, during the daytime, while people are watching, prepare to go to another place. Even though the people are rebellious, perhaps they will understand what you are symbolizing. ⁴ During the daytime, while they are watching, bring out the things that you want to take, and pack them. Then in the evening, while they are watching, do what those who are preparing to go into exile do. ⁵ Dig through the city wall and take your things through the

hole. ⁶ Put them in a sack on your shoulder while they are watching, and leave when it becomes dark. Cover your face so you cannot see the path. I want you to do this because I want you to warn the Israelite people.”

⁷ So I did what Yahweh told me to do. During the day I brought things out of my house as though I was packing to go into exile. Then in the evening I dug through the city wall. Then while people watched, I put my sack of belongings on my shoulder and left.

⁸ The next morning, Yahweh gave me this message, ⁹ ”Son of man, did the rebellious people of Israel not ask you, ‘What are you doing?’

¹⁰ So go back and say to them, ‘What I did is about the king in Jerusalem and all the other people of Israel who are there.’ ¹¹ Tell them, ‘What I did is a warning to you. What I did in front of you, they are going to have to do. They will be captured and forced to go to another country. ¹² Their king will put his belongings on his shoulder when it becomes dark and he will try to escape. His servants will dig a hole through the city wall, and he will take his belongings through it. He will cover his face so others will not recognize him and he will not be able to see the land. ¹³ But it will be as though I will spread a net for him to be captured; enemy soldiers will capture him, blind him, and take him to the city of Babylon where the Chaldean people live. But he will not be able to see it because he will be blind; and there he will die. ¹⁴ I will scatter all those who have been around him—his advisors and his soldiers—in every direction; and I will cause his enemies to pursue them, with their swords ready to strike them.

¹⁵ Then, when I scatter them among many nations, they will know that I, Yahweh have the power to do what I say that I

will do. ¹⁶ But I will spare some of them from being killed by the sword, or starving to death, or dying of disease so they can record that they have been doing disgusting things, and they will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.”

¹⁷ Then Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ¹⁸ ”Son of man, tremble while you eat your food, and shudder fearfully while you drink your water. ¹⁹ Tell this to the Israelite people: ’This is what Yahweh the Lord says about those who are still living in Jerusalem and in other places in Israel. They also will be very anxious while they eat their food and drink their water, because their country will soon have everything taken away. That will happen because the people who live there continually act very violently. ²⁰ The towns where people live will be devastated, and the land will become barren. Then you people will know that it is I, Yahweh, who have the power to do what I say that I will do.”

²¹ Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ²² ”Son of man, the people in Israel have this proverb that says, ‘The days keep passing, and what the prophets predict never happens.’ ²³ So say to them, ‘This is what Yahweh the Lord says: I am going to prove that what they say is not correct, and then they will never say it again in Israel.’ Tell them, ‘It will soon be the time when everything that the prophets predict will happen.’ ²⁴ No longer will prophets tell the Israelite people false visions, or tell people prophecies just to please them. ²⁵ Instead, I, Yahweh, will say what I want to tell the people, and what I predict will quickly happen. You rebellious people, I will cause to happen everything that I say will happen. That is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say.”

²⁶ Yahweh also gave me this message. He

said, ²⁷ ”Son of man, the Israelite people are constantly saying about you, ‘The things that he sees in visions will not happen soon. They are about things that will happen many years from now, far in the future.’

²⁸ Therefore say to them, ‘This is what Yahweh the Lord says: I will no longer delay causing to happen any of the things that I have prophesied. Whatever I have predicted will soon happen.”

Chapter 13

¹ Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ² ”Son of man, prophesy a warning against the prophets in Israel who are prophesying. Some of them are prophesying things that they themselves have imagined. Say to them, ‘Listen to what Yahweh says! ³ He says, “Terrible things will happen to those wicked prophets who proclaim their own ideas and have not seen any visions from me. ⁴ You Israelite people, your prophets are like jackals in the desert, they are scavengers feeding off of others’ loss. ⁵ Because you were listening to them, you have not repaired breeches or strengthened your walls. That needs to be done so that the walls will be strong when I, Yahweh, send your enemies to attack you. ⁶ The visions and prophecies of those prophets are false. They say, ‘Yahweh told me this.’ I have not sent them to you to be my prophets, but you expect that what they prophesy will truly happen! ⁷ They say that they have seen visions, but those visions are false, and the things that they prophesy are lies. They say, ‘Yahweh told me this,’ but I have told them nothing!

⁸ Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: Because you prophets have said what is false and because your visions are

lies, I am opposed to you. ⁹ I will strike all you prophets who falsely say that you have seen visions and prophesy things that are lies. You will not have any place among my people, your names will not be listed in the records of the Israelite people, and you will never return to Israel. Then you will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.

¹⁰ They deceive my people, saying "Things will go well for us" when things will not go well. It is like they want to make people think that there is a very strong wall when it is not strong. ¹¹ So, tell those prophets who cover the wall with whitewash that the wall will surely fall down. It will rain very hard. I will send big hailstones to fall. Very strong winds will blow against it. ¹² When the wall falls down, the people will certainly say to those prophets, "The white paint certainly did not make the wall strong!"

¹³ So this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: Because I am very angry with you, I will send enemy armies to destroy Jerusalem. It will be as though I will send a very strong wind and hailstones and very heavy rains to destroy you. ¹⁴ The false prophecies of your prophets are like a wall that they have covered with whitewash, but I will break it down, and shatter it down to the ground, with the result that people can see its foundations. When the wall collapses you also will be killed, and everyone will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do. ¹⁵ In that way I will show that I am very angry with the wall and with those who covered it with whitewash. And I will say, "The wall is gone and those who whitewashed it have been killed." ¹⁶ Those are the prophets who prophesied that things would go well for the people in Jerusalem, when things would not go well for them.'

¹⁷ So you, son of man, show that you

are angry with the women of Jerusalem who prophesy things that they themselves have imagined, and speak true prophesy against them. ¹⁸ Tell them, 'This is what Yahweh the Lord says: Terrible things will happen to you women who fasten magic charms on your wrists and make veils of various sizes to put on your heads in order to deceive the people. You think that you will deceive others by telling them that you know what will happen in the future, and you will save your own lives. ¹⁹ You dishonored me by telling lies in order to get from my people a few handfuls of barley and a few pieces of bread. My people listen to lies; and you women who are lying to them have caused people who did not deserve to die to be killed, and have spared those who should not continue to live.'

²⁰ Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say to those women: 'I detest your magic charms by which you deceive people like other people trap birds. I will tear those charms off your wrists, and I will cause the people whom you have deceived to no longer be deceived by you. ²¹ I will also tear off your veils and rescue my people from continuing to be deceived by you, and they will no longer be under your control. Then you will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do. ²² You have discouraged righteous people by telling them lies when I did not do things to cause them to be sad. And you have encouraged wicked people to keep on doing their wicked behavior; if they had turned away from it, they would have continued to live. ²³ Therefore, you will no longer falsely say that you have seen visions or tell people what will happen in the future in order to please them. I will rescue my people from being deceived by you. And then you will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.'"

Chapter 14

¹ One day some of the elders of Israel came to me and sat down in front of me.

² Then Yahweh gave me this message: ³ "Son of man, these men worship idols, and they are allowing idols to induce them to sin. So should I answer them if they ask me for advice? ⁴ But say this to them: 'This is what Yahweh the Lord says: When any Israelite person wants to worship idols that will induce him to sin, and goes to a prophet to get advice, I, Yahweh, will give him the same answer that they deserve to receive because they worship idols. ⁵ I will do this so the Israelite people, who have abandoned me in order to worship their idols, will sincerely worship me again.'

⁶ Therefore, say to the Israelite people, 'This is what Yahweh the Lord says: Repent! Stop worshiping your idols, and stop all your other detestable behavior!'

⁷ When any of you Israelite people or any foreigner living among you turns away from me and starts worshiping idols that induce him to sin, and then goes to a prophet to find out what I want him to do, I myself will answer him. ⁸ I will show that I detest him, and cause what happens to him to be a warning to others, and cause him to be someone whom people despise. I will not allow him to associate with my people. Then you will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.

⁹ And if a prophet is deceived and gives a false prophecy, even though I have allowed him to give that message, I will get rid of him and remove him from among my Israelite people. ¹⁰ Both the prophet and the one who asks him for advice will be guilty, and I will punish both of them.

¹¹ Then the Israelite people will no longer abandon me, and they will no longer be-

come unacceptable to me because of their sins. They will be my people, and I will be their God. That is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say."

¹² Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ¹³ "You human, if the people of some country sin against me by abandoning me, and I punish them by cutting off their food supply and by sending a famine so that people and animals die, ¹⁴ even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were there, they would save only themselves because of their being righteous. That is what I, Yahweh the Lord, declare.

¹⁵ Or, if I send wild animals throughout the country, and they attack and kill many of the people, so that travel in that country becomes very dangerous and no one travels through that country, ¹⁶ as surely as I am alive, even if those three men were in that country, they could not save even their own sons or daughters from being killed. Only they three would be saved, and the country would become a wasteland. That is what I, Yahweh the Lord, declare.

¹⁷ Or, if I bring enemy soldiers to kill the people and animals throughout that country with their swords, ¹⁸ as surely as I am alive, even if those three men were in that country, they would not be able to save even their own sons or daughters from being killed. They would save only themselves. That is what I, Yahweh the Lord, declare.

¹⁹ Or, if I send a plague into that land and cause the people and the animals to die from the plague because I am very angry with those people, ²⁰ as surely as I am alive, even if Noah, Daniel and Job were in that country, they would not be able to save even their sons and daughters. They would save only themselves because of their being righteous. That is what I, Yahweh the Lord, declare.

²¹ So now this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: I will cause four things to happen to the people of Jerusalem to punish them very severely. Some people and animals will be killed by swords, some will die from famines, others will be attacked and killed by wild animals, and others will die in plagues. ²² But some of your people will remain alive, both adults and children. They will come to you, Ezekiel. And when you see their disgusting behavior and actions, you will realize that I had good reasons for causing the people of Jerusalem to experience those many great disasters that I have sent to them. ²³ When you see those things that they do, you will know that there were very good reasons for me to do everything that I caused to happen to them. That is what I, Yahweh the Lord, declare.”

Chapter 15

¹ Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ² “Son of man, the wood of a grapevine is certainly not more useful than the branches of the trees in a forest. ³ No one even makes pegs from it to hang things on. ⁴ And after a branch of a grapevine is thrown into a fire and the fire burns both ends and chars the branch in the middle, after that will it be useful for anything? ⁵ No; if it was not useful for anything before it was burned, it certainly cannot be made into something useful after the fire has burned and charred it.

⁶ Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: The wood of grapevines is useful only for fuel in a fire. Similarly, the people who live in Jerusalem are useless. ⁷ I will reject them. It will be as though they have escaped from a fire, but there will still be a fire that will burn them up. And when I punish them, you people who

remain alive will know that I, Yahweh, have done it. ⁸ I will cause your country to become a wasteland because your people have not been loyal to me. That is what I, Yahweh, the Lord, say.”

Chapter 16

¹ Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ² “Son of man, inform the people of Jerusalem about their detestable behavior. ³ Say to them, ‘This is what Yahweh the Lord says to you people of Jerusalem: It is as though you are a woman whose father belonged to the Amor people group and your mother belonged to the Heth people group. ⁴ It is as though on the day that you were born, your umbilical cord was not cut, and your body was not washed in water or rubbed with salt and wrapped in strips of cloth, like Israelite babies always are. ⁵ No one pitied you or acted kindly toward you by doing those things for you. Instead, it was as though they hated you. As soon as you were born they threw you into a field to die.

⁶ Then it was as though I passed by and saw you lying in your own blood and kicking. And while you lay there kicking in your own blood, I said to you, “I want you to remain alive!” ⁷ It was as though I caused you to grow up, like plants in the field grow; you grew up and became tall and became like the most precious jewel of all. You developed into a beautiful woman, but you were still completely naked.

⁸ When I saw you several years later, it was as though I spread the cloth of my robe over you to symbolize that I would marry you, with the result that you were no longer naked. I solemnly promised that I would marry you and made a marriage agreement with you, and you be-

came my wife.' That is what Yahweh the Lord says.

⁹ And then it was as though I bathed you and washed the blood from you and put ointment on your body. ¹⁰ It was as though I put a fine linen robe on you and gave you expensive clothes. I put an embroidered dress on you and put leather sandals on your feet. ¹¹ It was as though I put bracelets on your arms and a necklace around your neck. Those things all had nice jewels fastened to them. ¹² I put a gold ring in your nose and fastened earrings to your ears and put a beautiful crown on your head. ¹³ So it was as though you wore gold and silver ornaments. You had clothes made from fine linen and other expensive fabrics, and an embroidered dress. You ate fine flour, honey, and oil. You were the most beautiful woman and I made you into a queen. ¹⁴ You were very beautiful, with the result that people in other nations heard about you, because they knew that I, Yahweh the Lord, am the one who had caused you to become very beautiful.

¹⁵ But it was as though you forgot that I made you beautiful and started acting promiscuous with every man who came along, and they all enjoyed your beauty. ¹⁶ It was as though you took some of your clothes to make beautifully decorated the high places, and that is where you slept with those men. Those things should certainly never occur! ¹⁷ You took the fine gold and silver jewelry that I gave you, and you made male idols for yourself, in order to sleep with them. ¹⁸ You took some of your embroidered clothes to put on those idols, and you burned oil and incense in front of them to honor them. ¹⁹ And the bread that was made from fine flour and the olive oil and honey that I gave to you to eat, you offered to be a fragrant sacrifice to those idols. I, Yahweh

the Lord, declare that that is what happened.

²⁰ And you even took your sons and daughters who were supposed to be committed to me and sacrificed and killed them as though they were less important than your becoming a prostitute. ²¹ You slaughtered those who were like my children, and offered them to be sacrifices to these false gods! ²² All during the time when you were acting like a prostitute and doing other detestable things, you did not think about the time when it was as though you were very young, naked, lying in your own blood and kicking in the field.

²³ So I, Yahweh the Lord, declare that terrible things will happen to you. In addition to all the other wicked things that you did, ²⁴ you built yourself a tall building in which you worship idols and you built a place to worship idols in every city square. ²⁵ At the beginning of every street you built a tall building for the worship of idols, and showed people your beautiful body, offering it to sleep with every man who walked by, and so you were known as a prostitute and your fame for your immorality grew every day. ²⁶ It was as though you had slept with men from Egypt who were eager to sleep with you, men who lived near Israel. You caused me to become very angry because you became more eager to sleep with more and more of them. ²⁷ So I punished you and caused your enemies to capture some of your country. I enabled your greedy enemies from Philistia to defeat you; and even they were shocked because of your disgraceful behavior. ²⁸ It was as though you slept with soldiers from Assyria, too, because you always wanted to sleep with more men. And after that, you still were not satisfied. ²⁹ So you also slept with soldiers from Babylonia, a country full of merchants, but even that did not satisfy

you.

³⁰ I, Yahweh the Lord, declare that you are ruining your life! When you did all those things, you were acting like a prostitute who has no shame for all the things she does. ³¹ But when you built the houses on the hills to worship idols in every city square, you were not really like a prostitute because prostitutes charge money. You refused to take money for what you did!

³² You are like a woman who commits adultery: You prefer to sleep with strangers rather than with your husband.

³³ Prostitutes are paid, but it is as though you give gifts to all your lovers; you bribe them to come to you from everywhere to sleep with you. ³⁴ So although you act like you are a prostitute, you are actually the opposite of other prostitutes! Instead of them giving any money to you, you give men money to sleep with you!

³⁵ Therefore, you people of Jerusalem, you, who are like a prostitute, listen to what Yahweh the Lord is saying about you!

³⁶ He says that what you have done is as though you have lusted for everyone around you and had slept with them and with the male idols you made, so that you even made your own children to be sacrifices to them. ³⁷ So what I am going to do is as though I will gather those who you think have loved you and those whom you hated. I will gather them around you to attack you, and what I will do is as though I will strip your clothes off you, and they will see you when you are completely naked. ³⁸ I will punish you like women who commit adultery and who murder people are punished. I will get revenge on you and get rid of you because I am extremely angry with you. ³⁹ I will allow your enemies who you thought loved you break apart your high places of idol worship and pagan altars. They will strip

you naked and keep your clothes and jewelry, and abandon you with nothing to cover yourself with. ⁴⁰ They will bring a mob to attack you, and that mob will throw stones at you and cut you to pieces with their swords. ⁴¹ They will burn down your houses and punish you while many women are watching. I will let them do this so that you will learn a lesson for acting so adulterously and for paying people to sleep with you. ⁴² Then I will no longer be angry with you. I will stop being jealous because your punishment will satisfy me.

⁴³ You have forgotten the wonderful things that I did for you in previous years. You have caused me to become extremely angry because of all the evil things that you have done. In addition to all the other detestable things that you did, you committed many sexual sins. So I Yahweh the Lord declare that I will punish you for doing those things.

⁴⁴ People who like to quote proverbs will quote this proverb about you: 'Daughters behave like their mothers behave.' ⁴⁵ You are like your mother; it was as though she detested her husband and her children. You are like your sisters, who also despised their husbands and their children. It was as though your father belonged to the Amor people group and your mother belonged to the Heth people group. ⁴⁶ And it was as though your older sister was Samaria, and she and her daughters lived to the north of you, and it was as though your younger sister was Sodom, and her daughters lived to the south of you. ⁴⁷ You not only imitated all their detestable behavior, but you quickly became more sinful than they were. ⁴⁸ I, Yahweh the Lord, solemnly declare that as surely as I am alive, the people who lived in Sodom and other nearby cities never did the detestable things that you people

in Jerusalem and other places in Judah have done.

⁴⁹ These are the sins of the people who lived in Sodom, who were like your sister people among them: they were prideful and did not think they would ever be punished. They ignored poor and hurting people around them. ⁵⁰ The people of Sodom and nearby cities were proud and did detestable things in my presence, so I got rid of them when I saw what they had been doing. ⁵¹ Also, the people of Samaria did not commit half as many sins as you commit. You have done more disgusting things than they have done. You cause the people of Samaria to appear to be good, compared to you. ⁵² Your sins are worse than their sins, so they seem to be less wicked than you are. So I will punish you more than I punished them. As a result, you will be ashamed and disgraced.

⁵³ However, some day I will cause the people of Sodom and Samaria and the cities near to them to prosper again. And I will cause you to prosper again, too. ⁵⁴ You will be very ashamed of the wicked things that you have done, and that will cause the people of those cities to be encouraged. ⁵⁵ The people of Sodom and Samaria will prosper again, and you and the people in nearby cities will prosper also. ⁵⁶ You sneered at the people of Sodom when you were proud, ⁵⁷ before it was revealed that you were more wicked than she was. And now the people of Edom and the people of Philistia all insult you and despise you. ⁵⁸ And you are being punished for all your immoral behavior and other detestable things that you do. This is what Yahweh is saying to you!

⁵⁹ This is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: I will continue to punish you like you deserve to be punished, because by rejecting the agreement that I made with you, you have despised that solemn agreement

that you promised to obey. ⁶⁰ But I will not forget the agreement that I made with you long ago and I will make an agreement with you that will endure forever. ⁶¹ Then you will think about what you have done, and you will be ashamed about those things when you welcome the people of Sodom and Samaria, cities which are like your daughters, but they will not have the same agreement that I will make with you. ⁶² I will establish my agreement with you, and you will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do. ⁶³ Then when I have forgiven you for all your sins, you will think about all the sins that you committed and you will be ashamed. You will never again boast about them, because you will be humiliated." I, the Lord Yahweh, have said so! This is the Lord Yahweh's declaration."

Chapter 17

¹ Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ² "Son of man, tell this story as an illustration to the people of Israel. ³ Say to them, 'This is what Yahweh the Lord says: A huge eagle that had strong wings and long beautiful feathers of many colors flew to Lebanon. It grasped the top of a cedar tree ⁴ and broke it off. Then the eagle carried it away to Canaan, a country that had many merchants, and planted it in one of the cities there.

⁵ Then that eagle took a seedling from your country and planted it in a fertile field. He planted it like people plant a willow tree, alongside a stream that had plenty of water. ⁶ It grew and became a low grapevine that spread along the ground. Its branches turned up toward the eagle, but its roots grew down into the ground. So it became a good vine and produced lots of branches and leaves.

⁷ But there was another huge eagle that had strong wings and beautiful feathers. And some of the roots of the vine grew toward that eagle, and its branches also turned toward it, hoping that the eagle would bring more water to it. ⁸ That happened in spite of the fact that the vine had been planted in good soil, where there was plenty of water, with the result that it had produced branches and produced grapes and had become a very healthy vine.'

⁹ Then after you have told that to the people, say to them, 'This is what Yahweh the Lord says: That vine will certainly not remain healthy. It will be pulled up by its roots by the eagle that planted it, and all its fruit will be stripped off and its leaves will wither. And it will not need someone with strong arms or many people to pull it out by its roots. ¹⁰ Even if that vine is transplanted, it certainly will not continue to grow. When the hot wind from the east blows against it, it will completely wither, there where it was planted!'"

¹¹ Then Yahweh gave this message to me: ¹² "Ask these rebellious Israelite people, 'Do you know what this parable means?' Tell them that it signifies that the king of Babylon went to Jerusalem with his army and captured the king of Judah and his officials, and took them back to Babylon. ¹³ Then he took one of the king's close relatives, appointed one of them as king, and made an agreement with him, forcing him to solemnly promise to remain loyal. The king of Babylon also took to Babylon the other important citizens of Judah, ¹⁴ in order that the kingdom of Judah would not be able to become powerful again. The king of Babylon intended that the kingdom of Judah would not continue to exist if the people did not obey that agreement that he made with the king of Babylon. ¹⁵ The king of Judah rebelled against

the king of Babylon by sending officials to Egypt to request from them horses and a large army to fight against the army of Babylonia. But the king of Judah will certainly not be successful. Rulers who rebel like that and refuse to obey solemn agreements will never escape.

¹⁶ I, Yahweh the Lord, declare that as surely as I am alive, the king of Judah will die in Babylon, in the city where the king of Babylon appointed him to be the king of Judah. He will die because he despised the solemn agreement and refused to do what he promised to do. ¹⁷ The king of Egypt with all his very huge army will not be able to help the king of Judah: The soldiers from Babylonia will build ramps up against the city walls and set up devices to batter the walls. They will enter Jerusalem and kill many of its people. ¹⁸ The king of Judah despised the solemn agreement by disregarding the treaty. Although he had solemnly promised to be under the control of the king of Babylon, he sent officials to request help from Egypt. Therefore he will not escape being punished by the king of Babylon.

¹⁹ Therefore this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: Just as surely as I am alive, I will cause the king of Judah to be punished for ignoring the solemn agreement that he made with the king of Babylon and then refusing to obey it, since this violates what I expect. ²⁰ It will be as though I will spread a net to capture him, and he will be caught in it. He will be captured and taken to Babylon and punished because he rebelled against me. ²¹ Most of his soldiers who try to escape will be killed by their enemies' swords, and those who survive will be scattered in all directions. Then you will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do."

²² This is also what Yahweh the Lord says: "It will be as though I will take a shoot

from the top of a very tall cedar tree and plant it in another place. I will plant it on a very high mountain. ²³ It will be as though I will plant it on a mountain in Israel, and it will grow and become a beautiful cedar tree. Many kinds of birds will make their nests in the tree, and they will have shade in its branches. ²⁴ And it will be as though all the trees in the field will know that I, Yahweh, get rid of tall trees and will make little ones grow. I cause big green trees to wither, and I cause dry trees to become green.

I, Yahweh have said this, and I will certainly do what I have said that I will do.”

Chapter 18

¹ Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ² ”You people quote this proverb and say that it is about Israel:

’Parents eat sour grapes,

but it is their children who have a very sour taste in their mouths.’

This means that you think that you must suffer for the sins that your ancestors committed.

³ But I, Yahweh the Lord, declare that as surely as I am alive, you Israelite people will no longer say this proverb. ⁴ Everyone who is alive belongs to me. That includes children and their parents; they all belong to me. And it is those who sin who will die because of their sins.

⁵ So suppose that there is a righteous person,

one who always does what is fair and right.

⁶ He does not eat meat sacrificed to idols on the hilltops;

he does not request help from idols as the rest of Israel has been doing.

He does not sleep with someone else’s wife

or with a woman during her monthly menstrual period.

⁷ He does not mistreat people;

if a person borrows money from him and gives him something to guarantee that he will pay the money back, this man always gives it back to that person before the sun goes down.

He does not rob people.

He gives food to hungry people.

He gives clothing to people who need clothes.

⁸ When he lends money to people,

he does not do it to make him pay interest.

He does not do things that are evil.

He always decides things fairly.

⁹ He faithfully obeys all my laws.

That man is truly righteous;

he will remain alive.

That is what I, Yahweh the Lord, promise.

¹⁰ But suppose that man has a son who acts violently, who murders people and does any of these other things, even though his father has not done any of them.

¹¹ He eats meat sacrificed to idols on the hilltops.

He sleeps with other people’s wives.

¹² He mistreats poor and needy people.

He robs people.

If someone gives him something to guarantee that he will pay back money that he has borrowed, the unrighteous man never gives it back to him before the sun goes down.

He seeks help from idols.

He does other disgusting things.

¹³ When he lends money, he charges interest.

If you think that I will keep such a person alive, you are certainly wrong. Because he has done all those detestable things, I will certainly make him die, and it will be his own fault.

¹⁴ But suppose that man has a son who sees all the sins that his father commits, but he himself does not do those things.

¹⁵ The son does not eat meat sacrificed to idols on the hilltops.

He does not request help from idols.

He does not sleep with other people's wives.

¹⁶ He does not mistreat people.

If he lends money to someone, he does not require that person to give him something to guarantee that he will pay the money back.

He does not rob anyone.

He gives food to those who need it.

He gives clothes to those who need clothes.

¹⁷ He does not commit sins, unlike his father,

and does not charge interest when he lends money.

He faithfully obeys all my laws.

I will make sure that that person does not die for his father's sins; he will certainly stay alive. ¹⁸ But I will ensure that his father will die for the sins that he committed, because the father cheated and robbed people, and did other things that are evil.

¹⁹ If you ask, 'Why should the man's son not suffer for the evil things that his father did?', I will answer that the son has done

what is fair and right and has obeyed all my laws, so he will surely remain alive. ²⁰ It is those who sin who will die because of their sins. I will not punish people because their parents have sinned, or because their children have sinned. I will reward people who live rightly, and I will punish the wicked people, those who live wrongly.

²¹ But if a wicked person stops doing all the evil things that he did previously, and if he starts to obey faithfully all my laws, and if he does what is fair and right, he will surely remain alive; I will not kill him.

²² I will not punish him for the sins he committed previously. Because of the good things that he has done since that time, I will allow him to stay alive. ²³ I, Yahweh the Lord, declare that I certainly am not happy about wicked people dying. Instead, I am happy when they stop doing wicked things and remain alive as a result.

²⁴ But if a righteous person stops doing right things and starts to commit sins and does the same disgusting things that wicked people do, I will certainly not allow him to remain alive. I will not think about the righteous things that he did previously. Because he did not faithfully do what pleases me, and because of all the sins that he has committed, he will certainly die.

²⁵ But you say that I, Yahweh, do not act fairly. You Israelite people, listen to what I say: It is certainly not what I do that is unfair; it is what you continually do that is not fair. ²⁶ If a righteous person turns away from doing what is right and commits sins, he will die for committing those sins. ²⁷ But if a wicked person turns away from doing wicked things and does what is just and right, he will save himself from dying. ²⁸ Because he has thought about all the evil things that he did and has turned

away from doing them, I will certainly allow him to live. I will not kill him. ²⁹ But you, the Israelites, say that I do not act fairly. You people of Israel, I always act fairly. It is you who are acting wickedly.

³⁰ Therefore, you Israelite people, I, Yahweh the Lord, will judge each of you according to what you have done. Repent! Turn away from all your wicked behavior! Then I will not destroy you because of the wrong things you have done. ³¹ Stop doing wicked things; start thinking in a new way. You Israelite people, do you really want me to kill you because you have sinned? ³² I, Yahweh the Lord, declare that I am not pleased if you die. So turn away from your sins and stay alive!"

Chapter 19

¹ Yahweh said to me, ² "Ezekiel, sing a sad funeral song which will be a parable about the leaders of Israel. Say to the Israelite people,

'It is as though your mother had been a brave female lion

who raised her cubs among other lions.

³ She taught one of them to hunt for other animals to kill,

and he even learned to kill and eat people.

⁴ When people from other nations heard about him,

they trapped him in a pit.

Then they used hooks

to drag him to Egypt.

⁵ His mother waited for him to return, but soon she stopped hoping for that to happen.

So she raised another cub who also became very fierce.

⁶ He hunted along with other lions for animals to kill,

and he even learned to kill and eat people.

⁷ He mistreated his victims' widows, and he destroyed cities.

When he roared loudly, everyone was terrified and abandoned everything they owned.

⁸ So people of other nations planned to kill him;

and men came from many places to spread out a net for him.

They caught him in it.

⁹ They pulled him with hooks in his flesh and put him into an iron cage,

then they took him to the king of Babylon.

There they locked him up so that the sound of his voice

could never be heard echoing on the hills of Israel.'

¹⁰ 'It is as though your mother

were a grapevine fertilized in blood, and growing up beside a stream.

There was plenty of water,

so it had lots of branches and produced a lot of grapes.

¹¹ That grapevine grew and became taller than all the nearby trees;

everyone could see that it was very strong and healthy.

And those branches were good for making scepters that symbolize the power of a king.

¹² But Yahweh became very angry,

so he pulled up the vine by its roots
and threw it on the ground,

where the very hot winds from the
desert dried up all its fruit.

The strong branches wilted and were
burned in a fire.

¹³ Now Yahweh has planted that vine
in a hot, dry desert.

¹⁴ A fire started to burn its stem,
and then started to burn the branches;
it burned all the grapes.

Now not even one strong branch re-
mains;

they will never become scepters for a
king.'

This funeral song must be sung very
sadly."

Chapter 20

¹ Almost seven years after the Babylo-
nians had taken us Israelites to their land,
on the tenth day of the fifth month of that
year, some Israelite elders came to me to
ask if I had any message for them from
Yahweh.

² Then Yahweh gave me a message for
them. He said, ³ "Son of man, speak to the
elders and tell them that the Lord Yahweh
says this: 'You say that you have come to
ask if there is any message from me, but as
surely as I am alive, I will not allow you to
ask for any message from me.'

⁴ If you are willing to warn them, remind
them of the disgusting things that their an-
cestors did. ⁵ Then say to them, 'On the
day that I chose you Israelite people to be-
long to me, I made a solemn oath to your
ancestors while they were still in Egypt.' I
said to them, 'I am Yahweh, your God. ⁶ I

will bring you out of Egypt and lead you
to a land that I have chosen for you. It
is the most fertile and beautiful land in
the world. ⁷ Each of you must get rid
of the disgusting idols that you love, and
the idols which you learned to worship in
Egypt, and with which you made it impos-
sible for me to accept you. I, Yahweh your
God, am saying this to you.'

⁸ But they rebelled against me. They
would not pay attention to me. They did
not get rid of the disgusting idols they
loved; they did not reject the idols that
they saw in Egypt. So because I was an-
gry with them, I said that I would punish
them in Egypt. ⁹ But for the sake of my
own reputation, I decided to do something
for your people so that the other people
groups would not laugh at me and say I
had no power. I decided that they would
see me bring my people out of Egypt. ¹⁰
Therefore I led your people out of Egypt
and brought them into the wilderness. ¹¹
I gave them all my laws and decrees, in
order that they would obey them, and as
a result they would live for a long time.
¹² Also, I established the Sabbath days to
be a reminder between me and them, so
they would know that I am Yahweh, the
one who sets them apart for my honor.

¹³ But the Israelite people rebelled against
me in the wilderness also. They did not
obey my commands; they rejected them,
even though they would have lived a long
time if they had obeyed them, and they
treated the Sabbath days like any other
day. So I said that I would destroy them in
the wilderness, because that would show
that I was very angry with them. ¹⁴ But
again, so that the other people groups
would not laugh at me, I decided to do
something in order to show those people
groups that I was still as powerful as when
they had seen me bring my people out of
Egypt. ¹⁵ I solemnly swore to your peo-

ple in the wilderness that I would not take them into the land that I had promised to give them, a land that was the most fertile and beautiful land in the world. ¹⁶ I made this oath, because they had rejected and disobeyed all my laws, and because they were treating the Sabbath days like any other day. And they insisted on worshipping their idols. ¹⁷ But I still pitied them, so I did not destroy them in the wilderness. ¹⁸ I said to their children, the next generation, 'Do not do the things that your parents always do. Do not worship their idols and so make it impossible for me to accept you. ¹⁹ I am Yahweh your God. Carefully obey my laws and commands. ²⁰ Respect my Sabbath days, in order that by doing that, it will remind you that you belong to me.

²¹ But their children also rebelled against me. They did not take care to obey my laws, even though anyone who obeys them will live for a long time; and they also treated the Sabbath days like any other day. So again I said that I would kill them all in the wilderness, and in this way I would stop being angry. ²² But I did not do that. I decided once more to do something so that the other people groups, those that had seen me bring your people out of Egypt, would not laugh and say that I had lost my power. ²³ So I swore to them in the wilderness that I would scatter them among many people groups, ²⁴ because they had rejected and disobeyed all my laws, and because they were treating the Sabbath days like any other day—and because they were eager to worship the idols that their parents had worshiped. ²⁵ So I also allowed them to obey laws that were not good, laws that would not help them live a long time. ²⁶ I allowed them to do things that made it impossible for me to accept them: I allowed them to sacrifice their firstborn children in fire. I allowed them to do that in order that they

would be horrified at themselves, and in order that they would know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.

²⁷ Therefore, son of man, speak to the Israelite people. Say this to them, 'This is what Yahweh the Lord says to you: This is one way that your ancestors dishonored me by turning away from me.' ²⁸ After I brought them into the land that I had sworn to give them, every time that they saw a high hill or a big green tree, they offered sacrifices to idols there. They made offerings to them, and that caused me to become angry. They presented to those idols their fragrant incense, and they poured out wine offerings to them. ²⁹ Then I asked them, 'What is this hilltop place where you go to worship idols?' So they are still called Bamah, which means 'hilltop.'

³⁰ Therefore, say this to the Israelite people: 'This is what Yahweh the Lord says: Why do you imitate your ancestors in acting in ways that make me unable to accept you? You act like prostitutes, leaving their husbands for other men. In the same way, you have left me to worship disgusting idols. ³¹ When you sacrifice your children in the fire, you make me unable to accept you. It is the same as when you bow down to your idols. You Israelite people, should I allow you to ask me to direct you in any matter? I, Yahweh the Lord, say that as surely as I am alive, I will not answer if you ask me.'

³² You say, 'We want to be like the other people groups in the world. We want to worship idols made of wood and stone like they do.' But what you want will never happen.' ³³ I, Yahweh your Lord, say that as surely as I am alive, I will use my great power to rule over you, and to show that I am angry with you. ³⁴ With my great power I will gather you from the places

to which I scattered you. ³⁵ I will bring you to a wilderness that is surrounded by other nations. There, while I am looking at you, I will judge you. ³⁶ I will punish you, as I punished your ancestors in the wilderness near Egypt. ³⁷ I will make you submit to me; I will force you to obey the covenant that I made with you. ³⁸ I will destroy the people among you who rebel against me. Although I will bring them out of Babylonia, where they are now living, they will not enter Israel. Then you will know that it is I, Yahweh, who have the power to do what I say that I will do.

³⁹ As for you Israelite people, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: Go and worship your idols now, each of you. But afterwards, you will surely pay attention to me and no longer dishonor me by taking gifts to your idols. ⁴⁰ I, Yahweh your Lord, declare that there on my sacred hill, Zion, that high hill in Israel, you will bring gifts to me, and I will accept them. I will require you to bring to me gifts and offerings there, and your sacrifices that you will set apart for me. ⁴¹ When I bring you out from the other nations to which you have been scattered, I will accept you as though you were fragrant incense. I will show the people of other nations that I have set myself apart as holy, that I might be honored. ⁴² Then, when I bring you into the land of Israel, the land that I swore to give to your ancestors, you will know that I, Yahweh, have done it. ⁴³ And there in Israel you will remember how you conducted your lives previously, the actions that caused you to become unacceptable to me, and you will hate yourselves for all the evil things that you have done. ⁴⁴ When I act toward you Israelite people to protect my reputation, and not because of your evil deeds and corrupt behavior, you Israelite people will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do. That is what Yahweh the

Lord declares.”

⁴⁵ Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ⁴⁶ ”Son of man, turn toward the south. Preach about what will happen to that dry land, to the forest there. ⁴⁷ Say to the forest in the southern wilderness of Israel: Listen to this message that Yahweh the Lord is saying about you: I am about to start a fire in your midst, and it will burn up all your trees, both the green trees and the withered trees. Nothing will extinguish the blazing flames. And the fire will scorch the faces of everyone who lives in that area, from the south to the north. ⁴⁸ Everyone will see that it is I, Yahweh, who have lit this fire, and no one will be able to put it out.”

⁴⁹ Then I said, “Yahweh, my Lord, when I tell things like this to people, they do not believe me. They say about me, ‘He is only telling parables.’”

Chapter 21

¹ Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ² ”Son of man, turn toward the south. Set yourself against them. Preach against the south and prophesy against the forest in the southern Judean wilderness. ³ Say to them, ”This is what Yahweh says: I am opposed to you, and it will be as though I pull my sword from its sheath to kill both the righteous and the wicked people among you! ⁴ So what I will do to you will be as though I pull my sword from its sheath and strike you. I will kill everyone, including righteous people and wicked people. I will get rid of everyone, from the south to the north. ⁵ Then everyone will know that it is as though I, Yahweh, have struck people with my sword, and I will not put it back in its sheath again.’

⁶ Therefore, Son of man, groan! Groan

in front of the Israelite people very sadly and sorrowfully. ⁷ And when they ask you, 'Why are you groaning?' tell them that it is because of the news that they soon will hear. Everyone will be very fearful, and their hands will tremble uncontrollably, while their knees become as weak as water. A great disaster will soon occur. This is what Yahweh the Lord is promising."

⁸ Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ⁹ "Son of man, prophesy and say to them, 'This is what the Lord says:

I will sharpen my sword
and polish it.

¹⁰ It will be sharp in order that I can slaughter many people with it;

I will polish it so that it will flash like lightning.

The people of Judah will not celebrate about their king's scepter,

because it will not resist the sword that is coming against it.

¹¹ So I will polish the sword,

and the right person will then hold it in his hand.

Now it is sharp; now it shines,
ready for the killer to use!

¹² So, Son of man, cry and wail,

because I will use my sword to kill my people,

including the leaders of Israel.

That sword will kill them and all the others of my people;

my sword will kill them all,

so beat your chests to show that you are sad.

¹³ I am about to test my people,

and what will happen if the scepter cannot resist?

That is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say.

¹⁴ So, Son of man, prophesy;

clap your hands to show that you are very sad about what is going to happen.

My sword will strike my people again and again;

it is a sword for slaughtering many people,

while I attack them from every side.

¹⁵ In order that people will be very much afraid

and that many people will die,

I have placed soldiers at every city gate,
ready to slaughter people.

My sword will flash like lightning,

as the soldiers slaughter the people.

¹⁶ I will tell my sword to slash to the right

and then to the left,

and to turn in every direction until no one remains alive.

¹⁷ Then I will clap my hands triumphantly;

and then I will no longer be angry.

That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it."

¹⁸ Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ¹⁹ "Son of man, draw on a map two roads for the king of Babylonia to march on with his army. When they depart from their own country, they will come to a signpost where a single road divides into those two roads. ²⁰ If they take one of those roads, they will attack the city of Rabbah, the capital of the Ammon people group. If they take the other road, they will come to Judah and Jerusalem, a city with walls around it. ²¹ When the army

of Babylon comes to where the road divides, the army will stop, while the king performs magic rituals to decide which road to go on. He will throw arrows; then he will consult his idols about which road to go on, and he will examine the liver of a sheep. ²² With his right hand he will pick up the arrow marked with the name of Jerusalem. He will then command his soldiers to go to Jerusalem. When they arrive there, they will set up rams to batter down the walls, and then the king will give the command for them to slaughter the people. They will shout the battlecry, and they will set up the rams against the city gates. They will build a dirt ramp against the walls around the city, and set walls against the city. ²³ The people in Jerusalem who had promised to be loyal to the king of Babylonia will think that those magic rituals must be wrong. They will think that his army should not be attacking them. But he will remind them of the disloyalty of which they are guilty, and he will say that they have violated their agreement with him.

²⁴ Therefore, tell the Israelite people that this is what Yahweh the Lord says: 'You people have allowed everyone to see that you are openly rebelling against the king of Babylonia, and by doing that you have shown that everything that you do is sinful. Therefore he will capture you and take you to Babylonia.'

²⁵ Also, say to the king of Judah, 'You very wicked king of Israel, it is your time to die. It is the time for Yahweh to punish you.'

²⁶ And this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say to you about your king in Jerusalem, 'Take off the king's turban and his crown, because now things will be different than they were before. I will give power to those who had none, and I will disgrace those who had power. ²⁷ I will cause the Babylonians to destroy everything. No

one will be king of Judah again, not until the man comes who deserves to be king. Then I will make him become king.'

²⁸ And, Son of man, prophesy and say that this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say about the Ammon people group, and about how I will disgrace them:

'My soldiers have swords

and they have pulled out those swords to slaughter many people.

They have polished them in order to kill people,

and to flash like lightning.

²⁹ Your Ammonite prophets have given you false visions about what will happen to you,

and they have held useless ceremonies that give you false messages.

So swords will strike the necks of those wicked people.

The day when I punish them has come, because they have not been loyal to me.'

³⁰ But later the soldiers of Babylon will have to put their swords back into their sheaths,

because the time for them to slaughter their enemies will end.

I will judge these Babylonians in the country where they were born.

³¹ I will pour out my punishment on them.

Because I am very angry with them,

my breath on them will scorch them like a fire.

I will allow brutal men to capture them, men who are experts at killing people.

³² They will be like fuel that is burned in a fire.

Their blood will flow in their own land.

No one will remember them anymore.

That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.”

Chapter 22

¹ Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ² “Son of man, are you ready to condemn the people of Jerusalem? It is a city full of murderers. Remind them of all the detestable things that they have done. ³ Then say, ‘This is what Yahweh the Lord says: By murdering people and by defiling yourselves, by making idols, you people of this city have brought on yourselves the time when I will destroy you. ⁴ You have become guilty by murdering innocent people. You have made it impossible for me to accept you, by making idols for yourselves. You are bringing your time to an end. Therefore I will cause the other people groups to laugh at you and mock you. ⁵ People in countries that are near you and people who live far from you will make fun of you, because your city is full of confusion, and because you have made it impossible for me, your own God, to accept you.

⁶ Think about how each of your Israelite kings have used his power to murder people. ⁷ Your people do not respect their parents; they have oppressed foreigners; they mistreat orphans and widows. ⁸ You despise my sacred places and practices, and you treat the Sabbath days like any other day. ⁹ Among you are men who tell lies in order to cause others to be executed. There are those who go to the hilltops and eat food offered to idols, and they openly perform evil acts. ¹⁰ There are men who sleep with their father’s wife, and men who sleep with women during

their monthly menstrual periods. ¹¹ There are men who sleep with someone else’s wife. Some of your men sleep with their daughters-in-law or with their own sisters or half-sisters. ¹² There are among you men who accept bribes in order to cause someone to be executed. You charge interest when you lend people money. You become rich by forcing people to give you money. And you have forgotten me, Yahweh.

¹³ So I will shake my fist at your unfair profits and at the murderers who live among you. ¹⁴ When I finish punishing you, you will no longer be courageous. I, Yahweh, have said what I will do to you, and I will do it. ¹⁵ I will scatter you among many people groups, and I will make you stop your sinful behavior. ¹⁶ When the people of other nations see that you have been humiliated, you will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.”

¹⁷ Yahweh then said to me, ¹⁸ “Son of man, your Israelite people have become useless to me. They are like dross to me. They are like the useless copper, tin, iron, and lead that remains after silver is melted in a very hot furnace ¹⁹ Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: Because you have all become like dross, I will gather you in Jerusalem. ²⁰ People put ore containing silver, copper, iron, lead, and tin in a very hot furnace and melt them in a blazing fire to burn up the impurities. Similarly, I will gather you together inside Jerusalem, and because I am very angry with you, what I will do will be as though I am melting you. ²¹ It will be as though I am blowing on you with a hot breath that shows that I am very angry, and it will be as though you will melt, ²² as though you will melt like silver melts in a furnace, and then you will know that I, Yahweh, have punished you.”

²³ Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ²⁴ "Son of man, say to the Israelite people, 'You are disgusting to Yahweh, completely unacceptable to him. So Yahweh is angry with you. There will be no rain in your country.' ²⁵ Their leaders are like lions that tear apart the animals that they have killed. The leaders destroy their people. They steal treasures and other valuable things from people, and they murder many men and make their wives into widows. ²⁶ Their priests disobey my laws and dishonor my sacred things by saying that there is no difference between things that are sacred and those that are not sacred, and by ignoring my laws about resting on the Sabbath days. As a result, they no longer honor me. ²⁷ Their officials are like wolves that tear apart the animals that they have killed. They murder people in order to get their money. ²⁸ Their prophets try to cover up those sins by saying they have received visions from God. They say, 'This is what Yahweh the Lord says,' when I have said nothing to them. ²⁹ The Israelite people force others to give them money, and they rob people. They oppress poor people, and they mistreat foreigners among them by not treating them fairly in the courts.

³⁰ I looked among them to find a man who would pray for the people and cause them to repent so that I would not need to destroy them. But I did not find anyone. ³¹ So because I am very angry with them, I will severely punish them for all the wicked things that they have done. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh the Lord, have said it."

Chapter 23

¹ Yahweh said to me, ² "Son of man, listen to this parable about Jerusalem and

Samaria. Once there were two women, daughters of the same mother. ³ They lived in Egypt. And from the time that they were young women, they became prostitutes. In that land, men fondled their breasts and caressed their young bosoms. ⁴ The older sister was Oholah, and her younger sister was Oholibah. It was as though they later became my wives. Later they gave birth to sons and daughters. Oholah represents Samaria, and Oholibah represents Jerusalem.

⁵ Oholah acted like a prostitute while she was still my wife. She desired to sleep with those whom she loved—soldiers from Assyria. ⁶ Some of them were army officers and commanders. They wore beautiful purple uniforms. They were all handsome young men who rode horses. ⁷ She acted like a prostitute toward all the important Assyrian officials. I could no longer accept her as belonging to me, because she was worshiping all the idols of the men she wanted to sleep with. ⁸ When she was a young woman in Egypt, she started being a prostitute, and she allowed young men to caress her breasts and have sex with her. When she became older, she did not quit acting like a prostitute.

⁹ So I allowed the Assyrian soldiers, whom she wanted to sleep with, to capture her. ¹⁰ They stripped all her clothes off her. They took away her sons and daughters. And then they killed her with a sword. Other women started talking about how she was disgraced, and about how she deserved to suffer.

¹¹ Her younger sister Oholibah saw those things that happened to Oholah, but she was also a prostitute, and she desired to sleep with men even more than her older sister had desired. ¹² Oholibah also wanted to sleep with the Assyrian soldiers. Some of them were army officers and com-

manders. They all wore beautiful uniforms. They were all handsome young men. And they rode horses. ¹³ I saw what she did that caused me to be unable to accept her, just like her older sister.

¹⁴ But she did even worse things. She saw drawings of men from Babylonia on the walls, painted in red. ¹⁵ The men in the drawings had belts around their waists and long turbans on their heads. They all resembled officers from Babylonia who rode in chariots. ¹⁶ As soon as she saw those drawings, she wanted to sleep with those men, and she sent messages to them in Babylonia. ¹⁷ Then the soldiers from Babylonia came to her, lay in bed with her, and slept with her. Then she became disgusted with them and turned away from them. ¹⁸ But when she continued to openly act like a prostitute and to show herself naked to others, I became disgusted with her and rejected her, as I had rejected her older sister. ¹⁹ But she became even more immoral, as she remembered when she was a young woman learning to be a prostitute in Egypt. ²⁰ There she wanted to sleep with those who loved her, whose private parts were very long, like those of donkeys, and whose reproductive emissions were huge, like those of horses. ²¹ So she desired to be immoral like she was when she was young, when men in Egypt caressed her bosom and fondled her young breasts.

²² Oholibah represents you people of Jerusalem. Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord say: Those soldiers who loved you but from whom you turned away because you became disgusted with them—I will make them angry with you. I will make them come and attack you from every side—²³ soldiers from Babylon and all the other places in Babylonia, and their allies from the regions of Pekod, Shoa, and Koa, and all the army of Assyria. Yes, all of

them are handsome young men, army officers and commanders, officers who have great fame, all riding on horses. ²⁴ Their huge army will attack you with weapons, riding in chariots and pulling wagons that will carry the army supplies. They will surround you, carrying large and small shields, and wearing helmets. I will allow them to capture you and punish you in the way that they always punish their enemies. ²⁵ Because I am very angry with you, I will cause them to act furiously toward you. They will cut off your noses and your ears. Then, those who are still alive, they will kill with their swords. They will take away your sons and daughters, and it will be like a fire that burns up your descendants. ²⁶ They will strip off your clothes and your fine jewelry, and they will take them away. ²⁷ In that way, I will stop all the immoral behavior that began when you became a prostitute in Egypt. You will no longer desire to do those things; you will no longer think about what you did in Egypt.

²⁸ This is what I, Yahweh the Lord say: Those whom you hate, those with whom you became disgusted and from whom you turned away—I am about to allow them to capture you. ²⁹ They will be cruel; they will take away everything that you own. They will leave you completely naked, and everyone will see that you truly are a prostitute. ³⁰ It is because of what you have done that you will be punished in that way; you have been an immoral prostitute; you have slept with men of other nations, and you have made it impossible for me to accept you, because you have worshiped their idols. ³¹ You have behaved like the people of Samaria, who are like your older sister. So I will cause you to be punished as they were punished.

³² This is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say:

You will suffer when you drink from a cup that is deep and large.

It will be as though you will drink from the same cup that the people of Samaria drank from.

And it is because you will drink what it is in that cup, many people will scorn you and make fun of you,

because when you drink from the cup it will make you drunk and then you will be overcome with sadness.

³³ When you become very drunk, you will become very sad,

because drinking what is in that cup will cause you to be ruined; everyone will leave you.

This is what happened to the people of Samaria, who are like your sister.

³⁴ You will drink all the liquid that is in that cup;

then you will break that cup into pieces

and use those pieces to cut your breasts because you will be very sad.

That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.

³⁵ Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: Because you have forgotten me and rejected me, I must punish you for your immoral behavior and for being a prostitute."

³⁶ Yahweh said to me, "Son of man, judge the people of those two cities represented by Oholah and Oholibah. You must remind them of their detestable behavior. ³⁷ It is as though they have committed adultery and have murdered people. They have been unfaithful to me by worshiping idols. They have even sacrificed their own children, who belonged to me, in fire. ³⁸ They have done other disgraceful things:

they have caused my temple to be an unacceptable place for worship, and they treat the Sabbath days like any other day. ³⁹ On the same day that they sacrificed their children to their idols, they entered my temple, which caused it to be an unacceptable place for worshiping me. They did these things in my own house!

⁴⁰ They sent messages to men in countries far away. And as those men were coming, the two sisters bathed themselves for them, painted their eyebrows, and put on jewelry. ⁴¹ They sat on a beautiful couch, with a table in front of it on which they had put incense and olive oil that belonged to me.

⁴² Soon there was a noisy crowd around them. Among the crowd there were drunkards who had come from the desert of Arabia. They put bracelets on the arms of the two sisters, and they put beautiful crowns on their heads. ⁴³ Then I said about the woman who had become exhausted by sleeping with many men, 'Now those men will act toward her as though she were a prostitute, because that is all that she is.' ⁴⁴ So they slept with those two women, Oholah and Oholibah, as men sleep with prostitutes. ⁴⁵ But righteous men will condemn them to be punished, as women who commit adultery and who murder others are punished, because those women commit adultery and they murder others.

⁴⁶ So this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: Bring a mob to attack Samaria and Jerusalem, and allow that mob to cause the people of those cities to be terrified; allow the mob to rob them. ⁴⁷ The mob will throw stones at them to kill them; they will cut them into pieces with their swords, they will kill their sons and daughters, and they will burn down their houses.

⁴⁸ In that way I will cause them to stop

their immoral behavior. This will warn other women to not imitate what you people of Jerusalem are doing. ⁴⁹ I will punish you people of Jerusalem for your immoral behavior and for worshiping idols. Then you will know that I, Yahweh the Lord, have the power to do what I say that I will do."

Chapter 24

¹ Almost nine years after the Babylonians had taken us Israelites to their land, on the tenth day of the tenth month of that year, Yahweh gave me this message: ² "Son of man, write down what day of the month this is. On this day the army of the king of Babylon has surrounded Jerusalem. ³ Tell those rebellious Israelite people in Babylon a parable. Say this to them: This is what Yahweh the Lord says:

'Pour water into the cooking pot
and put the pot on the fire.

⁴ Put into the pot some pieces of meat
from one of your best sheep:

put in the leg and shoulder, which are
the best pieces.

Then fill the rest of the pot with the best
bones.

⁵ Pile wood on the fire,

and cook the bones and the meat in
the boiling water.'

⁶ Do that because this is what Yahweh the
Lord says:

'Terrible things will happen to
Jerusalem; it is city that is full of murder-
ers,

a city that is like a corroded copper
pot,

and the corrosion cannot be removed.

Take the pieces of meat out of the pot,
but do not choose which pieces to take
out.

⁷ The blood of the people who were mur-
dered in Jerusalem is still there;

they were murdered on the bare rocks,
not on the soil, where their blood
could be covered.

⁸ But I am the one who caused the
blood of those who were murdered to be
smeared on the bare rock,

where their blood could not be cov-
ered;

I did that in order that I could see it
and then be angry and get revenge.'

⁹ Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh the
Lord, say:

'Terrible things will happen to that city
that is full of murderers!

It will be as though I also will pile high
the wood in the fire.

¹⁰ So heap on the wood
and light the fire!

Cook the meat well,
and mix some spices with it;
cook it until the bones are black.

¹¹ Then set the empty pot on the coals
of the fire

until the pot becomes very hot and
the copper glows,

so that the corrosion will disappear.

¹² It is as though I tried to get rid of that
corrosion,

but I was not able to do it,

not even by putting that pot on the
fire.

¹³ The corrosion in the pot represents your
immoral behavior. I tried to cleanse you

from your wicked behavior, but you did not allow me to do that. So you will not be cleansed from the guilt of your sin until I have punished you and I am no longer angry.

¹⁴ I, Yahweh, have said that I will surely punish you. And it is time for me to do that. I will not change my mind; I will not refrain from punishing you, and I will not pity you. I will judge you and punish you as you deserve to be punished for your sinful behavior. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh the Lord, have said it.”

¹⁵ One day Yahweh gave me this message:
¹⁶ “Son of man, I am going to suddenly take from you your wife by means of a disease, your wife, whom you love very much. But when she dies, do not show that you are sad or lament or cry. ¹⁷ Groan quietly; do not cry openly for her. Keep your turban wrapped around your head, and instead of being barefoot, keep your sandals on your feet. Do not cover the lower part of your face to show that you are sad. And do not eat the kind of food that people who are mourning usually eat.”

¹⁸ So one morning I talked to the people as usual, and that evening my wife suddenly died. The next morning I did what Yahweh had told me to do.

¹⁹ Then the people asked me, “What do the things that you are doing signify to us?”

²⁰ I answered them, “This is what Yahweh told me: ²¹ ‘Tell the Israelite people that I am about to destroy the temple, the building that you are very proud of, the building that you delight to look at. Your children whom you left in Jerusalem when you were forced to come to Babylon—your enemies will kill them. ²² When that happens, you will do as I have done: You will not cover the lower part of your faces, or eat the kinds of food that people who are mourning usually eat. ²³ You will keep

your turbans wrapped around your heads and keep your sandals on your feet. You will not mourn or cry, but your bodies will become very thin and slowly die; I will not forgive your sins at all. And you will groan for each other. ²⁴ Ezekiel will be a warning to you, and you must do what he has done. When that happens, you will know that I, Yahweh the Lord have the power to do what I say that I will do.”

²⁵ Then Yahweh said to me, “Son of man, soon I will destroy their sacred temple, which they rejoice about and which they respect and delight to look at, and I will get rid of their sons and daughters also. ²⁶ On that day, someone will escape from Jerusalem and come and tell you what has happened there. ²⁷ When that happens, you will be able to speak again without constraint. You two will talk together. You will be a warning to the people; and they will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.”

Chapter 25

¹ Some time later, Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ² “Son of man, turn toward where the Ammon people group lives, and prophesy about the terrible things that will happen to them. ³ Say about them, ‘This is what Yahweh the Lord says: You shouted joyfully when my temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, and when the country of Israel was ruined, and when the people of Judah were exiled to Babylon. ⁴ Therefore, I am going to allow an army of the people in the east to come and conquer you. They will set up their tents in your country and live there. They will eat the fruit from your fruit trees and drink the milk from your cattle. ⁵ I will cause your capital city of Rabbah to become a pasture for camels, and the rest

of Ammon, where your people are now living, to become only a resting place for sheep. Then you will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do. ⁶ This is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: You clapped your hands joyfully and stomped your feet, and laughed because you despised the people in the land of Israel. ⁷ Therefore, I will use my power against you, and I will enable other nations to conquer you and take you away like any other possessions of yours. I will destroy you completely, and you will no longer be one of the nations. When that happens, people will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.”

⁸ This is also what the Lord Yahweh says: The people of Moab south of Ammon and the people of Seir south of Moab despised Israel and said, “The people of Israel have become as unimportant as all the other nations!” ⁹ Therefore I will destroy the cities that protect the borders of Moab, starting at Beth Jeshimoth, Baal Meon, and Kiriathaim, the finest cities in Moab. ¹⁰ I will enable people from the east to conquer Moab and also to conquer Ammon. As the result, just as I will cause Ammon to be no longer remembered by other nations, ¹¹ I will also punish the people of Moab. When that happens, people will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.”

¹² This is also what Yahweh the Lord says: “You people of Edom are guilty of getting revenge on the people of Judah. ¹³ Therefore this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: I will use my power against the people of Edom and will get rid of their men and their animals. I will ruin the land from the region of Teman in central Edom to the region of Dedan in the south of Edom, and their enemies will kill many of their men. ¹⁴ The Israelite people will use

their power to get revenge on the people of Edom. They will show the people of Edom that I have been angry with them and that I will punish them. I will get revenge on the people of Edom. Then they will know that I, Yahweh the Lord, have the power to do what I say that I will do.”

¹⁵ This is also what Yahweh the Lord says: “The Philistia people group wanted very much for a long time to get revenge on the people of Judah. They very maliciously wanted to destroy Judah. ¹⁶ Therefore this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: I am about to use my power against the Philistia people. I will get rid of the Kereth people group and all those who live along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. ¹⁷ I will get great revenge on them and show that I am angry with them by the way I punish them. And when I get revenge on them, they will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.”

Chapter 26

¹ It was almost eleven years after the Babylonians had taken the Israelites to their land, on the first day of the month, Yahweh gave me another message. He said to me, ² “Son of man, the people of the city of Tyre shouted joyfully and they said about Jerusalem, ‘Jerusalem, the city from which traders went to many nations, is now destroyed. Now people from all over the world will come to us to buy and sell things. We will prosper because Jerusalem has now been ruined!’ ³ Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: ‘I am now your enemy, you people of Tyre. I will cause the armies of many nations to come and attack your city, as the waves of the sea beat against the shores. ⁴ Their soldiers will destroy the walls around Tyre and tear down your towers. The city

will be completely destroyed. Then they will scrape away the rubble and cause the city to become a bare rock. ⁵ Out in the sea, the part of your city that is on an island will become a place where men spread their fishing nets to dry them. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh the Lord, have predicted it: People from many nations will carry off everything of value in your city. ⁶ The people in small villages on the coast near Tyre—your enemies will kill them with their swords. Then people will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.'

⁷ This is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say is going to happen: From the north, I am going to bring the most powerful king in the world, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, with his army to attack Tyre. They will bring horses and chariots, and men who ride the horses and men who drive the chariots; it will be a huge army. ⁸ In the battles in the small villages on the coast, their soldiers will kill many people with their swords. Then they will build up walls outside the city of Tyre. They will build a dirt ramp up to the top of the wall, and they will all hold up shields to protect themselves from arrows being shot from the ground. ⁹ The king will direct the soldiers who operate the rams to batter the wall, and those who will use iron bars to tear down the towers in the wall. ¹⁰ The king will have a huge number of horses, and the stamping of their hooves will raise dust to cover the whole city. It will be as though the walls tremble because of the noise made by the horses, the supply wagons, and the chariots when they enter the city where the enemy has broken down the walls. ¹¹ The horses will trample all of the streets of the city with their hooves. The soldiers will kill the people with their swords; they will cause the monuments that celebrated their strength to collapse.

¹² They will take away all the people's valuable possessions and steal the things that the merchants sell. They will tear down the walls of the houses and destroy their fine houses. Then they will throw into the sea the stones from the walls of those houses and the timber and the rubble. ¹³ No longer will the people sing noisy songs or play their harps. ¹⁴ They will cause the city to become a bare rock and only a place where men spread their fishing nets. And the city will never be rebuilt.'" Those things will certainly happen because the Lord Yahweh has declared that they will happen.

¹⁵ This is also what the Lord Yahweh says about the people of Tyre: When the people in Tyre groan because the enemy has wounded them, when many people die, and when the enemy destroys the city, the people living along the coast will tremble because they are afraid. ¹⁶ Then all the kings in the cities along the coast will step down from their thrones and lay aside their robes and their embroidered clothes. They will be terrified, and they will sit on the ground, trembling. They will be shocked because of what has happened to the city of Tyre. ¹⁷ Then they will sing a sad song about the city, like this:

'The famous city, in which many men who sailed on the seas lived,

is now no more!

The people of that city had great power as they sailed, but now they are at the bottom of the sea;

they terrified all the people living near them.

¹⁸ But now everyone living along the coast is terrified because the enemy has destroyed the great city.

It is as though the land along the coast itself were trembling;

the people on the islands in the sea are terrified because that city exists no more.'

¹⁹ This is also what the Lord Yahweh says: 'When I cause everyone to leave the city of Tyre, like people have left other cities in which no one lives any longer, and when I cause the huge waves of the sea to cover the city, ²⁰ then I will bring the people of that city down to be with everyone else who is dead, those who died long ago. I will cause them to live in the place below the earth that is like old ruins, with those who have gone down to that pit previously, and they will never return to the earth, to where people are alive. ²¹ I will cause them to die in a horrible way, and that will be the end of them. People will search for that city, but it will no longer exist.' This is what the Lord Yahweh declares will happen.

Chapter 27

¹ Yahweh said this to me: ² "Son of man, sing a funeral song about Tyre. ³ The city of Tyre is on an island at the edge of the sea, and their merchants traded with people groups who live along many seacoasts. This is what Yahweh the Lord says that you should tell them:

You people of Tyre said that your city was very beautiful.

⁴ You controlled what people bought and sold—the people who lived along the sea.

Those who built your city made it very beautiful.

⁵ You and your city were like a huge ship that you built from fir trees on Mount Hermon.

Then you took cedar wood from Lebanon to make a mast for the ship.

⁶ You carved oars from oak trees from the region of Bashan.

You made the deck from cypress wood from the island of Cyprus,

and you covered the decks with ivory.

⁷ You made the sails from fine embroidered linen from Egypt;

those sails were like flags that people could see far away.

⁸ Men from the cities of Sidon and Arvad pulled your oars;

the men who steered the ship were experienced sailors from Tyre.

⁹ Experienced craftsmen from Gebal were on board. They caulked the seams of your ships.

Sailors from many countries came in their ships to buy and sell goods with you.

¹⁰ Men who came from the far away lands of Persia, Lud, and Put were soldiers in your army.

They hung their shields and helmets on the walls of your city;

this caused many people to admire your city.

¹¹ Men from the cities of Arvad and Helek were watchmen on your city walls;

men from the city of Gammad were in your towers.

They also hung their shields on your walls;

they also made your city very beautiful.

¹² Because of the many things that you had to trade, men from Tarshish sent merchants who brought silver, iron, tin, and lead to trade for things that you had.

¹³ Merchants from the regions of Greece, Tubal, and Meshech brought slaves and

things made from bronze to trade for things that you had.

¹⁴ Men from Beth Togarmah brought work horses, war horses, and mules to trade for things that you had.

¹⁵ Merchants came to you from the island of Rhodes.

People from many nations by the sea traded with you;

they brought ivory and valuable black ebony wood to trade for things that you had.

¹⁶ Because you had very many things to trade, people from the land of Aram brought to you valuable turquoise stones, purple cloth, embroidered cloth, fine linen cloth, and jewelry made from coral and rubies to you.

¹⁷ Men from Judah and Israel brought wheat from the city of Minnith in Ammon, and cakes, honey, olive oil, and ointment to trade for your things.

¹⁸ Because you had very many things to sell, men from the city of Damascus brought wine from the town of Helbon and white wool from the area of Zahar to trade for many things that you had.

¹⁹ Men from the tribe of Dan and Greek men from the area of Izal brought things made of iron, cassia spice, and fragrant calamus seeds to trade for things that you had.

²⁰ Merchants came from Dedan in southern Edom bringing saddle blankets to trade for things that you had.

²¹ Men from Arabia and all the rulers of the region of Kedar sent merchants to trade lambs and rams and male goats for things that you had.

²² Merchants from Sheba and Raamah in Arabia brought many kinds of very good

spices and jewels and gold to exchange for things that you had.

²³ Men came from Haran, Kanneh, Eden, Sheba, Ashur and Kilmad in Mesopotamia with their goods. ²⁴ They brought beautiful things to trade with you: Blue cloth, embroidered cloth, and rugs of many colors that were rolled up and tied with ropes.

²⁵ Cargo ships from Tarshish carried all those things that you sold;

the warehouses on your island were full of all those things and brought you great honor.

²⁶ The men who row your ships took the ships full of cargo out onto the large seas.

But now the strong east wind has wrecked those ships.

²⁷ Everything in the ships has been lost—

all the valuable cargo and many of the sailors and ship pilots,

the ship workers and merchants and soldiers.

On the day that the ships were wrecked, all their crews sank to the bottom of the sea.

²⁸ The people in cities along the coast trembled

when they heard your ship pilots cry out.

²⁹ All the men who pulled the oars will leave the ships;

the sailors and pilots will come to the shore and stand on the beach.

³⁰ They will cry aloud because of what has happened to you,

and they weep bitterly.

They will throw earth on their heads

and roll around in ashes.

³¹ They shave their heads to show that they are very sad because of what has happened to you,

and they put on rough sackcloth to mourn.

They weep for you very bitterly
and mourn for you.

³² While they wail and mourn because of what has happened to you

they sing this sad funeral song:

'There was certainly never a city like Tyre,

which now is silent,

covered by the waves of the sea.'

³³ The goods that your merchants traded were things that pleased the people of many countries.

Kings in very distant places became rich from the money they made by buying and selling with you.

³⁴ But now your city is like a ship wrecked in the sea;

and everything in it is broken, and it is now at the bottom of the sea.

All of your cargo and your sailors have sunk to the bottom of the sea.

³⁵ All the people who live along the sea-coast are appalled

because of what has happened to you.

Their kings are very horrified;

they shake with fear as they watch.

³⁶ The merchants of the other nations shake their heads

because it is difficult for them to believe what has happened;

now your city has disappeared,

and it will not exist anymore."

Chapter 28

¹ Then Yahweh gave me another message. He said: ² "Son of man, give to the king of Tyre this message from me, Yahweh the Lord:

'You have very proudly claimed that you are a god,

and that you are untouchable, since you sit on a throne in a city on an island in the sea!

You boast that you are a god,

but you are in reality only a man, not a god.

³ You think that you are wiser than Daniel was,

and you think that you can understand every secret.

⁴ Because you were wise and shrewd in business, you have become very rich;

you have acquired much gold and silver for your treasuries.

⁵ Yes, it is true that by buying and selling wisely, you have become very rich;

and because you are rich, you have become very proud.

⁶ Therefore, Yahweh the Lord says that

because you think that you are as wise as a god,

⁷ he will bring a foreign army to attack your country,

an army that causes other nations to be terrified.

They will pull out their swords to strike you,

you who think that you have marvelous wisdom,

and they will ruin all your beautiful things and make them ugly.

⁸ They will bring you down to your grave;

you will die violently

like those who died in the sea.

⁹ Then you will certainly not tell those who are killing you

that you are a god,

because they will know that you are not a god;

you are only a man.

¹⁰ You will die like other people die, those who are unacceptable to God,

those whom foreigners kill. That will surely happen because Yahweh has said it.”

¹¹ Yahweh also gave me this message: ¹² “Son of man, sing a sad song about the king of Tyre. Tell him that Yahweh the Lord says this to him:

“You were completely perfect,

extremely wise and handsome.

¹³ You had a wonderful life, because you were in my beautiful garden in Eden.

Your clothes were decorated with many kinds of very valuable stones—

ruby, topaz, emerald, chrysolite, onyx, jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and beryl stones.

Those stones were set in gold mountings

which I prepared for you on the day that I created you.

¹⁴ I appointed you to be a strong angel to guard the people.

I placed you on my holy mountain,

and you walked among fiery stones.

¹⁵ You were completely good in all that you did

from the day that you were created, until you started to do wicked things.

¹⁶ Then you became busy buying and selling things,

you started to act violently, and you sinned.

So I disgraced you.

You, the angel who was supposed to guard the people—I forced you to leave my own mountain;

I forced you to leave those fiery stones.

¹⁷ You were extremely proud

because you were very handsome.

Because you loved beautiful things,

you did things that wise people do not do.

So I threw you to the ground,

and allowed other kings who saw you to laugh at you.

¹⁸ By committing many sins

and by buying and selling things dishonestly,

you caused the places where people worshiped me to become unacceptable to me.

So I will make a fire that will burn your city down.

Your city will be burned completely,

and the people who watch it will see

that what is left of the city will only be ashes.

¹⁹ All the people who knew what your city was like previously

will be appalled.

Now your city will disappear,

and it will not exist anymore.”

²⁰ Then Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ²¹ "Son of man, turn toward the city of Sidon, and announce the terrible things that will happen to it. ²² Give the people of Sidon this message from Yahweh the Lord. Tell them:

'I am your enemy, you people of Sidon.

By what I do to you,

I will show you how great I am,

and you will know that it is Yahweh who punishes you and judges you with justice.

You will know that I am different from you, and that I will be honored by what I do to you!

²³ I will send a plague on you,

and I will send enemies to come and kill you in your streets.

They will attack you from every direction,

and they will slaughter your people inside the walls of your city.

Then everyone will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.'

²⁴ No longer will people who live near the people of Israel hurt them as painful briars and sharp thorns hurt people. And then the Israelites will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do."

²⁵ And this is also what Yahweh the Lord says: "I will gather them from distant countries where I have scattered them. And the other people groups will see that I am set apart and honored, when the house of Israel makes their homes in the land I gave my servant Jacob! ²⁶ My people will live safely in Israel; they will build houses and plant vineyards. And when I punish the nearby people groups that de-

spised them, my people will know that it is I, Yahweh their God, who has done this."

Chapter 29

¹ Almost ten years after the Babylonians had taken us Israelites to their land, on the twelfth day of the tenth month of that year, Yahweh gave me another message. He said to me, ² "Son of man, turn toward Egypt and proclaim the terrible things that will happen to the king of Egypt and all his people. ³ Give the king this message from me, for I am Yahweh the Lord:

'Know this, Pharaoh, king of Egypt that I, Yahweh, am your enemy.

You are like a great monster that lies in the streams of the Nile River.

You are so bold to say that the Nile River is yours,

and that you made it for yourself.

⁴ But it will be as though I will put hooks in your jaws

and drag you out onto the land,

with fish sticking to your scales.

⁵ I will leave you and all those fish to die in the desert;

you will fall to the ground,

and no one will pick up your corpse to bury you,

because I declare that your body will be food for the wild animals and birds.

⁶ When that happens, all the people of Egypt will know that it is I, Yahweh, who have the power to do what I say that I will do.

The Israelite people have trusted that you would help them. But you have been like a reed pole in their hands. ⁷ And when they leaned on that pole, it broke and tore

open their shoulders. When they leaned on you, you were like a pole that broke in their hand, and as a result you caused their legs to be wrenched and that made it impossible for them to stand.'

⁸ Therefore Yahweh the Lord says, 'I will bring Egypt's enemies to attack them with their swords; they will kill Egypt's people and animals. ⁹ Egypt will become an empty desert. Then the people of Egypt will know that it is I, Yahweh, who has the power to do what he says he will do, and that he will punish the people of Egypt for saying that the Nile River is theirs because they made it. ¹⁰ I am against you and your streams, and I will ruin Egypt and make it into an empty desert, from the city of Migdol in the north to Syene in the south, as far south as the border of Cush. ¹¹ For forty years no one will walk through that area, and no one will live there. ¹² Egypt will be barren, and it will be surrounded by other abandoned nations. The cities of Egypt will be empty and without people for forty years, and the surrounding lands will be the same. I will scatter the people of Egypt to countries far away.'

¹³ But Yahweh the Lord also says this: 'At the end of forty years, I will enable the people of Egypt to return home again. ¹⁴ I will bring back the people of Egypt whom their enemies had captured, and I will allow them to live again in the region of Pathros in the south, where they lived previously. But Egypt will continue to be a very unimportant kingdom. ¹⁵ It will be the least important of all the nations; it will never again be greater than the nearby countries. I will cause Egypt to be very weak, and they will never again rule over other nations. ¹⁶ When that happens, the leaders of Israel will no longer think of asking Egypt to help them. When I punish Egypt, the Israelites will be reminded that they previously sinned by trusting that

Egypt could help them. And the people of Israel will know that Yahweh the Lord has the power to do what he says he will do.'

¹⁷ Almost twenty-seven years after we Israelites prisoners had been taken to Babylon, on the first day of the new year, Yahweh gave me this message: ¹⁸ "Son of man, the army of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon fought very hard against Tyre, with the result that their heads were rubbed bare under their helmets, and their shoulders became raw. But Nebuchadnezzar and his army did not get any valuable things from Tyre to reward them for their hard work in that campaign. ¹⁹ Therefore, Yahweh the Lord says that he will enable King Nebuchadnezzar's army to conquer Egypt. They will carry away from there all the valuable things, in order that the king can give them to his soldiers. ²⁰ Yahweh says that he will enable them to conquer Egypt as payment for what they did to Tyre, because Nebuchadnezzar and his army were working for him, doing what he wanted them to do, which was to destroy Tyre."

²¹ Yahweh said to me, "Some day I will make Israel become a mighty nation. When that happens, I will make them listen to what you tell them. Then they will know that all this has happened because I, Yahweh, will have done this."

Chapter 30

¹ Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ² "Son of man, prophesy about what will happen to Egypt. Say that this is what I, the Lord Yahweh, say:

'Weep and wail,

because terrible things will happen one day that is coming.

³ That day is near,

the day when I, Yahweh, will punish people;

it will be like a day of full of storm clouds and disaster for many nations.

⁴ An enemy army will come to attack Egypt with their swords,

and there will be great distress for the people in Cush.

The enemy army will kill many people in Egypt;

they will take away everything of value,

and they will even tear the buildings down to their foundations.

⁵ Soldiers of Cush, Libya, Lydia, and all the foreigners in the land of Egypt, together with the Jews living in Egypt—they will all die because of war.’

⁶ This is what Yahweh says:

‘This army will defeat Egypt’s allies,

and the power that the people of Egypt are so proud of will end.

From the city of Migdol in the north to the city of Syene in the south, they will kill the soldiers of Egypt’s allies.

This is what Yahweh the Lord declares.

⁷ Egypt’s allies’ soldiers will be shocked, and her allies’ cities will be destroyed, surrounded by ruined cities in nearby nations.

⁸ Then, when I cause everything in Egypt to be burn down,

and when I cause their enemies to defeat all their allies,

people will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.

⁹ At that time, I will send messengers to go swiftly up the Nile River in boats to terrify the people of Cush, who still think they

are safe. They will be horrified when they hear that Egypt has been destroyed. This will soon happen!

¹⁰ This is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say:

By the power of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon

I will destroy very many people in Egypt.

¹¹ Nebuchadnezzar and his army, whose soldiers have no pity on anyone,

will come to destroy Egypt.

They will pull out their swords

and fill Egypt with the corpses of those whom they have killed.

¹² I will cause the streams of the Nile River to become dry,

and I will sell the nation of Egypt to evil men.

By the power of foreigners

I will ruin the land and everything that is in it.

That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it will happen.

¹³ This is also what I, Yahweh the Lord, say:

I will cause the enemy to destroy the idols

in the city of Memphis.

No longer will there be a king in Egypt, and I will terrify everyone in the land of Egypt.

¹⁴ I will cause all people to leave the region of Pathros in southern Egypt.

I will start fires in the city of Zoan in northeast Egypt

and punish the people in the city of Thebes in southern Egypt.

¹⁵ I will punish the soldiers in the fortress of Pelusium in northern Egypt,

and I will destroy the people in Thebes.

¹⁶ I will burn Egypt with fire;

the people in Pelusium will suffer severe pain.

Enemies will conquer Thebes,

and the enemies of Memphis will attack the people who live there every day.

¹⁷ The enemy will kill many young men in the cities of Heliopolis and Bubastis in northern Egypt,

and the people who are left will have to go to Babylon.

¹⁸ It will be a dark day of destruction at the city of Tahpanhes in northeast Egypt

when I cause the power of Egypt to end;

that country will no longer be strong.

It will be as though a dark cloud will cover Egypt,

because the people of its villages will go to Babylon as prisoners.

¹⁹ That is how I will punish Egypt,

and people will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.”

²⁰ Almost eleven years after the Babylonians took us Israelites to their country, Yahweh gave me another message on the seventh day of the first month of that year. He said, ²¹ ”Son of man, I have enabled the army of Nebuchadnezzar to defeat the army of the king of Egypt. It is as though I have broken one of the arms of the king of Egypt, and it has not been bandaged in order that it could be healed, and it has not been put in splints in order that after it heals the arm will be strong enough to hold a sword. ²² Therefore, this is what

I, Yahweh the Lord, say: I am the enemy of the king of Egypt. I will completely destroy Egypt’s power; it is as though now I will break both of the king’s arms, the good one and the broken one, and cause the sword to fall from his hand. ²³ I will scatter the people of Egypt among the nations. ²⁴ It is as though I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon and put a sword in his hand, and as though I will break the arms of the king of Egypt, and he will groan in front of the king of Babylon like a soldier who is wounded and about to die. ²⁵ I will cause the king of Babylon to become stronger and stronger, and the king of Egypt to become completely weak. When that happens, when I make the Babylonian army strong, they will use that power to attack Egypt. ²⁶ I will scatter the people of Egypt among the nations. And when that happens, people will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.

Chapter 31

¹ Almost eleven years after the Babylonians had taken us Israelites to their land, Yahweh gave me another message, on the first day of the third month of that year. He said, ² ”Son of man, say to the king of Egypt and to the immense numbers of his people,

’You think that there is no country whose power is as great as the power of your country.

³ You think that your country is as great as Assyria was.

Well, Assyria was like a tall cedar tree in Lebanon;

it had big beautiful branches

that provided shade for other trees in the forest.

It was very tall;

and the branches of the tallest trees made a treetop that was a roof over the forest.

⁴ Water came to it from deep springs,

and as a result that cedar tree grew tall and very green.

Then water flowed around the base of the tree

into channels that took water to other nearby trees in the open countryside.

⁵ That huge tree grew very tall,

higher than all the other trees around it.

Its branches grew very thick and long

because of the abundant water at the base of the tree.

⁶ Birds built their nests in the branches,

and wild animals gave birth to their young under those branches.

And it was as though people of all the great nations lived in the shade of that tree.

⁷ It was majestic and beautiful;

its branches spread out widely

because the roots of the tree grew down into the ground where there was a plentiful supply of water.

⁸ The cedar trees in my garden in Eden were not as great as that tree,

and the branches of the fir trees were not as long and thick as the branches of that cedar tree.

And the branches of the plane trees were not as long and thick, either.

No tree in my garden was as beautiful as that cedar tree.

⁹ Because I caused that tree to become very beautiful

because of its magnificent green branches,

all the leaders of other countries represented by those other trees in Eden envied the country represented by that tree.'

¹⁰ Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: 'That tree, which represents Assyria, grew very tall; its top was higher than the other trees, and it became very proud because it was so tall. ¹¹ Therefore, I enabled another mighty nation to conquer it, to destroy it as it deserved to be destroyed. I have already discarded it. ¹² A foreign army, one that has caused people of other nations to be terrified, cut it down and left it. Its branches fell on the mountains and in the valleys. Some of its branches lay broken in all the ravines in the land. All the people of other nations came out from being under its shade and left it. ¹³ Birds of the sky settled on the fallen tree, and wild animals lived among its branches. ¹⁴ As a result, no other tree, even if the tree has plenty of water, will ever grow to such great height, or lift its top above the branches higher than other trees. They will all certainly die and decay; they will go to the place of the dead; they will go to the grave.'"

¹⁵ This is what Yahweh the Lord says: "When that great tree was cut down, it was as though the springs that watered it mourned for it, because I caused the plentiful water from the springs to dry up. It was as if I had caused the mountains in Lebanon to mourn for it, and all the trees there to weep. ¹⁶ I caused the people of other nations to tremble when they heard that tree fall to the ground—when they heard that Assyria had been destroyed. All the other people groups had also been like beautiful, well-watered trees in Lebanon, but they were comforted when the king represented by that cedar tree arrived among them in the

place where they were as dead people. ¹⁷ The people represented by the trees that grew in the shade of that huge tree, the allies of the great nation that the cedar tree represents, had also died and gone down to where the dead people are.

¹⁸ This parable is a warning to you people of Egypt. You think that there is no other nation that is as great and glorious as yours is. But your nation will also be destroyed, along with those other nations. Your people will be there among the other people who are not fit to worship me, people who have been killed by their enemies' swords. That is what will happen to the king of Egypt and all his many people." This is what the Lord Yahweh has declared will happen.

Chapter 32

¹ Almost twelve years after the Babylonians had taken us Israelites to their land, Yahweh gave me another message, on the first day of the twelfth month of that year. He told me, ² "Son of man, sing a sad song about Pharaoh the king of Egypt. Sing this to him:

'People think that you are like a lion among the nations;

but you are like a sea monster in the river

thrashing around in the water,

churning up the water with your feet

and making all the water muddy.

³ But I, the Lord Yahweh, say to you

that I will send many people to throw my net over you,

and that they will haul you up onto the land.

⁴ They will throw you into a field, where I will leave you to your fate.

I will allow the birds to sit on you,

and all the wild animals will eat the flesh of your corpse until their stomachs are full.

⁵ I will cause them to scatter your flesh on the hills

and fill the valleys with the parts of your rotting body.

⁶ I will cause them to fill the land with your blood,

and also the mountains;

they will fill the ravines with your blood.

⁷ When I kill you,

I will cover the sky and not allow the stars to shine.

I will put a dark cloud in front of the sun,

and the moon will not shine.

⁸ I will cause the stars in the sky to be dark,

and there will be darkness over your entire land;

this will surely happen because I, Yahweh the Lord, have said it.

⁹ And I will terrify the people of many nations when they hear how I destroy you,

there where I will send you,

in countries that you have never known about.

¹⁰ I will cause many people to be shocked because of what has happened to you;

their kings will be horrified and shudder because I destroyed you,

when I swung my sword in front of them to kill you.

At the time that you die,
all of them will tremble,
fearing that I will kill them, too.

¹¹ I, the Lord Yahweh tell you, Egypt,
that the swords of the army of the king
of Babylon will strike you.

¹² I will cause the mighty soldiers of
Babylonia

to kill your best soldiers—

the soldiers of Babylonia, who are
more ruthless than those of any other na-
tion.

They will cause the people of Egypt to
quit being proud,

because they will kill very many of
your people.

¹³ I will destroy all the cattle in Egypt,
which graze alongside the streams.

As a result, the water in those streams
will never again become muddy

because of people and cattle walking
in them.

¹⁴ Then I will allow the streams in Egypt
to become calm again

and to flow as smoothly as olive oil
flows.” This is what the Lord Yahweh an-
nounces.

¹⁵ He also says this: “When I cause Egypt
to become empty,

when I strip off everything that grows
on the land,

and when I get rid of all the people who
live there,

people will know that it is I, Yahweh,
who have the power to do what I say that
I will do.

¹⁶ There will be a sad song that people will
sing about Egypt.

Women of many nations will sing it;

they will chant it about Egypt and all
its many people.”

This will surely happen because Yah-
weh has said that it would happen.

¹⁷ On the fifteenth day of that same month,
Yahweh gave me another message. He
said,

¹⁸ “Son of man, wail about the many peo-
ple of Egypt, because I will send them to
the place under the earth, where they and
people of other mighty nations will be. I
will send them there, along with others,
down to the place where the dead are. ¹⁹
Say to them, ‘You people of Egypt, you
think that you are more beautiful than the
people of other nations. But you also will
descend to the place where the godless
dead people are. ²⁰ You will die along with
many others whom their enemies have
killed. Their enemies have begun to at-
tack, and they will drag away a huge num-
ber people of Egypt. ²¹ In the place where
the dead people are, mighty leaders of
other countries will make fun of you peo-
ple of Egypt and your allies. They will say
that you have come to lie dead with them,
those godless people whom their enemies
killed.

²² The dead of the people of Assyria and
their army will also be there. They will be
surrounded by the dead of others whom
their enemies killed. ²³ Their graves will
be there in the deep pit, and the dead sol-
diers of their army will lie around their
graves. The dead of all those who had ter-
rified so many others will also be there,
for their enemies will have killed them,
too.

²⁴ Many, many people from the country
of Elam will be there, too, and Elam’s ser-
vants, because their enemies will have
killed them. These were soldiers who had
terrified people in many places. At that

time they will lie there in that deep pit below the earth, and they, along with the others who have gone there, will be disgraced.

²⁵ The people of Elam in their huge numbers will lie there among others who were slaughtered, surrounded by the graves of a huge crowd of other people. While they were alive, they caused people of other nations to be terrified; but they were godless, and now, because their enemies will have killed them, they will lie with others in that deep pit, disgraced.

²⁶ The dead of all the soldiers of the lands of Meshech and Tubal will be there, surrounded by the graves of a huge crowd. While they were alive, they also caused people in many places to be terrified. They are uncircumcised people whom their enemies will have killed. ²⁷ They will not lie there beside the uncircumcised warriors who have gone to the grave highly honored with their shields over their bodies and their swords under their heads. While they were alive, they terrified many people on the earth.

²⁸ You king of Egypt, I will kill you also, and you will lie there with other godless people whom their enemies will have killed.

²⁹ People of Edom will be there, along with their kings and leaders. They were powerful, but I will kill them. They will lie there in the place where the other godless people lie.

³⁰ All the rulers of countries north of Israel, including people from the city of Sidon, will be there. Because of their power, they terrified other people, but they will lie there. They were godless, and they will lie there along with others whom their enemies will have killed. They, along with everyone else who goes down into that deep pit, will be disgraced.

³¹ The king of Egypt and all his army will see them, and they will be comforted about the death of their many people, because they know that there were other huge groups of people whom their enemies killed. ³² While that king was living, I allowed him to terrify others in many countries, but he and his huge army will be there among other godless people whom their enemies have killed." This will certainly surely happen because the Lord Yahweh has said that it would happen.

Chapter 33

¹ Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ² "Son of man, speak to your fellow Israelites and say this to them: 'Suppose that I bring an enemy army to attack a country, and the people of that country choose one of their own people to be a watchman. ³ And suppose that he sees the enemy army come into view, and that he blows a trumpet to warn everyone. ⁴ If anyone hears the trumpet but pays no attention, and if that person then dies because of the enemy, that person is responsible for his own death. ⁵ If he had paid attention, he would have saved his own life. But as it is, he will die, and it will be his own fault.

⁶ Now suppose that the watchman sees the enemy army coming and does not blow the trumpet to warn the people. Then suppose that one of his people dies because of the enemy. That person will die because of his own mistake, but I will hold the watchman responsible for it.

⁷ Son of man, this parable has a meaning for you. I have appointed you to be a watchman for the Israelites. So always listen to what I say, and warn the people for me. ⁸ When I say to some wicked person,

‘You wicked person, you will surely die because of your sins,’ you must tell him what I said. If you do not speak to that person to warn him to turn away from his sins, that wicked person will die because of his sins, but I will make you responsible for his death. ⁹ But if you warn that wicked person that he should turn away from his sins, but if he does not do so, then he will die because of his sins, but you will have saved your own life.

¹⁰ Son of man, say to the Israelite people, ‘This is what you all are saying: “The guilt that we feel for disobeying God’s laws and sinning is like a heavy weight on us, and our sins are hurting us, and we are slowly dying. So what can we do to continue to remain alive?”’ ¹¹ Say to them, ‘Yahweh the Lord says, “As surely as I am alive, I am not happy when wicked people die; I would prefer that they turn away from their wicked behavior and continue to live. So repent! Turn away from your evil behavior! You Israelite people, do you really want to die?”’

¹² Therefore, Son of man, say to your fellow Israelites that if good people start to disobey me, the fact that they were previously righteous will not keep me from punishing them. Similarly, if wicked people turn away from their wicked behavior, they will not die because of those sins. And if good people start to sin, I will not allow the fact that they had been good to keep me from punishing them now. ¹³ If I tell those who do what is right that they will surely remain alive because of all the good they do, but then if they turn away and become proud of all their good deeds, then I will ignore all the good things that they had done before. I will make sure that they will die because of the evil things that they have done. ¹⁴ Continue to tell the people these things: If I say to some wicked person, ‘You will surely die

because of your sins,’ perhaps that person will stop doing evil and start doing what is just and right. ¹⁵ For example, he might return what he took from another person to guarantee that that person would pay back what he owes, or he might return things that he has stolen, or he might obey the laws that will enable those who obey them to remain alive. If this happens, he will surely remain alive; he will not die because of the sins that he committed previously. ¹⁶ I will ignore the sins that he previously committed; he will surely remain alive.

¹⁷ Tell the people this: That they say that what I do is not fair, but that it is really what they do that is not fair. Then tell them these things, also: ¹⁸ If a good person stops doing what is good and starts to do what is evil, it is fair that he should die because of his sins. ¹⁹ And if a wicked person turns away from his wicked behavior and does what is right and fair, it is fair for him to remain alive because of doing that. ²⁰ Remind the people that they are still saying that what I do is not fair. They can talk all they want, but I will punish each of them for what they do. Tell them this.”

²¹ Almost twelve years after the Babylonians had taken us Israelites to their land, on the fifth day of the tenth month of that year, a man who had escaped from Jerusalem came to me in Babylon and said, “Jerusalem has been captured!” ²² The evening before that man arrived, Yahweh took control of me. So when that man arrived, Yahweh enabled me to speak again; I was no longer forced to be silent.

²³ Then Yahweh gave a message to me. He said, ²⁴ “Son of man, the people who are living in the ruins in Israel are saying, ‘Abraham was only one person, but Yahweh promised him that he and his descendants would possess this land. But we are many; so surely Yahweh has given us this

land to possess.’ ²⁵ So send a message to them. Say, ‘This is what Yahweh the Lord says: “You eat meat that still has the animal’s blood in it. You still worship idols. And you still murder others. So should this land belong to you? ²⁶ You rely on using your swords to obtain things that you want. You do many detestable things. Each of you sleeps with other men’s wives. So should you really possess the land of Israel?”’

²⁷ Send this message to them and tell them that this is what I, the Lord Yahweh, say to them: ‘As surely as I am alive, those who are left in the ruins in Jerusalem—their enemies will also kill them. And those who are living in the countryside—wild animals will kill them. Those who are living in forts and caves will die from disease. ²⁸ I will cause your country to become a desolate wasteland. You will no longer be proud of being a strong country. The mountains of Israel will become very desolate, with the result that no one will walk across them.’ ²⁹ Then, when I have caused their country to become a desolate wasteland because of all the disgusting things that you have done, they will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.”

³⁰ As for you, Son of man, your fellow Israelites here in Babylon stand beside the city wall or at the doors of their houses and are talking with each other. They are saying, ‘Come and listen to the message that has come from Yahweh.’ ³¹ My people come to you as they often have done, and they sit in front of you to listen to what you say. But they do not do what you tell them that they must do. With their mouths they say that they love me, but in their inner beings they are eager to acquire things by doing what is unjust. ³² To them, you are only a man who sings them beautiful songs and plays a musical instrument well.

They hear what you say, but they do not do what you tell them to do.

³³ The terrible things that I have said will happen to them will surely happen. And then they will know that a prophet has been among them, and that you are that prophet.”

Chapter 34

¹ Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ² “Son of man, speak my message against the leaders of Israel. They should be taking care of my people, like shepherds take care of their flocks. Say to them that this is what I, the Lord Yahweh, have to tell them: ‘You shepherds of Israel, terrible things will happen to you because you take care only of yourselves. You should certainly take care of my sheep. ³ But you are like shepherds who eat the fat sheep, who slaughter the best animals for their wool. You are not real shepherds at all. ⁴ You have not taken care of the sick sheep; you have paid no attention to those who are wounded. You have not looked for the sheep who have wandered off. You rule over them with force and violence. ⁵ Because you did not take care of them, my people have wandered away like sheep. And while they are scattered, wild animals attack and kill them, and then eat their flesh. ⁶ My people wander like sheep all over the high hills and mountains. They are scattered all over the earth, and no one is searching for them.

⁷ Therefore, you who should be acting like shepherds, listen to what I, Yahweh the Lord, have to say to you. ⁸ As surely as I am alive, my people are like a flock of sheep without any shepherd, and as a result it is as though wild animals have attacked my people and eaten them. You shepherds did not search for them; in-

stead, you only wanted to provide food for yourselves. ⁹ Therefore, you who should be shepherds of my people, listen to me. ¹⁰ I am opposed to you leaders. I will punish you for mistreating my people. I will remove you from taking care of my people; you will no longer feed yourselves while ignoring them. I will rescue my people from you, and you will no longer be able to butcher them and eat them.

¹¹ I, the Lord Yahweh, tell you leaders that I myself will search for my sheep and take care of them. ¹² As a shepherd takes care of his sheep, I will rescue my people from all the places to which you scattered them, when disasters struck them and they were afraid. ¹³ I will bring them back from those countries and gather them together again in their own land. I will lead my sheep to good pastureland on the hills of Israel, in the ravines, and in the villages of Israel. ¹⁴ My sheep will graze in good pastures on the mountaintops. They will lie down in good grazing areas. ¹⁵ I myself will take care of my people and allow them to lie down and rest. This is what I, Yahweh the Lord, promise. ¹⁶ I will search for those who are lost; I will bring back the ones who have strayed away. I will bandage those who have been injured and strengthen those who are weak. But I will destroy those who are fat and powerful. I will act fairly toward my sheep, my people.

¹⁷ And as for you, my people, my sheep, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: 'I will judge between each of you; I will separate those who are peaceful from those who are cruel and powerful. ¹⁸ You leaders, you who are like strong sheep who do evil to the others: It is bad that you keep the best pastures for yourselves. It is even worse that you trample the good grass with your feet. It is bad that you yourselves drink the clear water. It is even

worse that with your feet you cause the rest of the water to become muddy. ¹⁹ You are forcing my flock to eat the grass that you have trampled and to drink the water that you have caused to become muddy!

²⁰ Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say to you: I myself will judge between those of you who are like the fat sheep and the rest of my people, those who are like the thin sheep. ²¹ You who are like strong sheep, with your shoulders and buttocks you have shoved the others away. You butted them with your horns, until you chased them all away from the good pastureland. ²² But I will rescue my people, and you will no longer steal from them. I will judge between one person and another. ²³ And I will appoint one leader for them, someone who will be like King David, who served me very well. That leader will take care of them and be like their shepherd. ²⁴ I, Yahweh, will be their God, and the one who is like King David will be their king. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.

²⁵ I will make a covenant with the people of Israel. I will promise to give them peace. I will promise to get rid of all the wild animals in Israel, in order that my people may live safely, even in the wilderness and in the forests. ²⁶ I will bless them, and I will bless all the region close to Mount Zion, where they will worship me in my temple. I will bless them by sending them rain showers at the right season; they will be showers to bless them. ²⁷ The fruit trees will produce fruit, and the ground will produce crops. And my people will live safely in their land. When I rescue them from people who made them slaves, they will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do. ²⁸ Soldiers from other nations will no longer take away their valuable possessions, and wild animals will no longer attack them.

They will live safely, and no one will make them afraid. ²⁹ I will cause their land to be peaceful and to produce good crops. There will no longer be famines in the land, and people in other nations will no longer mock them. ³⁰ Then they will know that I, Yahweh their God, am helping them, and they will know that they, the Israelite people, are my people. ³¹ It is as though you, my people, are my sheep whom I take care of, and I am your God. That is what I, Yahweh the Lord, declare.”

Chapter 35

¹ Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ² ”Son of man, turn toward Edom and prophesy what will happen to its people. Say this to them: ³ ’You who live near Mount Seir in Edom, I am your enemy. I will use my power to strike you and ruin your country. ⁴ I will destroy your cities, and everyone will leave them. When that happens, you will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.

⁵ You have always been enemies of the Israelite people. You rejoiced when they experienced a great disaster, when their enemies attacked them, when I was punishing them most severely for the sins that they had committed. ⁶ Therefore, I, Yahweh the Lord, declare that as surely as I am alive, I will allow your enemies to slaughter you. They will attack you again and again. You enjoyed watching other people die, so I will slaughter you. ⁷ I will therefore make everyone leave Mount Seir, and I will destroy anyone who enters it or leaves it. ⁸ I will cause your mountains to be filled with the corpses of those who have been killed. The corpses of those whom your enemies have killed will lie on your hills, in your valleys, and

in all your ravines. ⁹ I will cause your land to be forever without people. No one will live in your towns again. When that happens, you will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.

¹⁰ Your people said, ‘Israel and Judah will become ours. We will take over their territory!’ You said that even though I, Yahweh, was still there and protecting them. ¹¹ Therefore, I, Yahweh the Lord, declare that as surely as I am alive, I will punish you for being angry with my people, for envying them, and for hating them. And when I punish you, I will make sure that the Israelites know that it is I who have punished you. ¹² Then you will know that I, Yahweh, have heard all the disgusting things that you have said about the land of Israel; you said that the land was ruined, and that you could capture it for yourselves. ¹³ You insulted me; I heard everything that you said about me. ¹⁴ So this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: You people who live on Mount Seir and in all the other places in Edom, when I make everyone leave your land, everyone else in the world will rejoice. ¹⁵ You were happy when the land of the Israelite people was ruined, so I will do the same thing to your land. When that happens, people will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.”

Chapter 36

¹ Yahweh said to Ezekiel, ”Son of man, give a message to the hill country and mountains in Israel just as if they were people. Tell them to listen to my message for them.

² This is it: The enemies of Israel, those people groups who live nearby, are now very happy, because they are saying that Jerusalem has been destroyed, so the ancient mountains of Israel will now belong

to them. ³ So you, Ezekiel, must tell the mountains of Israel what I, the Lord Yahweh, am saying to them: 'Armies of other nations attacked you from every direction, and everyone has left you. Those foreign armies are now in your land. They have spoken very maliciously about your people, the Israelites, and have told all kinds of lies about them. ⁴⁻⁶ Therefore, you mountains of Israel, listen to this message from me. I, Yahweh the Lord, have something to say to you, the hills and mountains, and to you, the ravines and valleys, and to you, the towns and cities which the enemy burned down, where no one is living any longer, from where the enemy has taken everything valuable, and whose people the people groups all around are mocking. "This is what I, Yahweh the Lord, declare: I am very angry with the people of Edom and the other people groups; they have insulted your Israelite people and happily taken all their land as pastures. So Ezekiel must speak for me to you, the land of Israel, mountains and hills, valleys and ravines: I, Yahweh the Lord, am very angry because the enemy has insulted you. ⁷ Therefore, this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: I solemnly declare I will shame the people of the nations that are around you.

⁸ But I say to you mountains of Israel that huge crops of fruit will grow on your trees for my Israelite people, because they will soon return home from Babylonia. ⁹ I will work to help you, and I will be kind to you. I will enable farmers to plow the ground and plant seed in you. ¹⁰ I will cause the number of people who live there on you mountains and everywhere else in Israel to greatly increase. People will live in the cities and rebuild houses where there are now only ruins. ¹¹ I will cause the number of people and domestic animals to increase. People will have many children. I will enable people to live there as they

did previously, and I will enable them to prosper as they did before. Then you will know that it is I, Yahweh, who have the power to do what I say that I will do. ¹² I will enable my Israelite people to walk through your mountains. They will own the land on you; you will belong to them forever. You will always grow enough food for them to eat, so they will never again go hungry and die.

¹³ I, Yahweh the Lord, am telling you mountains this: It is true that people have said they could not grow many crops on you, and so they died from hunger. ¹⁴ But that will no longer happen. ¹⁵ No longer will the other people groups ridicule you mountains. No longer will they laugh at you; no longer will you mountains make your nation suffer defeat. I, the Lord Yahweh, am telling you this myself."

¹⁶ Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ¹⁷ "Son of man, when the Israelite people were living in their own land, they defiled it by the things that they did. They made it unacceptable to me. I considered that their behavior was as disgusting as the rags that women use during their monthly menstrual periods. ¹⁸ So I severely punished them, because they had murdered many people and because they had worshiped idols there. They made their entire land unacceptable to me. ¹⁹ So I made their enemies scatter them into other lands. I punished them as they deserved to be punished because they had done so many evil things. ²⁰ Wherever they went among those lands, they caused other people to mock me, when they should have honored me. Those people have been saying, 'The Israelites belong to Yahweh, but he was not strong enough to protect them. They had to leave the land that he had given to them.' ²¹ The people of Israel had disgraced me among the people groups to

which they had to go, but I deserve that those people groups worship me instead.

²² So you, Ezekiel, say to the Israelite people that I, the Lord Yahweh, am telling them this: 'You Israelite people, it is not for your sake that I am going to rescue you from your enemies. Instead, I will do this so that the people in these other lands will worship me as God. You have done your best to disgrace me wherever you have gone. ²³ I will show that these other people groups should worship me as God, even though they would never know it by watching how you act. When I prove to them that I am powerful and can do anything, then they will know that I will carry out everything that I say I will do. And they will see you honor me as the God who is holy.

²⁴ I will take you out of those distant lands. I will gather you from all those places where you had to go, and I will bring you back to your own land. ²⁵ It will be as though I will sprinkle clean water on you, and then you will be clean. I will make you clean from everything that has made me reject you, and I will cause you to stop worshiping idols. ²⁶ I will give you a completely new way of thinking. I will enable you to stop being stubborn, and I will enable you to obey me from your inner beings. ²⁷ I will put my Spirit within you and enable you to carefully obey all my laws. ²⁸ You will again live in the land that I gave to your ancestors. You will be my people, and I will be your God. ²⁹ I will free you from everything that made me reject you. I will cause your grain to be plentiful, and I will not send a famine to you again. ³⁰ I will cause your fruit trees to produce plenty of fruit and your ground to produce plenty of good crops, with the result that the people of other lands will not mock you because you do not have enough food. ³¹ When that happens, you

will think about your previous evil behavior and wicked deeds, and you will be very displeased with yourselves for your sins and the detestable things that you did. ³² But I, the Lord Yahweh, tell you this: It is not for your sake that I will do those things. You Israelite people ought to be ashamed of your behavior.

³³ I, the Lord Yahweh, also tell you this: At the time that I cleanse you from all the sins that you have committed, I will enable you to live in your cities again and to build houses where there are now only ruins. ³⁴ People who walk through your country will see that you are once again cultivating your land, and that your people are living in it again. ³⁵ Then they will say, "This land that was ruined has become very fertile, like the garden of Eden. The cities that were piles of ruins, empty and destroyed, now have houses around them, and people are living in those cities." ³⁶ When that happens, the people who are still left in the lands that are around you will know that it is I, Yahweh, who have enabled you to rebuild what was destroyed, and to again plant crops in the fields that had nothing growing in them. I, Yahweh, have said that it will happen, and I will cause it to happen.

³⁷ This is also what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: Again I will answer your pleas for me to make your people become as numerous as sheep. ³⁸ I will make them as numerous as the flocks of sheep that will be needed for offerings in Jerusalem during your regular festivals. The cities that are now ruined will be filled with people, and then you will know that I, Yahweh, have done this."

Chapter 37

¹ One day Yahweh gave me another vision.

In the vision I felt the power of God on me, and by his Spirit he took me to the middle of a valley. It was full of bones of people who had been killed. ² He led me to walk back and forth among those bones. I saw that there were very many bones there, bones that were very dry. ³ He asked me, "Son of man, do you think that these bones can become living people again?"

I replied, "Yahweh my Lord, only you know if that can happen."

⁴ Then he said to me, "Speak a message for me to these bones. Say to them, 'You dry bones, listen to what Yahweh says. ⁵ This is what Yahweh the Lord says to you bones: I am going to put my breath into each of you, and you will become alive again. ⁶ I will fasten tendons to your bones and cause your bones to be covered with flesh. I will cover the flesh with skin. Then I will breathe into you, and you will become alive. When that happens, you will know that I, Yahweh, have the power to do what I say that I will do.'"

⁷ So I spoke to the bones as Yahweh commanded me to speak. As I was speaking, there was a noise, a sound of shaking, and the bones came together, bones joining to each other. ⁸ While I was looking, I saw tendons fastening to them and flesh covering them, and then skin covered the flesh, but they were not breathing.

⁹ Then he said to me, "Son of man, speak a message for me to the wind. Say to the wind, 'Wind, Yahweh says to you, blow from all four directions. Breathe into these people who have been killed, in order that they can come alive again!'" ¹⁰ So I said what he commanded me to say, and then breath entered them, and they began to breathe. They became alive and stood up, like a huge army.

¹¹ Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones represent all the Israelite people.

The people say, 'It is as though our bones are dried up; we can hope for nothing good any longer; our nation is destroyed.'

¹² So speak my message to them and say, 'This is what the Lord Yahweh says: My people, it will be as though I will open your graves and cause your corpses to become alive again. I will bring you back to Israel. ¹³ Then when that happens, you my people will know that I, Yahweh, have done this. ¹⁴ I will put my spirit in you, and it will be as though you will become alive again, and I will enable you to live in your own land again. Then you will know that it is I, Yahweh, who said that it would happen and who has caused it to happen. That is what I, Yahweh, declare.'"

¹⁵ Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ¹⁶ "Son of man, take a wooden stick and write on it, 'This represents Judah and all the tribes of Judah.' Then take another one and write on it, 'This represents Israel and all the tribes of Israel.' ¹⁷ Then join them together to become as though they were one larger wooden stick in your hand.

¹⁸ When your fellow Israelites ask you, 'What does this action mean?', ¹⁹ tell them, 'This is what the Lord Yahweh says: One of the pieces of wood in Ezekiel's hand represents Israel and all the tribes of Israel. I am joining it to the piece of wood that represents Judah, to form one stick in his hand.' ²⁰ Then, Son of man, hold up the pieces of wood that you have written on, in order that the people can see them. ²¹ Say to the people, 'This is what Yahweh the Lord says: I will take you Israelite people out of the countries to which you have been forced to go. I will gather you from all those lands, back to your own land. ²² And I will cause you to again be one nation in your land, on the mountains of Israel. And there will be one king to rule over all of you. Never again will you be

two nations or divided into two kingdoms. ²³ No longer will you defile yourselves by worshiping idols and disgusting statues of your gods, because I will enable you to stop sinning and to stop rejecting me. You will be my people, and I will be your God.'

²⁴ The king who rules over them will always come from the family of King David. David was the one who served me well. There will be one shepherd to watch over them and to take care of all of them. They will carefully obey all my laws. ²⁵ They will live in the land that I gave to Jacob, who also served me well; they will live in the land where your ancestors lived. They and their children and their grandchildren will live there forever, and the one who will be like King David will be their king forever. ²⁶ I will make a covenant with them to give them peace; it will be a covenant that will last forever. I will give them that land again and cause their population to increase. And I will put my temple among them forever. ²⁷ My home, where I will live, will be among them; I will be their God, and they will be my people. ²⁸ Then, when my temple is there again among them, the people of nations will know that I, Yahweh, set apart Israel for my honor."

Chapter 38

¹ Yahweh gave me another message. He said to me, ² "Son of man, turn and face Magog, the country where Gog is the king. He is also the ruler of the nations of Meshech and Tubal. Announce my message about the terrible things that will happen to him. ³ Say this: 'This is what the Lord Yahweh says: Gog, you who rule Meshech and Tubal, I am your enemy. ⁴ It will be as though I will turn you around and put hooks in your jaws and bring you

to Israel—you and all of your army, including your horses and the men carrying weapons who ride those horses, and many other soldiers carrying large shields and small shields, all of them carrying swords. ⁵ Your soldiers also include armies from Persia, Ethiopia, and Put, all of them with shields and helmets— ⁶ also all the soldiers from Gomer and an army from Beth Togarmah—both of these lands that are far north of Israel. Armies of many nations will come with you.'

⁷ Tell Gog this: 'Get ready, and be prepared to be the commander of all those soldiers. ⁸ At some future time, Yahweh will command you to lead those armies to attack Israel, a country whose buildings have been rebuilt after they were destroyed in wars. Their people will have been brought back from many nations to live again on the hills of Israel, where no one had been living for long time. Yahweh bring the Israelites back from other lands, and they will be living peacefully. ⁹ You and all those armies from many nations will go up to Israel, advancing like a great storm. Your army will be like a huge cloud that covers the land.

¹⁰ But this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: On that day, you will plan to do something very evil. ¹¹ You will say this to yourself: "My army will invade a country where the villages do not have walls around them. We will attack people who are peaceful and think that no one will harm them. Their towns and villages do not have walls with gates and bars. ¹² So it will be easy for us to attack these people. They are people who come back together from many countries where they had lived for many years, people who now live safely in their land with all their livestock and other possessions. They are living in the country that is in the middle of the most important countries in the world. Our soldiers

will take away all their valuable possessions.”¹³ Then people of Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish will come and say to you, “Are you gathering all your soldiers in order to attack Israel and take away all their silver and gold? Do you plan to take away their livestock and all their other valuable possessions?”

¹⁴ Therefore, Son of man, take my message about Gog and say to him, ‘This is what the Lord Yahweh says: At that time, when my people of Israel are living safely, you will certainly think about them. ¹⁵ You will come from your place far north of Israel, with the armies of many other nations, all riding horses, a huge army. ¹⁶ You will march toward my Israelite people, and your soldiers will cover the land like a huge cloud. Gog, I will bring your army to attack the country that belongs to me, but what I will do to you will show the people of other nations that I am holy.

¹⁷ This is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say to Gog: In past years, when I gave messages to my servants, the prophets in Israel, there were messages about you. At that time, they said for many years that I would bring your armies to attack my people. ¹⁸ So this is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say will happen: When your army attacks Israel, I will be very angry with you. ¹⁹ I will be furious, and to show that I am angry, there will be a great earthquake in Israel, where your armies will be. ²⁰ The fish in the sea, the birds, the wild animals, and the animals that crawl on the ground, and all the people on the earth will tremble because of what I will do. Mountains will fall down, cliffs will crumble, and walls everywhere will fall to the ground. ²¹ Gog, on all the mountains in the country that belongs to me I will cause your soldiers to fight against each other. ²² I will punish you and your soldiers with plagues, and I will kill them. I

will send down from the sky, on you and your troops who have come from many lands, huge amounts of rain, hail, and burning sulfur. ²³ In this way, I will cause the people of many nations to know that I am very great, and I will show them my holiness. And they will see who I am and they will know that I am Yahweh.”

Chapter 39

¹ Yahweh said to me, “Son of man, speak for me about the terrible things that will happen to Gog. Say this to him: ‘Gog, I am your enemy, you who rule Meshech and Tubal. ² I will turn you around and drag you and your armies from far north of Israel and send you to fight on the mountains of Israel. ³ When you are there, I will snatch your bows from your left hands and cause your arrows to fall from your right hands. ⁴ You and all the soldiers that are with you will die on the mountains of Israel. I will give your corpses to be food for the birds that eat dead flesh, and to the wild animals. ⁵ You will die in the open fields. This will certainly happen because I, Yahweh the Lord, have said that it will happen. ⁶ I will cause many fires to burn in Magog and to all those who live safely in the areas along their coasts, and they will know that it is I, Yahweh, who have the power to do what I say that I will do.

⁷ I will enable my Israelite people to know that I am holy. I will no longer allow them to mock me, and the people groups in the other lands will know that I am Yahweh, the God whom Israel worships and honors. ⁸ That day is fast approaching. I, Yahweh the Lord, declare that those things will happen soon.

⁹ At that time, the people who live in the cities of Israel will go out and gather the weapons from the dead soldiers, and will

use them to make fires to cook their food. They will burn the small and large shields, the bows and arrows, the war clubs, and spears. There will be enough weapons to use as firewood for seven years. ¹⁰ They will not need to gather firewood in the fields or cut wood from trees in the forests, because those weapons will be all the firewood that they will need. And they will take valuable things from those who took valuable things from them, and steal things from people who stole things from them. That is what I, Yahweh the Lord, declare will happen.

¹¹ At that time I will create a graveyard for you, Gog, and your soldiers, in the valley east of the Dead Sea. That graveyard will block the road that travelers usually walk on, because you, Gog and all the soldiers of your huge army will be buried there. So it will be named the Valley of Hamon Gog.

¹² For seven months the people of Israel will be burying your corpses. It will be necessary to bury all of them, in order that the land will not be defiled because of any unburied corpses. ¹³ All the people of Israel will do the work of burying them. The day when I win that victory they will honor me, and they will remember that day forever.

¹⁴ After those seven months are ended, the Israelite people will designate men to go throughout the land to bury any remaining corpses, in order that the land might not remain defiled. ¹⁵ When they go through the land, whenever one of them sees a human bone, he will set up a marker beside it. When the gravediggers see the markers, they will pick up the bones and bury them in the Valley of Hamon Gog. ¹⁶ There will be a city there named Hamonah. And by doing this work of burying the corpses, they will cleanse the land.”

¹⁷ Yahweh said to me, “Son of man, this

is what I, the Lord Yahweh, say: Summon every kind of bird and wild animal. Say to them, ‘Gather together from everywhere and come to the feast that Yahweh is preparing for you. It will be a great feast on the mountains of Israel. There you will eat men’s flesh and drink their blood. ¹⁸ You will eat the flesh of strong soldiers and drink the blood of kings as if they were fat animals from the region of Bashan—as if they were male sheep, lambs, goats, and bulls. ¹⁹ At the feast that Yahweh is preparing for you, you will eat fat until your stomachs are full, and you will drink blood until it is as though you are drunk. ²⁰ It will be as though you are eating at a table that I have set up for you. You will eat all you want of the flesh of horses and their riders, strong soldiers of every kind.’ That is what I, Yahweh the Lord, declare.

²¹ ‘I will show people of the nations that I am powerful, and all the nations will see how I punish them. ²² At that time, the Israelite people will learn that I, Yahweh their God, have the power to do what I say that I will do. ²³ And the people of the other lands will know that the Israelites had been forced to go to other countries because they sinned by not being faithful to me. I turned away from of them, and I allowed their enemies to capture them and kill many of them. ²⁴ I punished them as they deserved because of their disgusting behavior and sins, and I turned away from them.

²⁵ Therefore, this is now what I, the Lord Yahweh say: I will now bring back from exile the descendants of Jacob; I will have mercy on all the Israelite people, and I will also make sure that they honor me. ²⁶ When the Israelite people are back in their own country, they will live safely in their land, with no one to cause them to be afraid. They will forget about the disgraceful and unfaithful things that they

did previously. ²⁷ When I have brought them back from their enemies' countries and gathered them together in Israel, the people of many nations will know how holy I am because of what I did for my people. ²⁸ The Israelite people will know that I, Yahweh, have done this. They will know that because I forced them to go to other countries, and then I gathered them together in their own country. I will not leave any of them in those countries. ²⁹ I will no longer turn away from them; I will give my Spirit to the Israelite people. This will certainly happen because I, Yahweh the Lord, have said it."

Chapter 40

¹ Almost twenty-five years after the Babylonians had taken us Israelites to their land, on the tenth day of the first month of that year, almost fourteen years after Jerusalem had been destroyed, Yahweh grabbed hold of me with his power, and he took me in a vision to Israel. ² He set me on a very high mountain. On the south side of that mountain there were some buildings that looked like part of a city. ³ When he took me there, I saw a man who looked as if he had been made of bronze. He was standing inside the city gate, and he was holding a linen cord and a measuring stick in his hand. ⁴ He said to me, "Son of man, look carefully at everything that I am going to show you, and pay attention to everything that I say and everything that I will show you, because that is why God brought you here. And then later you must tell the Israelite people everything that you have seen here."

⁵ In the vision I saw that there was a wall that completely surrounded the temple area. The measuring stick in the man's hand was three and one-tenth meters long. He measured the wall and it

was three and one-tenth meters thick and three and one-tenth meters high.

⁶ Then he went to the gate in the temple wall on the temple's east side. He climbed the steps and measured the gateway that faced outward; it was three and one-tenth meters deep. ⁷ Next, there were alcoves for the temple guards, each being three and one-tenth meters long and deep. The distance of the wall between each alcove was two and three-quarters meters. The gateway that faced inward, which led to the temple portico, was also three and one-tenth meters deep.

⁸ Then he measured the portico that was after the gate; it was three and one-tenth meters long. ⁹ He also measured the depth, which was three and one-tenth of a meter. The doorposts on either side were one meter thick. This was the portico attached to the temple gate on the gate's inner side, facing the temple. ¹⁰ Inside the east gate there were three alcoves for guards on each side of the gate. They all had the same length and depth. And the distance of wall between them was the same.

¹¹ Then he measured the opening of the gate; it was five and two-fifths meters wide, and the entrance from the gate was seven meters long. ¹² Running along in front of the alcoves was a low wall one-half meter high. Each of the alcoves was three and one-tenth meters long on all sides. ¹³ Then the man measured the gateway's width from the roof of the alcove on one side, to the roof of the alcove on the other side. The distance was 13 and one-half, from one alcove's entrance to that of the other. ¹⁴ Then the man measured along the wall that separated the alcoves from each other; it was thirty-two meters long. He measured them as far as the gate's portico. ¹⁵ The distance from the entrance of the gate to the far end of its por-

tico was twenty-seven meters. ¹⁶ There were narrow windows in the walls of all the alcoves, and also in the inner walls between the alcoves. The portico also had these same windows on its inner side. The wall that ran between the alcoves was decorated with carvings of palm trees.

¹⁷ Then the man brought me to the temple's outer courtyard. There I saw some rooms, and a stone pavement in the courtyard. There were thirty rooms facing the courtyard. ¹⁸ The stone pavement was all around the courtyard, and it extended out from the walls into the courtyard for the same distance as the gate entrances. That was the lower pavement. ¹⁹ Then the man measured the distance across the outer courtyard of the temple, between the outer gate and inner courtyard; it was fifty-four meters on the east side, and the same distance on the north side of the courtyard.

²⁰ Then he measured how long and how wide was the gateway on the north side, which was an entrance into the outer courtyard of the temple complex. ²¹ There were three alcoves for guards on each side of that gateway. From the gateway to the end of its portico was twenty-seven meters, and they were thirteen and one-half meters wide. ²² It had the same windows, portico, guard alcoves, and palm tree decorations as the east gate had. Like the east gate, there were seven steps leading up to it and its portico. ²³ Across the outer courtyard from the north gate was a gate leading to the inner courtyard, just as there was on the east side. The man measured the distance from the north gate to the gate leading to the inner courtyard; it was fifty-four meters in distance.

²⁴ Then he brought me through the south gateway into the inner courtyard, and he measured the entrance. It measured the same as the other gateways. Its alcoves,

its walls between the alcoves, and its entry room measured the same as the ones on the other sides. ²⁵ The gateway and its portico had narrow windows along the walls, as on the other sides. The gateway and its portico measured twenty-five meters long and thirteen and one-half wide. ²⁶ There were seven steps leading up to that gate and its portico. It also had carvings of palm trees on the walls that were between the rooms. ²⁷ Across the outer courtyard from the south gate was a gate opening onto the inner courtyard. The man measured from that gateway to the entrance on the south side of the outer courtyard; it was also fifty-four meters in distance.

²⁸ Then the man brought me through the south entrance into the inner courtyard, and he measured the south entrance. It measured the same as the other gates. ²⁹ He measured its alcoves, its walls, and its portico with the same measuring standards he had been using. The gate and its portico had windows all around. The gate and its portico measured twenty-seven meters long and thirteen and one-half wide. ³⁰ The porticos of the inner gates, which led to the inner courtyard, were about thirteen and one-half meters long and two and three-quarters meters wide. ³¹ The portico's entrance faced the outer courtyard. Carvings of palm trees decorated the walls, and there were eight steps leading up to it.

³² Then the man led me to the east side of the inner courtyard, and he measured the gate. It had the same measurements as the other gates. ³³ Its alcoves, walls, and portico measured the same as the others. The gate and its portico had windows all around. The gate and its portico measured twenty-seven meters long and thirteen and one-half wide. ³⁴ Its portico faced the outer courtyard. It also had carvings of palm trees decorating the walls, and it

had eight steps leading up to it.

³⁵ Then he led me to the entrance on the north side and measured it. It measured the same as the other entrances. ³⁶ And its alcoves and walls between them and the entry room all had small windows in the walls. It all measured the same as the other gates. The gate and its portico measured twenty-seven meters long and thirteen and one-half meters wide. ³⁷ Its portico faced the outer courtyard. It also had carvings of palm trees decorating the walls, and it had eight steps leading up to it.

³⁸ In each of the inner entrances there was a room with a door. They were rooms where the carcasses of the animals that were to be completely burned on the altar were washed. ³⁹ In each portico were four tables, two on each side. On those tables would be slaughtered the animals that were to be completely burned, also the animals for offerings of sins that people had committed, and offerings that acknowledged their guilt for having sinned against other people. ⁴⁰ Just outside the inner courtyard, to the left of the steps leading up to its north gate, there were two tables, and to the right of the steps were two more tables. ⁴¹ There were four tables on the outer side of each inner courtyard gate, and there were also four tables on the inner side. The animals to be sacrificed were slaughtered on these tables. ⁴² There were also four tables of cut stone for the preparation of the offerings that were to be completely burned, four-fifths of a meter long on each side and one-half meter high. The priests would put on those stone tables the tools for slaughtering all the animals. ⁴³ The meat for the offerings would be placed on those stone tables. There were hooks on which the meat was hung, each with two prongs, each eight centimeters long, fas-

tened to the walls of the porticos.

⁴⁴ Outside two of the inner gateways, on the inner courtyard side, there were rooms for those who led in singing during the worship, one on the north side and one on the south side. ⁴⁵ The man said to me, "The room whose door faces south is for the priests who are working in the temple. ⁴⁶ The room whose door faces north is for the priests who are in charge of the work at the altar. They are the descendants of Zadok; they are the only descendants of Levi who are permitted to approach Yahweh while they work for him."

⁴⁷ Then he measured the courtyard; it was square, fifty-four meters long and fifty-four meters wide. The altar was in front of the sanctuary.

⁴⁸ Then he brought me to the portico of the sanctuary and measured the doorposts and their walls on each side of the entrance; they were about two and three-quarters meters thick. The doorway was seven meters wide, and the sides on each side of it were one and three-fifths meters wide. ⁴⁹ The portico was eleven meters wide, and its depth was six meters on each side. There were steps leading up to it, and there were columns on each side of the portico.

Chapter 41

¹ Then in the vision the man brought me to into the holy place in the temple and measured the doorposts on either side of the entrance; they were each three and one-tenth meters wide. ² The entrance was five and two-fifths meters wide, and the walls of each side of it were two and three-quarters meters long. He also measured the holy place. It was twenty-two meters long and eleven meters wide.

³ Then he entered the inner room of the temple, the very holy place, and measured the walls to either side of the entrance; each was one meter wide. The doorway was three and one-tenth meters wide, and each of the walls on each side of the entrance was three and four-fifths meters long. ⁴ Then he measured the inner room; it was eleven meters long and eleven meters wide. Then he said to me, "This is the very holy place."

⁵ Then he measured the wall of the temple; it was three and one-tenth meters thick. There was a row of rooms along the outside wall of the temple. Each of those rooms was two meters wide. ⁶ There were three stories of rooms, with thirty rooms on each story. There were ledges all around the wall of the temple that were supports for the side rooms above. There were no extra supports built into the sanctuary wall. ⁷ Each of the side rooms was wider than the one below it. The most narrow rooms were built first, at the bottom. Then a wider set of rooms was built over it, and the widest set was at the top. A set of stairs was built from the lowest level through the middle level to the highest level.

⁸ I saw that there was a terrace around the temple. The terrace was the foundation for those side rooms; it was three and one-tenth meters high. ⁹ The outer wall of those side rooms was two and three-quarters meters thick. All around the sanctuary there was an open area between those side rooms. ¹⁰ The open areas were near the priests' rooms that were surrounding the courtyard; there was a distance of eleven meters between the two sets of side rooms all around the sanctuary. ¹¹ There were two doors from those side rooms into another open area; one faced north and one faced south. This open area was two and three-quarters me-

ters wide.

¹² There was a large building on the west side of the temple area. It was thirty-eight meters wide, and it had a wall two and three-quarters meters thick and forty-nine meters long.

¹³ Then the man measured the temple. It was fifty-four meters long, and the temple courtyard, where the large building was, was fifty-four meters wide. The building and its wall measured the same. ¹⁴ The courtyard on the east side of the temple, across the front of the temple, was also fifty-four meters wide.

¹⁵ Then he measured the building on the west side. Including its walls, it was also fifty-four meters long.

The outer walls of the holy place, of the very holy place, and the portico, ¹⁶ the inner walls above and below the narrow windows, and the galleries on all the stories—all these things were covered with thin panels of wood. ¹⁷ All the walls inside the temple were decorated with carvings of winged creatures and palm trees; between each figure of a winged creature was a carving of a palm tree. ¹⁸⁻¹⁹ Each winged creature had two faces. One face was the face of a human, and one was the face of a lion. Those figures were carved on the walls all around the inside of the temple, and each face looked at the carving of a palm tree. ²⁰ They covered all the walls, from the floor to the wall above the entryway.

²¹ At the entrance to the main room of the temple there were square doorposts, all the same in appearance. ²² In front of the very holy place there was a wooden altar. It was one and three-fifths meters high and one meter wide on all four sides. Its corners and base and sides were all made of wood. The man said to me, "This is the table that is in the presence of Yahweh."

²³ The holy place and the very holy place had folding doors. ²⁴ Each door consisted of two parts that swung on hinges. ²⁵ On these doors there were carvings of winged creatures and palm trees. There was also a wooden roof over the front portico of the sanctuary. ²⁶ On the side walls of the portico were narrow windows with figures of palm trees carved on the sides of the windows. The side rooms around the temple also had projecting roofs.

Chapter 42

¹ Then in the vision the man led me out of the inner courtyard, through the gate on the north side. We entered the outer courtyard and came to rooms that were facing the northern outer wall. ² The building with those rooms was fifty-four meters long and twenty-seven meters wide. ³ In that building there was one group of rooms that faced the inner courtyard. The distance between those rooms and the sanctuary, the main temple building, was eleven meters. These rooms were built on three stories. Each set of rooms had a walkway over the set of rooms below it. There were rooms that overlooked the open area of the outer courtyard. ⁴ To one side of the rooms was a walkway that was five and two-fifths meters wide and fifty-four meters long. All the doors of the rooms were on their north side. ⁵ Each set of rooms was narrower than the set of rooms below them, because each upper set had a walkway in front. ⁶ The rooms on the upper levels had no pillars to support them as there were in the courtyard, because those rooms were supported by the walls of the rooms below. ⁷ The outer wall ran parallel to the rooms that faced the outer courtyard; this part of the outer wall was twenty-seven meters long. ⁸ The row of rooms that was along the outer

courtyard was twenty-seven meters long, and the row of rooms that faced the temple was fifty-four meters long. ⁹ The bottom story had an entrance on its east side, coming from the outer courtyard.

¹⁰ On the eastern side, along the outer wall of the outer courtyard, next to the temple courtyard, there was also a set of rooms. ¹¹ There was a walkway in front of them. These rooms were like the rooms on the north side. They had the same length and width, and also the same kind of entrances. ¹² There were also doorways into rooms on the south side that were similar to what was on the north side. There was an inside passage with an outer door; the passage had doors into all the rooms. At the east end of the passage was an outside door leading into it.

¹³ Then the man said to me, "The rooms on the northern and southern sides that overlook the temple sanctuary are only for Yahweh's special purposes. Here the priests who offer sacrifices to Yahweh will eat their portions of those offerings. Because these rooms are special, they will be used to store the offerings for Yahweh: The flour for the flour offerings, for the offerings for the sins that people have committed, and for the offerings that people make for their sins. ¹⁴ When the priests leave the temple, they will not be allowed to immediately enter the outer courtyard. First they must remove the clothes that they had been wearing inside the holy place, because those clothes are special, reserved for their work. They must put on other clothes before they enter the parts of the temple area where the other people gather."

¹⁵ When the man had finished measuring the inside of the temple area, he led me out through the east entrance and measured all the surrounding area. ¹⁶⁻¹⁹ He measured the four sides of the area. There

was a wall around the area that was two hundred and seventy meters long on each side. ²⁰ He measured the wall that separated what was sacred from the areas that were not sacred on four sides. The wall was five hundred cubits long and five hundred cubits wide.

Chapter 43

¹ Then the man brought me to the entrance on the east side. ² Suddenly I saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the east. The sound of his coming was like the roar of a rushing river, and all that area shone with his glory. ³ What I saw in this vision was like what I had seen in my earlier visions, first by the Kebar Canal and later when God came to destroy Jerusalem. I prostrated myself on the ground. ⁴ The glory of Yahweh entered the temple through the east entrance, ⁵ and then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner courtyard, while the glory of Yahweh filled the temple.

⁶ Then, while the man was standing beside me, I heard someone speak to me from inside the temple. ⁷ He said, "Son of man, this is my temple, the place where I sit on my throne and where I rest my feet. This is where I will live with the Israelite people forever. The Israelite people and their kings will never again disgrace me by worshiping other gods at their hilltop places of idol worship, or by building lifeless idols of their past kings. ⁸ Your people placed their altars near mine, and the doorposts of their temples were next to the doorposts of my temple. There was only a wall between them. And they disgraced me by the detestable things that they did. So I was angry and destroyed them. ⁹ Now they must stop this disgusting worship of idols and these rituals to

honor kings' idols. If they stop doing those things, I will live among them forever.

¹⁰ Son of man, describe to the Israelite people what this temple that I have shown you in a vision is like, in order that they will be ashamed of the sins. ¹¹ If they are ashamed of all the evil things that they have done, tell them all about the temple that I showed you: Its design, the exits and entrances, and everything else about it. And tell them all my laws and regulations about worshiping me there. Write all these things down while they watch you, in order that they will be able to faithfully obey them.

¹² And this is the supreme law about the temple: All of the area on top of the hill where the temple will be built must be kept sacred and holy.

¹³ These are the measurements of the altar, using the same kind of measuring stick that was used for the temple area: There is a gutter around the altar that is one-half meter deep and one-half meter wide. There is a rim around it that is twenty-three centimeters wide. This will compose the base for the rest of the altar. ¹⁴ The lower part of the gutter is one meter high to the lower ledge that surrounds the altar. The lower ledge is one-half meter wide. From that ledge to the upper ledge, it is two meters. That ledge is also one-half meter wide. ¹⁵ The hearth at the top of the altar is another two meters high, and there is a hornlike projection that juts up from each of the four corners. ¹⁶ That place at the top of the altar is square, six and one-half meters long on each side. ¹⁷ The upper ledge that borders the hearth is also a square, seven and three-fifths meters long on each side, and has a rim all around that is twenty-seven centimeters wide. There is a gutter measuring one-half meter at the bottom of the altar. There are steps leading up to the

east side of the altar.”

¹⁸ Then the man said to me, “Son of man, this is what Yahweh the Lord says: These are the regulations for sacrificing offerings that will be completely burned and for sprinkling the blood against the sides of the altar when it is built: ¹⁹ You must present to the priests a young bull to be an offering for the sins of the priests, the descendants of Levi, from the clan of Zadok, who come near to the altar to serve me. ²⁰ You must take some of the blood from the bull and smear it on the four projections of the altar and on the four corners of the upper ledge, and all around the rim, so I will accept the altar, and to make the altar belong only to me. ²¹ You must burn that bull outside the temple in the part of the temple area designated for that purpose.

²² The next day you must offer a male goat that has no defects, to be an offering, so I will accept the altar. Then you must purify the altar again, as you did with the bull that was sacrificed. ²³ When you have finished doing all that, you must offer a young bull and a ram, both of them without any defects. ²⁴ You must offer them to me, Yahweh. The priests must sprinkle salt on them and burn them completely on the altar as a sacrifice to me.

²⁵ Then, each day for seven days you must bring to the priest a male goat to be sacrificed for an offering, so I will accept the altar. You must also sacrifice a young bull and a ram, each without any defect, that the priests will provide. ²⁶ For seven days the priests will consecrate the altar, so I will accept the altar. By doing that they will set it apart for my honor. ²⁷ At the end of those seven days, starting on the following day, the priests will continue to put on the altar offerings to be completely burned and offerings to promise friendship with me. Then I will accept you. That is what I, Yahweh the Lord, declare.”

Chapter 44

¹ Then the man brought me back to the outer entrance to the temple area, the one on the east side, but the gate was shut. ² Yahweh said to me, “This gate must remain shut. It must not be opened by anyone; no one will be permitted to enter it. It must remain shut because I, Yahweh, the God of Israel, made it to be special to me when I came in through it. ³ Only the ruler of Israel will be permitted to sit inside this entrance to eat food in my presence. He must enter and leave the temple area through this gate.”

⁴ Then the man brought me through the north entrance to the front of the temple. I looked and saw that the glory of Yahweh filled his temple, and I prostrated myself on the ground.

⁵ Yahweh said to me, “Son of man, look carefully, and listen carefully to everything that I tell you about all the regulations concerning the temple. Note carefully the temple entrance and all the exits. ⁶ Say this to the rebellious Israelite people: ‘This is what I, Yahweh the Lord, say: You Israelite people, I will no longer endure the detestable things that you do!’

⁷ In addition to all the other detestable things that you do, you brought into my temple foreign men who had not been circumcised and who knew nothing about how to honor me. By doing that, you caused my temple to be an unacceptable place to worship me, while you offered food and fat and blood, and you disobeyed my covenant with you. ⁸ Instead of doing what I commanded you to do in regard to my holy things, you appointed foreigners to be in charge of my temple. ⁹ But this is what I, Yahweh, have said: No foreigners, no men who are not circumcised, no godless people are permitted to enter my temple, not even foreigners who live among

you Israelites permanently.

¹⁰ Many of the descendants of Levi deserted me along with most of the Israelite people, and started to worship idols. I will punish them for their sin. ¹¹ I will permit them to work in my temple and to be in charge of the temple gates. They will be able to slaughter the animals that will be completely burned on the altar, and to burn other sacrifices for the people, and they will be able to help the people. ¹² But because they helped the people to worship idols and caused many of the people of Israel to sin by worshiping idols, I swear that I will punish them for their sin. ¹³ They must not come near me to serve as priests. They must not come near any sacred things or the holy offerings. They will be ashamed of the things that they did, of which they are guilty. ¹⁴ But I will still put them in charge of the work in the temple, and allow them to do all the work that needs to be done there.

¹⁵ But the priests who are descended from Levi and from the clan of Zadok faithfully worked in my temple when the other Israelites deserted me. So they must come near to me to work for me. They will stand in my presence to offer sacrifices of animals' fat and blood. ¹⁶ They are the only ones who are permitted to enter my temple. They are the only ones who are permitted to come near my altar to serve me and do what I tell them to do.

¹⁷ When they enter the gateway into the inner courtyard, they must wear white linen clothes. They must not wear any clothes made of wool while they do their work at the gates of the inner courtyard or inside the temple. ¹⁸ They must wear white linen turbans on their heads and linen undergarments around their waists. They must not wear anything that would cause them to perspire. ¹⁹ Before they go out into the courtyard where other peo-

ple are, they must take off the clothes that they have been wearing and leave them in the sacred rooms, and put on other clothes, in order that the people are not consecrated by touching the sacred clothes.

²⁰ The priests must not shave their heads or let their hair become long; but they must keep their hair trimmed. ²¹ Priests must not drink wine before they enter the inner courtyard. ²² Also, priests must not marry widows of men who were not priests or women who have been divorced. They are permitted to marry only virgins or widows of other priests. ²³ They must teach the people the difference between things that are holy and things that are not, and teach them how to know what things are acceptable to me and what things are not.

²⁴ If there is a dispute between people, the priests are the ones who must serve as judges and decide matters according to my laws. They must obey all my laws and decrees concerning the sacred festivals, and they must treat my Sabbath days as special for me.

²⁵ Priests are permitted to go near the corpse of a father or mother or son or daughter or brother or unmarried sister. But they must not defile themselves by going near a corpse of anyone else. ²⁶ If a priest touches the corpse of a close relative, he must perform the rituals to become acceptable to serve me again. After he performs those rituals, he must wait seven days. ²⁷ Then, on the day that he enters the inner courtyard again to serve me in the temple, he must give an offering to remove his guilt for having sinned. That is what I, Yahweh the Lord, declare.

²⁸ The priests will not own any land. They will have only what I provide for them.

²⁹ They will eat the offerings made from flour, offerings to remove people's guilt

for having sinned, and offerings made when people fail to give to me the things that they are required to give. Everything else in Israel that is dedicated to me will belong to the priests. ³⁰ The best fruits of the first part of each harvest and all the other special gifts will belong to the priests. You must give them the first part of your ground flour, in order that I will bless the people who live in your house. ³¹ Priests must not eat the flesh of any bird or animal that is found dead or that has been killed by wild animals.

Chapter 45

¹ When the land of Israel is divided among the twelve tribes, you must present to Yahweh one part of the land to be a sacred district. It will be thirteen and one-half kilometers long and five and two-fifths kilometers wide. This entire area will be reserved for Yahweh. ² Part of that area, a square about 270 meters long on each side will be left empty all around the temple area. An additional strip of ground, about twenty-seven meters wide, will be left empty all around the temple area. ³ Inside the sacred district, measure a section thirteen and one-half kilometers long and five and two-fifths kilometers wide. It will be where the sanctuary is, and that is the most holy place. ⁴ It will be the sacred portion of the land for the priests who work in the temple, those who come near to Yahweh to serve him. It will be a place very special for Yahweh, for the priests' houses, as well as for the temple. ⁵ An area thirteen and one-half kilometers long and five and two-fifths kilometers wide will be for the descendants of Levi who work in the temple. That area will belong to them, and they can build towns there to live in.

⁶ Alongside this sacred area will be a section of land that is thirteen and one-

half kilometers long and two and three-quarters kilometers wide. It will be for a city where anyone in Israel may live.

⁷ The ruler of Israel will have the land that is on each side of the area formed by the temple district and the city. It will extend to the west from the western end of those areas, and to the east from the eastern end of those areas. The far eastern and far western borders of the king's land will measure the same as the parallel borders of those other tracts. ⁸ This portion of land will belong to the ruler. So the rulers will no longer have any excuse for oppressing my people and stealing their land. They will assign the remaining parts of the land in Israel to each tribe, to be divided up among the people.

⁹ This is what Yahweh the Lord says: You rulers of Israel must stop acting violently and oppressing the people! You must do what is fair and right. Stop taking land from the people; stop forcing them off their land! ¹⁰ Also, you must use accurate scales and accurate containers for measuring things. ¹¹ The baskets for measuring dry things and containers for measuring liquids must be the same size; each must hold twenty-two liters—called an ephah (for dry measure) and a bath (for liquid measure). ¹² When you weigh things, you must use weights that everyone accepts as being correct. The shekel is to be divided into twenty gerahs, and a mina will be worth sixty shekels.

¹³ You must present to the ruler one measure of wheat or barley for every sixty measures that you harvest. ¹⁴ You must give him one measure of olive oil for every one hundred measures that you produce. ¹⁵ Also, Yahweh declares that you must take one sheep or goat from every two hundred in your flocks in the lush pastures of Israel. You must offer a sheep or a goat for various offerings: Burnt of-

ferings and offerings to promise friendship with Yahweh, offerings to atone for the people's sins. "This is the Lord Yahweh's command." ¹⁶ All the people in the land must join in bringing these offerings to the ruler of Israel. ¹⁷ The ruler must provide the animals to be completely burned on the altar, flour for the offerings made from grain, and wine for the sacred festivals that Yahweh has appointed for the people Israel—including the festivals to celebrate the new moons, and the offerings for the Sabbath days. He must provide the animals for the offerings for the people to become acceptable to God, offerings of flour made from grain, offerings to be completely burned, and offerings to promise friendship with Yahweh, to atone for the sins of the people of Israel."

¹⁸ This is also what the Lord Yahweh declares: "On the first day of the first month of each year you must take one young bull that has no defects and sacrifice it to purify the temple. ¹⁹ The priest must take some of the blood of the offering to atone for the people's sins, and he must smear it on the temple doorposts, on the four corners of the upper ledge surrounding the altar, and on the gateposts of the inner courtyard. ²⁰ You must do the same thing on the seventh day of the month for any people who sin accidentally or without knowing that they sinned. By doing that you will purify the temple.

²¹ In the first month of each year, on the fourteenth day of the month, you must start to celebrate the Passover festival. The festival will last for seven days. During that time you must not eat any bread made with yeast. ²² On the first day, the ruler must provide a bull as an offering for himself and for the other people of the country. ²³ And every day during those seven days he must provide seven bulls and seven rams that have no defects, to be

an offering to make it possible for Yahweh to accept the people. ²⁴ He must also provide twenty-two liters of flour as an offering with each bull, and the same amount of flour with each ram, and also four liters of olive oil with each offering of flour.

²⁵ During the seven days of the festival celebrating when the Israelites lived in tents during the exodus from Egypt, which starts on the fifteenth day of the seventh month of each year, the ruler must provide the same things for offerings to make it possible for God to accept the people, for offerings to be completely burned, for offerings of things made from grain, and for offerings of olive oil.

Chapter 46

¹ This is also what Yahweh the Lord declares: "The east gateway of the inner courtyard must be shut during the six days you work each week, but on the Sabbath days and on the days when there is a new moon, the gateway must be open. ² The ruler must enter the courtyard through the entry room of the gateway, and stand alongside the gateposts of the inner courtyard. Then the priests must sacrifice the animal that will be completely burned on the altar, and also his offering to promise friendship with me. The ruler must worship me at the entrance of the inner gateway, and then he must leave. But the gate will not be shut until that evening. ³ On the Sabbath days and on the days when there is a new moon, the people also must worship me at the entrance of this gate. ⁴ The offering that the ruler brings to be completely burned on the Sabbath day must be six male lambs and one ram, all with no defects. ⁵ The offering that he gives with the ram is twenty-two liters of flour, and the flour that he

offers with the lambs should be as much as he pleases, along with one liter of olive oil for every twenty-two liters of flour . ⁶ Then each day that there is a new moon, he must offer a young bull, six lambs and a ram, all with no defects. ⁷ He must also provide twenty-two liters of flour with the bull, the same amount of flour with the ram, and as much flour as he wants with the lambs, along with one liter of olive oil with every twenty-two liters of flour. ⁸ When the ruler enters the temple area, he must enter through gate and its entry room, and he must go out by the same way.

⁹ When the people come to worship me at the festivals that I, Yahweh, have commanded, those who enter the temple area through the north gateway must go out through the south gateway. And those who enter through the south gateway must go out through the north gateway. People must not go out through the gateway through which they entered; they must go out through the opposite gateway. ¹⁰ The ruler must go in when the other people go in, and go out when the people go out.

¹¹ During the festivals that you hold for me, the king must present twenty-two liters of flour along with a bull or a ram, and as much flour as he wants to with the lambs, along with one liter of olive oil with every twenty-two liters of flour. ¹² When the ruler gives an offering that is not required, either one to be completely burned or an offering to celebrate fellowship with me, the gate on the east side must be opened for him. He must then present his offerings like he does on the Sabbath days. Then he will go out, and after he goes out, they must shut the gateway.

¹³ In the morning of every day, someone must provide a one year old lamb with no

defects to be an offering to me, one that the priests will completely burn. ¹⁴ Someone must also provide each morning an offering of flour. It must be three and one-half liters of flour mixed with one liter of olive oil. You must never stop presenting these offerings of flour and olive oil to me, Yahweh, each day. ¹⁵ The lamb and the offering of flour and olive oil must be presented to me every morning, to be completely burned on the altar.

¹⁶ This is what Yahweh the Lord declares: If the ruler gives some of his land to one of his sons, to belong to him permanently, it will then eventually belong to his son's descendants. ¹⁷ However, if he gives some of his land to one of his servants, the servant is allowed to keep that land until the year of the celebration of Jubilee. Then the ruler must take possession of it again. But if the ruler gives land to his sons, that land will belong to them permanently. ¹⁸ The ruler must not take any land that the people own and force them to live somewhere else. The land that he gives to his sons must be from his own property, not from anyone else's property, in order that none of my people will be separated from his own property."

¹⁹ Then, in the vision, the man brought me through the entrance alongside the gateway to the sacred rooms on the north side, the rooms that belonged to the priests, and he showed me a place at the western end. ²⁰ He said to me, "This is the place where the priests will cook the meat of the offerings that people make because they failed to do what they promised Yahweh that they would do, and offerings to cause people to become acceptable to God, and where they will bake bread made with the flour brought as offerings. They will cook those things in their rooms in order to avoid bringing them into the outer courtyard to cook them there, lest someone

might be consecrated by touching them.”

²¹ Then the man brought me to the outer courtyard and led me around to its four corners. In each corner I saw an enclosed area; ²² each was twenty-two meters long and sixteen meters wide. ²³ Around the inside of each of these enclosed areas was a stone ledge, with places to make fires all around under the ledge. ²⁴ The man said to me, “These are the kitchens where the descendants of Levi who work in the temple will cook the sacrifices that the people bring.”

Chapter 47

¹ Then in the vision, the man brought me back to the entrance of the temple. There I saw water coming out from under the entrance and flowing toward the east. The water was flowing down the south side of the entrance, to the right of the altar. ² Then he brought me out through the north gate and led me around to the eastern gate at its exterior side.

³ As the man continued walking toward the east, I saw that he had a measuring line in his hand. He measured off 540 meters and then led me through water that covered my ankles. ⁴ Then he measured off another 540 meters and led me through water that was up to my knees. Then he measured off another 540 meters and led me through water that was up to my waist. ⁵ Then he measured off another 540 meters and led me through water that was now a river that I could not cross, because the water was so deep; to continue farther would have required me to swim. ⁶ Then he asked me, “Son of man, think about this carefully.” Then he led me onto the bank of the river

⁷ and back along it toward in the direction from where we had come. There I saw

many trees growing on each side of the river. ⁸ He said to me, “This water flows east and goes down into the Dead Sea. And when the water enters the Dead Sea, it stays fresh and restores the water of the Sea and makes it fresh again. ⁹ Swarms of fish will live in the water wherever the river flows. There will be many fish in the Dead Sea, because the water that flows into it will cause the salt water to become fresh water. Wherever the river flows, everything alongside it will flourish. ¹⁰ Fishermen will stand along the riverbank to catch fish. From En Gedi on the western side to En Eglaim there will be places to spread fishing nets. There will be many kinds of fish, as there are in the Great Sea.

¹¹ But the swamps and marshes along the shore will not become fresh; they will be left to make salt. ¹² Many kinds of fruit trees will grow on both sides of the river. Their leaves will not wither, and they will always have fruit. They will bear new fruit every month, because the water that comes from the temple flows continually to the trees. Their fruit will be good to eat and their leaves will be good for healing.”

¹³ In the vision, Yahweh also said this to me: “Here is a list of the twelve tribes of Israel and the territory that each tribe is to receive. The descendants of Joseph will receive two portions. ¹⁴ Divide the land equally among all of the tribes. I lifted up my hand to swear to your ancestors that I would give them this land to own permanently.

¹⁵ These will be the boundaries of the land:

On the north side, it will extend from the Mediterranean Sea east along the road to Hethlon, and then on to Zedad,

¹⁶ to Berothah, and then on to Sibram, which is on the border between Damascus and Hamath. The boundary will run as far as Hazer Hattikon, which is on the border of the region of Hauran. ¹⁷ So the bound-

ary will extend from the Mediterranean Sea to Hazar Enan on the border between Hamath to the north and Damascus to the south. That will be the northern boundary.

¹⁸ On the east side, the boundary will extend between Hauran and Damascus, south along the Jordan River between the region of Gilead and the territory of Israel, along the Dead Sea as far as Tamar. That will be the eastern boundary.

¹⁹ On the south side, the boundary will extend from Tamar to the springs near Meribah Kadesh. Then it will extend west along the brook of Egypt to the Great Sea. That will be the southern boundary.

²⁰ On the west side, the boundary will be the Mediterranean Sea, north to a point near Lebo Hamath.

²¹ You must distribute this land among yourselves, among the tribes of Israel. ²² You must assign the land as a permanent possession for yourselves and also for any foreigners who are living and raising their children among you. You must consider them to be like native born Israelites, and they must be assigned land among the tribes of Israel. ²³ Wherever foreigners are living, you must give them some land to belong to them permanently.' That is what the Lord Yahweh declares."

Chapter 48

¹ Here is a list of the tribes of Israel and the territory that each tribe is to receive. The northern boundary of Israel will start at the Mediterranean Sea and go east to the city of Hethlon, then to Lebo Hamath, and farther on to Hazar Enan, which is south of Damascus, and it will continue to Hamath. Each tribe will receive land that will extend from the eastern boundary of

Israel west to the Great Sea.

The tribe of Dan will receive land alongside the northern border of Israel.

² South of their area will be the territory for the tribe of Asher.

³ South of Asher's land will be territory for the tribe of Naphtali.

⁴ South of Naphtali's land will be territory for the tribe of Manasseh.

⁵ South of Manasseh's land will be territory for the tribe of Ephraim.

⁶ South of Ephraim's land will be territory for the tribe of Reuben.

⁷ South of their land will be territory for the tribe of Judah.

⁸ South of Judah's land will be an area that the entire nation will give to me; you will set it apart for special use. The temple will be in the center of this area. It will be as long as any of the portions of land assigned a tribe of Israel.

⁹ This special area will be thirteen and one-half kilometers long and five and two-fifths kilometers wide. This is what you will give to Yahweh. ¹⁰ Within this special area, these will what you will assign to the priests: you will assign them an area of land measuring thirteen and one-half kilometers on the northern and southern side; and five and two-fifths kilometers on the western and eastern sides. The temple of Yahweh will be in the middle of this special area. ¹¹ The temple area will be for the priests, those set apart for my honor, who are descendants of Zadok. They are ones who served me faithfully and did not turn away from Yahweh as the descendants of Levi did. ¹² When the land is distributed, you will offer that special area to me, for it to be the priests' special portion; it is land that you will treat as very special to me. Next to the priests' territory will be where the other descendants of Levi will live.

¹³ The land that you will assign to the descendants of Levi will be the same size as the land that the priests will receive. So together, these two portions of land will be thirteen and one-half kilometers long and about eleven kilometers wide. ¹⁴ None of this special land, this best land, may ever be sold or traded or used by other people, because it belongs to Yahweh. It is set apart for him.

¹⁵ Another strip of land thirteen and one-half kilometers long and about two and three-quarters kilometers wide will be allotted for other people living in the special area to use. There they may build homes and have pasturelands, and there will be a city in the middle of this area. ¹⁶ The city will be square, two and two-fifths kilometers long on each side. ¹⁷ There will be an open area around the city, within the special area, that will be about 135 meters deep in each direction. ¹⁸ Outside the city there will be a farming area that will extend five and two-fifths kilometers on the east side and five and two-fifths kilometers on the west side. Men who work there will produce food for the people who work in the city. ¹⁹ Those who come from the various tribes to work in the city may also work in this farmland. ²⁰ This entire special area, including the land given for Yahweh's use and the city, will be a square that is thirteen and one-half kilometers long on each side.

²¹ The tracts of land to the east and to the west of Yahweh's area and the city will belong to the ruler. One area will extend east to the eastern boundary of Israel, and the other will extend west to the Great Sea. Yahweh's area, which contains the temple, will be in the middle. ²² The area that belongs to the ruler will be between the tribe of Judah to the north and the tribe of Benjamin to the south.

²³ South of Yahweh's area, each of the

other tribes will receive one portion of land that extends from the eastern boundary of Israel west to the Great Sea.

Just south of Yahweh's area will be territory for the tribe of Benjamin.

²⁴ South of Benjamin's land will be the land for the tribe of Simeon.

²⁵ South of Simeon's land will be the land for the tribe of Issachar.

²⁶ South of Issachar's land will be the land for the tribe of Zebulun.

²⁷ South of Zebulun's land will be the land for the tribe of Gad.

²⁸ The southern boundary of Gad's land will extend south from En Gedi to the springs at Meribah Kadesh, and then to the west along the brook of Egypt to the Great Sea.

²⁹ This is a description of the land that you must assign to the tribes of Israel, for it to belong to them permanently.' That is what I, Yahweh the Lord, declare.

³⁰ Here are the city gates: On the north side, which is two and two-fifths kilometers long, ³¹ there will be three gates. Each gate will have the name of one of the tribes of Israel. The first one will be named for Reuben, the next for Judah, the next for Levi.

³² On the east side, also two and two-fifths kilometers long, will be gates named for Joseph, Benjamin, and Dan.

³³ On the south side, also two-fifths of a kilometer long, will be gates named for Simeon, Issachar, and Zebulun.

³⁴ On the west side, also two-fifths of a kilometer long, will be gates named for Gad, Asher, and Naphtali.

³⁵ The distance around the city would be nine and three-quarters kilometers.

From that time on, the name of the city will be "Yahweh is there."

DANIEL

Chapter 1

¹ After King Jehoiakim had been ruling in Judah for almost three years, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem with his army and surrounded the city so that the city would be weakened before the army attacked. ² After two years, the Lord gave Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers victory over Jehoiakim, who was the king of Judah. They also took some of the sacred objects that were in the temple of God, and took them to Babylonia in the land of Shinar. There Nebuchadnezzar put them in the treasure house of his god.

³ Then Nebuchadnezzar commanded Ashpenaz, the chief official in his palace, to bring to him some of the Israelite men whom they had brought to Babylon. These were men who belonged to important families, including the family of the king of Judah. ⁴ King Nebuchadnezzar wanted only men who were very healthy, handsome, wise, well educated, capable of learning many things, and suitable for working in the palace. He wanted to teach them the Babylonian language so that they could understand the writings of the Babylonians. ⁵ The king commanded his servants, "Give them the fine, rich foods and wine served to me. Train them for three years and then they will become my servants."

⁶ Among the young Israelite men who were chosen were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, who all came from Judah. ⁷ Ashpenaz gave them Babylonian names. He gave to Daniel the name Belteshazzar, he gave to Hananiah the name Shadrach, he gave to Mishael the name Meshach, and he gave Azariah the name

Abednego.

⁸ But Daniel decided that he would not eat the kind of food that the king ate, or drink the wine that the king drank because that would make him ritually defiled. So he asked Ashpenaz, the chief of the king's officials for permission to eat and drink other food so that he might not defile himself. ⁹ God gave Daniel kindness and compassion in the relationship he had with Ashpenaz. The chief official had great respect for Daniel. ¹⁰ He said to Daniel, "My master the king, has chosen what food and drink you should have. If you eat other things and you become thinner and paler than the other young men who are your age, he could order his soldiers to cut off my head because you did not follow his directions."

¹¹ The chief official assigned a servant to give Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah their food and drink. Daniel spoke to him. ¹² He said, "Please test your servants! For ten days give us only vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ After ten days, see whether we look healthy or not. Also see how those who eat the king's food look. Then you do to us whatever you think is best." ¹⁴ The servant agreed to this test. He gave them the food Daniel requested for ten days.

¹⁵ After ten days, he saw that they looked healthier and better nourished than all the young men who had been eating the food the king chose for them. ¹⁶ So after that he took away the king's special food and wine, and he only gave them vegetables to eat.

¹⁷ God gave to these four young men wisdom and the ability to study many things that the Babylonians had written and studied. He also gave to Daniel the ability to understand the meaning of visions and dreams.

¹⁸ After three years, the king chose a day when those who were in training would come before him. Ashpenaz, the chief of the king's officials, presented them all to Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ The king talked with them and realized that none of the other young men were as capable as Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So they stood together, ready to begin their service to the king. ²⁰ In every question requiring wisdom and understanding, the king found these men advised him ten times more effectively than his magicians and those who claimed to speak with the dead. There were none better than these four in his entire kingdom.

²¹ Daniel remained there serving the king more than sixty years until the first year that Cyrus became king.

Chapter 2

¹ One night during the second year that Nebuchadnezzar ruled, he had a dream. The dream worried him so much that he could not sleep. ² The next morning he summoned his men who worked magic, those who claimed to speak with the dead, those who gave advice from watching the stars, and the wise men. To test their skill, he demanded that they tell him what he had dreamed. They came and stood before the king. ³ The king said, "I had a dream last night that worries me and I want to know what the dream means."

⁴ The men who studied the stars replied to the king, (what follows is written in the Aramaic language). They said, "King Nebuchadnezzar, may you live forever! Tell us your dream and we will tell you what it means!"

⁵ But the king replied to them, "I have decided that you must tell me the dream and also tell me what it means. If you do not

do this, I will cut you into pieces and turn your houses into piles of dung! ⁶ But if you tell me what I dreamed and what it means, I will reward you. I will give you gifts and a reward and great honor. So tell me what I dreamed and what it means."

⁷ Again they replied, "Tell us what you dreamed, and we will tell you what it means."

⁸ The king replied, "I know that you are just trying to get more time because you know that I will do to you what I said that I would do. ⁹ If you do not tell me what I dreamed, you know what I promised to do to you. I think that you have all agreed to tell me lies and other wicked things before your time is up. So then, you have only one choice. Tell me the dream, and I will know you can tell me what it means."

¹⁰ The wise men replied to the king, "There is no one on the earth who can do what you ask! There is no king, even a great and mighty king, who has ever asked his astrologers or those who claim to speak with the dead, or wise men like ourselves to do something like that! ¹¹ What you are asking us to do is impossible. Only the gods can tell you what you dreamed, and they do not live among us!"

¹² The king was very angry when he heard that, so he commanded his soldiers that they execute all men who were known for their wisdom in all of Babylon. ¹³ According to the king's command, they set out to find Daniel and his friends, to execute them.

¹⁴ Arioch, the commander of the king's guards, came with soldiers to kill everyone in Babylon who was considered to be wise. So Daniel spoke to him very wisely and tactfully. ¹⁵ Daniel asked the captain Arioch, "Why has the king made a decree that must be carried out so quickly?" So Arioch told Daniel all that had happened.

¹⁶ Daniel went to talk with the king and requested an appointment with the king so that he could tell the king what the dream was and what it meant.

¹⁷ Daniel went to his house and he told his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah what had happened. ¹⁸ He urged them to ask God, who lives in heaven, to help them by telling them the secret of the dream of the king so that they and the other men in Babylon known for wisdom would not be put to death. ¹⁹ That night God gave Daniel a vision, and in that vision the secret was made known to him. Then Daniel praised God ²⁰ saying,

"We praise the name of the true God forever

because he owns all wisdom and power.

²¹ He makes the time move forward, and he owns the seasons.

He removes every king when he chooses and gives new kings their kingdom.

He gives wisdom to some, and people become wise.

He teaches knowledge to those who understand.

²² He reveals to us things that are deep and hidden.

He can do this because he knows everything that the darkness hides from us,

and because the light comes from where he lives.

²³ God, whom my ancestors worshiped,

I thank you and I praise you

because you have caused me to be wise and made me strong.

You have told me what my friends and I asked you to tell us,

and you have revealed to us what the king demanded to know."

²⁴ Then Daniel went to Arioch, the man whom the king had appointed to execute everyone known to be wise in Babylon. He said to him, "Do not kill those men of wisdom. Take me to the king and I will tell him what his dream means."

²⁵ So Arioch quickly took Daniel to the king. He said to the king, "I have found one of the men whom we brought from Judah who can tell you what your dream means!"

²⁶ The king said to Daniel (whose name was now Belteshazzar), "Can you tell me what I dreamed and what it means?"

²⁷ Daniel replied, "There is no one to help, even those who claim to be wise and those who claim to consult with the dead. No one can help, none of the magicians or astrologers. None of these can discover the secrets of your dream. ²⁸ But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and he has shown in your dream what will happen in the future. Now I will tell you what you dreamed and the vision you saw as you were lying on your bed.

²⁹ O king, while you were sleeping, you dreamed about events that will happen in the future. The one who reveals mysteries has shown you what is going to happen. ³⁰ It is not because I am wiser than anyone else on earth that I know the meaning of this mysterious dream. It is because God wanted you to understand your deep thoughts hidden in the vision he gave you.

³¹ O king, in your vision you saw in front of you a huge and terrifying statue of a man. It was shining very brightly, and it was frightening and awesome. ³² The head of the statue was made of pure gold. Its chest and arms were made of silver. Its belly and thighs were made of bronze. ³³ Its legs

were made of iron and its feet were a mixture of clay and iron. ³⁴ As you watched, someone cut a stone from a mountain, but it was not a human who cut it. The stone tumbled down and smashed the statue's feet that were made of iron and clay. It smashed them to bits. ³⁵ Then the rest of the statue collapsed into a big heap of iron, clay, bronze, silver, and gold. The pieces of the statue were as small as bits of chaff on the ground where it is threshed, and the wind blew away all the tiny pieces. There was nothing left. But the stone that smashed the statue became a large mountain that covered the whole earth.

³⁶ That was what you dreamed. Now we will tell you what it means. ³⁷ You are a king who rules over other kings. The God who rules in heaven has caused you to rule over them and has given you great power and has honored you. ³⁸ He has caused you to be the ruler over all people so that even the animals and birds belong to you. You are the head of the statue, that head made of gold.

³⁹ After your kingdom ends, there will be another great kingdom, but it will not be as great as yours. The silver parts of the statue represent that kingdom. Then there will be a third great kingdom whose king will rule over the whole earth. The bronze parts of the statue represent that third kingdom. ⁴⁰ After that kingdom ends, there will be a fourth great kingdom. The iron parts of the statue represent that kingdom. The army of that kingdom will smash the previous kingdoms, just like iron smashes everything that it strikes. ⁴¹ The feet and toes of the statue that you saw were a mixture of iron and clay, showing that the kingdom they represent will later be divided. ⁴² Some parts of that kingdom will be as strong as iron, but some parts will not remain together, just as iron and clay do not stay together

when mixed. ⁴³ The mixture of iron and clay in the statue also means that this kingdom will come apart, because the different people groups will not work together, just as clay does not stick to iron.

⁴⁴ But while those kings are ruling, God who rules in heaven will establish a kingdom that will never end. No one will ever defeat its king. He will completely destroy all those kingdoms, but his kingdom will remain forever. ⁴⁵ That is the meaning of the stone that someone cut from the mountain, the stone that will crush to tiny bits the statue that is made of iron, bronze, silver, and gold. God, the great God, has told you what will happen in the future. The dream he gave you will come true. Its meaning is true, as I have told it to you."

⁴⁶ Then King Nebuchadnezzar lay down on the ground in front of Daniel as an act of great respect. He commanded his people to burn incense and to burn an offering of grain in honor of Daniel. ⁴⁷ The king said to Daniel, "Your God has enabled you to tell me the meaning of this dream, so now I truly know that your God is greater than all the other gods, and King over all other kings. He reveals secrets; he makes known mysteries no one else could know."

⁴⁸ Then the king gave many gifts to Daniel, and he also appointed him to rule over the entire province of Babylon. He made him to be the chief governor over all the wisest men in Babylon. ⁴⁹ Daniel asked the king to appoint Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to serve in important positions as administrators in the province of Babylon. But Daniel remained in the king's palace and served the king there.

Chapter 3

¹ King Nebuchadnezzar made a golden

statue. It was twenty-seven meters tall and three meters wide. He set it up in the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. ² Then he sent messages to all the provincial governors, the regional governors, and the local governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the high officials of the provinces. He told them to come to celebrate the new statue that he had set up to honor the god that it represented. ³ When they all arrived, they were all standing in front of that statue.

⁴ A person on the royal staff shouted out the king's new law to everyone, "You people who come from many countries and who speak many languages, listen to what the king has commanded! ⁵ When you hear the sound of the horns, flutes, zithers, lyres, harps, and other flutes, and all the music they will play, you must lie down on the ground and honor the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar has put up. ⁶ Anyone who refuses to do that will be thrown into a blazing fire."

⁷ So all those people who had gathered from the many people and nations, who were speaking various languages, when they heard the instruments play, they laid themselves down on the ground and gave their worship and said words of praise to the statue.

⁸ But some Chaldeans went to the king. ⁹ They reported to him, "O king, may you never die! ¹⁰ You decreed that every person who hears the sound of those instruments should lie down on the ground and honor the golden statue. ¹¹ You also decreed that anyone refusing to do that would be thrown into a blazing fire. ¹² There are some men from Judah that you appointed to be officials in the province of Babylon who have paid no attention to your decree. Their names are Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They have re-

fused to worship your gods and the golden statue that you have set up."

¹³ When he heard this, Nebuchadnezzar became very angry. He commanded his soldiers to bring in Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. So they brought them to the king. ¹⁴ Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Have you decided that you will not worship my gods or the golden statue that I have set up? ¹⁵ I will give you one more chance. If you bow down to worship the statue that I have set up when you hear the sounds of the musical instruments, fine. But if you refuse, you will be thrown into a blazing fire. Then who is the god who can rescue you from my power?"

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, "Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend our actions to you in this matter. ¹⁷ If we are thrown into a fire, the God we worship is able to rescue us. He has the power to rescue us from you. ¹⁸ But even if he does not rescue us, we will not worship your gods, and we will never honor the statue you have set up."

¹⁹ Then Nebuchadnezzar became extremely angry. His face showed great rage against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He gave orders that the fire should be made seven times hotter than usual. ²⁰ After that was done, he ordered some of his strongest soldiers to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and then to throw them into the blazing fire. ²¹ When the soldiers tied them up and threw them into the furnace, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were wearing their robes, their tunics, their turbans, and their other clothes. ²² Because the king's orders were given when he was so angry and were to be followed without any delay, and because the fire was so hot, the flames leaped out of the blaze and killed the soldiers that took Shadrach,

Meshach and Abednego up into the fire.
²³ So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, tied up, fell into the burning flames of the fire.

²⁴ But as Nebuchadnezzar was watching, he was shocked. He jumped up and shouted to his advisors, "Did we tie up three men and throw them into the flames?"

They replied, "Yes, O king, we did."

²⁵ Nebuchadnezzar shouted, "Look! I see four men in the fire! They are not tied with ropes and they are walking around and the flames are not hurting them! The fourth man is shining like a son of the gods!"

²⁶ Nebuchadnezzar came closer to the edge of the blazing fire and shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, you who worship the Most High God, come out of there! Come here!" So they came out and away from the fire.

²⁷ Then all the king's officials saw them when they came out of the fire. The flames had not harmed them. Not even the hair on their heads was singed, and none of their clothing was scorched. There was not even any smell of smoke on them.

²⁸ Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "We must all praise the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent one of his messengers to rescue these three men who worship him and trust in him. They ignored the king's command and refused to worship any other god but their own God, even if it cost them their lives. ²⁹ Therefore I am now making this decree: 'If any people from any nation, or those who speak any language, say anything against the God who is worshiped by Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they will be torn to pieces and their houses will be torn down and made into piles of garbage. This decree is made because there is no other

god who can rescue people like this!'"

³⁰ Then the king gave Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego positions of greater importance within the province of Babylon.

Chapter 4

¹ Several years after Nebuchadnezzar started to rule, he sent this message to every people, nation, and language in his empire. He wrote,

"I wish that all things will go very well with you!

² I want you to know about all the ways in which God Most High has shown his power, and how he has done so many amazing things for me.

³ He performs great miracles that show his power;

he does wonderful things.

He will always be king;

he will rule from one generation to another without end."

⁴ I, Nebuchadnezzar, was living in my palace without a care, and I was enjoying every luxury. ⁵ But one night I had a dream that caused me to be very afraid. I saw visions that terrified me as I lay on my bed. ⁶ So I summoned all those in Babylon who were wise so that they could come and tell me what my dream meant. ⁷ All the men who worked magic, those who claimed to speak with the dead, the wise men, and those who made predictions from the stars came to me. I told them what I had dreamed, but they could not tell me what it meant. ⁸ At last, Daniel came to me, and I decided to tell him what I had dreamed. (He is also named Belteshazzar, to honor my own god, and I knew that the spirit of the holy gods was in him).

⁹ I said to him, "Belteshazzar, you are the most important of all my magicians. I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and that you can reveal the meaning of any mystery. There is none that is too difficult for you. So tell me what my dream means. ¹⁰ This is what I dreamed while I was lying in bed: I saw a large tree growing in the middle of the earth. ¹¹ The tree was very strong and had grown very tall. It seemed that its top reached up to the sky and that everyone in the world could see it. ¹² It had beautiful leaves, and it had fruit for people and all creatures to eat. Wild animals rested in its shade and birds built nests in its branches. All the living creatures got food from that tree.

¹³ "While I was lying in bed, I saw in my dream a holy angel come down from heaven. ¹⁴ He shouted, 'Cut down that tree, and cut off its branches. Strip off all of its leaves, and scatter its fruit. Chase away the animals that are lying in the shade of the tree and the birds that are in its branches. ¹⁵ But leave the tree stump and the roots in the ground. Fasten a band of iron and bronze around the stump and let it stay there with grass around it.

¹⁶ Cause that man to live out in the fields among the animals and plants. Cause the dew from the sky to make his body damp each morning. Take away his sanity and let him have the mind like an animal's mind for seven years.

¹⁷ 'The holy ones in heaven have issued a decree. They want everyone to know that God Most High rules over all the kingdoms in this world. He is the one who chooses the people to rule these kingdoms. He sometimes places very important people in places of importance.'

¹⁸ Belteshazzar, that is what I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw in my dream. Now you must tell me what the dream means. No one else can tell me. I asked all the very

wise men in my kingdom to tell me what it means, but they were unable to do that. But you can tell me because the spirit of the holy gods is in you."

¹⁹ Then Daniel, who was also named Belteshazzar, did not say anything for some time because he was very worried about the meaning of the dream. Then the king said to him, "Belteshazzar, do not be afraid about the dream or what it means." Daniel replied to the king, "Sir, I wish that the events that were predicted in your dream would happen to those who hate you, and that the meaning of your dream would happen only to your enemies and not to you.

²⁰ In your dream you saw a very strong and tall tree. It seemed to reach up to the sky, and everyone in the world could see it. ²¹ It had beautiful leaves, and it had produced much fruit for all people and creatures to eat. Wild animals rested in the shade of that tree, and birds built nests in its branches. ²² O king, that tree is you! You have become very powerful. Your greatness has grown and reached up to the sky, and you rule people all over the world.

²³ Then you saw a holy angel come down from heaven; he said, 'Cut down that tree, and cut off its branches. Strip off all of its leaves, and scatter its fruit. But leave the stump of the tree and its roots in the ground. Fasten a band of iron and bronze around the stump and allow it to stay there with grass around it. Each morning bring dew from the sky to make this man, who is represented by that tree, damp. Cause him to live in the fields with the animals for seven years.'

²⁴ This is what your dream means, O king. This is what the Most High God has declared will happen to you. ²⁵ You will be forced to live away from other human beings. You will live in the fields with the

wild animals. You will eat grass like an ox, and dew from the sky will make you wet every morning. You will live that way for seven years until you learn that it is the Most High God who rules over the kingdoms of the world. He appoints the ones he chooses to rule over them. ²⁶ But the stump of the tree and its roots were left in the ground. That means that you will rule your kingdom again when you learn that it is God who is over everything and everyone. ²⁷ Your Majesty, please do what I am telling you to do. Stop sinning and do what is right. Turn away from your evil behavior. Act mercifully to those whom other people are mistreating. If you do that, perhaps you will continue to prosper.”

²⁸⁻²⁹ All these things happened to King Nebuchadnezzar: Twelve months later, he was walking around on the roof of his palace in Babylon, ³⁰ and he looked out over the city and said to those around him, “I have built this great city of Babylon to be the place where I rule! I have built it with my own power to show people my honor and my greatness.”

³¹ The king had just finished speaking when a voice came from heaven and said, “King Nebuchadnezzar, this is what must happen: You are no longer the ruler of this kingdom! ³² You will live away from human society. You will live in the fields with wild animals, and you will eat grass as an ox does. You will live that way for seven years until you learn that it is I, the Most High, who rules over the kingdoms of this world, and I appoint whomever I wish to rule over them.”

³³ At that very moment everything that had been said about Nebuchadnezzar came true. He was driven away from other human beings. He ate grass like an ox, and dew from the sky made me wet every morning. My hair grew as long the

feathers of an eagle, and my fingernails became like the claws of a bird.

³⁴ After those seven years ended, I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up toward heaven and acknowledged that what God said was true. Then I could think correctly again, and my sanity was restored. I praised and worshiped the Most High, and I honored him, the one who lives forever.

He rules forever;

his ruling power is an everlasting authority.

³⁵ He regards all the people in the world as insignificant.

He has the power to do whatever he wants to do.

He does whatever he wants with the angel armies in heaven and with us who live on the earth.

So no one can correct him;

no one can challenge him;

no one can say to him, “Why are you doing these things?”

³⁶ When I was able to think correctly again, I was honored again; and for the glory of my kingdom, my splendor and the shining brightness of my reign were brought back to my kingdom again. My advisors returned to me, and I became greater and more powerful than I was before. ³⁷ Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and honor God, the king who rules in heaven. All of his actions are just and right. And he is able to make the proud humble.

Chapter 5

¹ Several years later, Belshazzar became the king of Babylon. One day he invited

one thousand of the most important people to a big feast, and he drank wine in front of them all. ² While he was drinking, he commanded that his servants bring him the gold and silver cups that his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem. He did this so that he and his officials, his wives, and his concubines could drink from them. ³ So his servants brought in all those gold cups that had been taken from the temple in Jerusalem. Then the king and his officials and his wives and his concubines drank wine from those cups. ⁴ They drank wine and praised their idols—these idols that were made of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and of stone.

⁵ Suddenly they saw across from the lampstand a man's hand and fingers. The hand was writing on the plaster wall in the palace. The king saw the hand as it was writing. ⁶ He became very frightened, and his face became pale. His knees started shaking and his legs became very weak and could not support him.

⁷ Then he shouted to his servants to bring those who claimed to speak with the dead, the wise men, and the astrologers in Babylon. He said, "I will greatly honor anyone of you who can read this writing and tell me what it means. I will give that person a purple robe like I wear because I am the king and I will put a gold chain around his neck. I will make him the third most powerful ruler in my kingdom."

⁸ But when all those wise men came in, none of them could read the writing or tell him what it meant. ⁹ So King Belsazzar became more afraid. His face was changed and he looked different. None of his officials knew how they could help him.

¹⁰ The queen came to the place where they were eating. She heard what the king had said and that his nobles did not

know how to help him. She said, "O king, may you live forever! Do not be upset about this or let this change the way you look. ¹¹ There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. When Nebuchadnezzar was ruling, he found that this man understood many things and was wise, just like the gods. Nebuchadnezzar appointed him to be in charge of the magicians, of those who speak with the dead, of the wise men, and of the astrologers. ¹² His name is Daniel, but the king gave him the name Belteshazzar. He is a person who can be trusted. He is very intelligent and understands many hidden things. He is able to tell the meaning of dreams, to explain riddles, and to solve problems that few others can solve. Call for him to come here and he will tell you what this writing means."

¹³ So they went and brought Daniel in. The king asked him, "You are the famous Daniel, are you not?—one of those that my father brought here from Judah. ¹⁴ I have heard that the spirit of the gods is in you and that you understand many things and have excellent wisdom. ¹⁵ There were men who are known for their wisdom and others who speak with the dead, and they tried to read the writing on this wall and to tell me what it means, but they could not do it. ¹⁶ Someone told me that you can explain what dreams mean and that you can make things understandable that others cannot know. If you can read these words and tell me what they mean, I will give you a purple robe like I wear because I am the king, and I will put a gold chain around your neck, and I will make you the third most powerful ruler in the kingdom."

¹⁷ Daniel replied and said to the king, "I do not want your gifts. Keep them for yourself and give the rewards to some other

person. I will read what is written on the wall for you, but not because you give me any reward.

¹⁸ Your Majesty, the Most High God caused Nebuchadnezzar, the man who was king before you, to become a great ruler. He was greatly praised and honored. ¹⁹ Because God made him very great, everyone—every nation, no matter what language they spoke—was afraid of him, and they trembled at what he could do. He put to death those whom he decreed should die, and he kept alive those whom he decreed should live. He honored those whom he chose to honor, and he brought disgrace to those whom he wanted to humble. ²⁰ But when he became very proud and stubborn, he was unable to rule any longer. ²¹ He had to go away from other human beings because he lost his mind. God caused him to have a mind like animals have. He lived among the wild donkeys. He ate grass like an ox, and dew from the sky made his body wet every morning. He was like that until he learned that the Most High God is the only one who rules the kingdoms of this world and that he appoints whomever he chooses to rule those kingdoms.

²² Now, Belshazzar, you have become king in your father's place. You knew all these things, but you have not made yourself humble. ²³ You have put yourself above the Lord who rules in heaven. You called for the cups from the house of God in Jerusalem so that you could use them to drink wine. You and your officials and your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from these cups and toasting your own gods—gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. Those gods cannot see, they cannot hear, and they do not know anything! But you have not honored God, who gives you breath and who controls everything that

happens to you. ²⁴ So God sent this hand to write a message for you on the wall.

²⁵ This is the message that it wrote: Mene, Mene, Tekel, and Pharsin.

²⁶ This is what those words mean:

‘Mene’ means ‘numbered.’ That means that God has been counting the days that you will rule, and he has decided that you will not rule anymore.

²⁷ ‘Mene’ means ‘weighed.’ God has weighed you on a scale, and you do not weigh what you should.

²⁸ ‘Peres’ means ‘divided.’ God has divided your kingdom. It will be ruled by people from Media and by people from Persia.”

²⁹ Then Belshazzar did what he had promised. He put on Daniel a purple robe like the one he himself wore. He put a gold chain around his neck, and he proclaimed that Daniel would be the third most powerful ruler in the kingdom.

³⁰ But that same night soldiers from Media entered the city and killed Belshazzar, king of Babylonia. ³¹ Darius, king of Media, became the king of Babylonia when he was sixty-two years old.

Chapter 6

¹ King Darius decided to divide his kingdom into 120 provinces. He appointed a governor to rule each province. ² The king also appointed three administrators, one of whom was Daniel. These chief administrators were to supervise the provincial governors, to give oversight so that the king's orders were followed, and to ensure that the king would not have anything stolen from his treasuries. ³ Daniel was a very capable leader and an exceptional person, and he distinguished him-

self among the chief administrators. The king made plans to appoint Daniel over his entire kingdom. ⁴ Then the other administrators and the governors became jealous. So they began to search to find some way that they could criticize the work Daniel did when he was working for the king. But he always did his work faithfully and honestly. They could not find anything to criticize. He was honest and worked hard. ⁵ They began their plot against Daniel, "The only way we can find a reason to criticize Daniel would be to use his obedience to the law of his God against him."

⁶ So the administrators and governors put their plan in place by going as a group to the king and saying, "Your Majesty, may you live forever!" ⁷ All of the chief administrators and regional governors and provincial governors and advisors and other governors have all agreed that you should make a law that everyone must obey. We want you to command that for the next thirty days people may pray only to you and to no god or person other than you. If anyone prays to anyone else, he must be thrown into a room filled with lions. ⁸ Because laws made in the lands of Media and Persia cannot be changed, we want you, the king, to issue the law and sign your name on the document." ⁹ So King Darius issued the law and signed the document.

¹⁰ When Daniel found out that the king had written and signed that law, he went home, knelt in his upstairs room, and prayed. The room had a window that looked toward Jerusalem and the windows were open. Anyone could see that he was praying. This is what he did every day, three times a day. ¹¹ The officials followed their plot against Daniel, and they found him praying and asking God for help. ¹² So they returned to the king and

said to him, "Is it true that you wrote a law stating that for the next thirty days people may pray only to you, and that if anyone prays to anyone else, either to a human or to a god, he will be thrown into a pit of lions?"

The king replied, "Yes, that is the law that I wrote. It is a law in the lands of Media and Persia which cannot be changed."

¹³ Then they said to the king, "That man Daniel, one of the men who was brought from Judah, is not paying any attention to you or the law that you signed. He prays to his god three times each day!" ¹⁴ When the king heard that, he was very upset about it. He tried to find a way to save Daniel. He worked hard for the rest of that day until the sun set, trying to find a way to save Daniel.

¹⁵ In the evening, many of those who formed the plot against Daniel spoke to the king, "You know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is that no change can be made to the king's commands, and no one can change it."

¹⁶ Hearing this, the king gave the order and his servants brought Daniel and threw him into a pit where the lions were. Before they threw him in, the king said to Daniel, "I hope your God, whom you worship all the time, will rescue you!"

¹⁷ They rolled a huge stone across the entrance to the pit. Then the king sealed the entrance with his signet ring, and the other officials also sealed the entrance with their signet rings, so that nothing could be done for Daniel. ¹⁸ The king returned to his palace. That night he refused to eat any food. He would not allow anyone to entertain him and that night he was unable to sleep.

¹⁹ At dawn the next morning, the king got up and went quickly to the pit where the lions were. ²⁰ When he came near it, he

was very worried. He called out, fearing the worst, “Daniel, you who serve the living God! Was your God—whom you worship always—able to save you from the lions?”

²¹ Daniel answered, “O king, may you live forever! ²² Yes, my God sent his angel to shut the lions’ mouths and they have not hurt me! He knows that I have done nothing wrong, and you know, O king, I never did anything wrong to you either!”

²³ The king was extremely happy, and he commanded his servants to lift Daniel out of the pit. When they did that, they saw that the lions had not wounded him at all. God had protected him because he trusted in him.

²⁴ Then the king commanded that the men who had accused Daniel be seized and thrown into the pit of lions—along with their wives and children. When they were thrown into the pit, the lions leaped on them and crushed their bones before they fell to the bottom of the pit.

²⁵ Then King Darius wrote this message and sent it throughout his kingdom to all the people, to every nation, and to all the people no matter what language they spoke:

“I wish that all things go very well with you!

²⁶ I command that everyone in my kingdom should fear and revere the God that Daniel worships.

He is the living God,

and he will live forever.

His kingdom will never be destroyed;

he will rule until the end.

²⁷ He rescues and saves his people,

he performs all kinds of signs and wonders

in heaven and on the earth.

He rescued Daniel from the power of the lions!”

²⁸ So Daniel was very successful all during the time that Darius ruled and during the time that Cyrus, the king of Persia, ruled.

Chapter 7

¹ In the first year that Belshazzar was the king of Babylonia, Daniel had a dream one night as he lay in bed. He saw certain things that he wrote down the next morning. This is what he said:

² “I, Daniel, had a dream during the night. In my dream I saw that strong winds were blowing from all four directions, stirring up the water on the sea. ³ Then I saw four large animals coming out of the sea. Each of the four was different from the others.

⁴ The first one resembled a lion, but it had wings like an eagle has. But as I watched, something tore off its wings and the animal was left there, standing, like a human being. It was given a mind like humans have.

⁵ The second animal resembled a bear. It was crouching and holding between its teeth three ribs from some creature. Someone said to it, ‘Stand up and eat many people!’

⁶ Then I saw in front of me the third of these animals. It resembled a leopard, but on its back it had four wings like a bird’s wings. It had four heads and it was given the power to rule people.

⁷ In the vision I saw a fourth animal. It was stronger than the other animals and more terrifying. It crushed other creatures with its huge iron teeth and ate their flesh. The parts of animals that it did not grind with its teeth, it walked over on the

ground. It was different from the other three animals. It had ten horns on its head.

⁸ While I was looking at those horns, I saw a little horn appear on the head of that animal. It tore out three of the other horns. This little horn had eyes like a human has and a mouth that boasted about great things.

⁹ Then while I watched,

thrones were set up for judges,

and God, The One who Lives Forever,
sat on one of the thrones.

His clothes were as white as snow,

and his hair was as white as pure
wool.

His throne was burning with fire,

and it had wheels that were also burn-
ing.

¹⁰ Fire poured out in front of him like water in a river.

Millions of people were there serving him,

and a hundred million other people
were standing in front of him.

The court was called into session,

and they opened the books.

¹¹ While I was watching, I could hear the little horn speaking very boastfully. As I continued to watch, the fourth animal was killed. Its corpse was thrown into a fire and completely burned. ¹² The power of the other three animals was taken away from them, but they were allowed to continue to live for a specific period of time.

¹³ I also saw that night someone coming who resembled a son of man, that is, he had a human figure. He was coming close, surrounded by clouds, and he came to The One who Lives Forever and was presented

to him in honor. ¹⁴ He was given authority to rule over all the nations in the world; royal honor was given to him. He will rule forever—he will never stop ruling. The kingdom that he rules will never be destroyed.

¹⁵ As for me, Daniel, I was very sad by what I had seen in that vision; I was so troubled, I did not know what to think about it. ¹⁶ I went to one of those who were standing in front of the throne of God, and I asked him to tell me what it meant.

¹⁷ He said, 'The four large animals represent four kings who will come to power on the earth. ¹⁸ But the Most High will enable the people who belong to him to rule in the kingdom forever.'

¹⁹ Then I wanted to know more about what the fourth animal represented—the animal that was different from the other three, the animal that crushed those whom it attacked with its bronze claws and then ate their flesh with its iron teeth, the animal that walked over the parts of their bodies that it did not eat. ²⁰ I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the horn that appeared later, which got rid of three of the other horns. I wanted to know what it meant that it had eyes and a mouth with which it spoke very boastfully. That horn was more terrifying than the other horns. ²¹ While I was having this vision, I saw that this horn attacked God's people and was defeating them. ²² But then The One who Lives Forever came and judged in favor of the people who belonged to him. Then it was time for God's people to be able to rule.

²³ Then the man who was standing there said to me, 'The fourth animal represents an empire that will exist on the earth; that empire will be different from all other empires. The army of that empire will crush

people all over the world and trample on their bodies. ²⁴ As for its ten horns, they represent ten kings who will rule that empire, one after the other. Then another king will appear. He will be different from the previous kings. He will defeat the three kings that were represented by the three horns that were pulled out. ²⁵ He will say things against the Most High, and he will oppress God's people. He will try to change the times of the sacred festivals and their laws. He will control them for three and a half years.

²⁶ But the court will be convened, and they will take his kingdom away and it will be completely destroyed. ²⁷ Then the kingdom, the power to rule, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole of heaven will be given to the holy people who belong to the Most High. The kingdom that he rules is a kingdom that is everlasting, and all kings and rulers will serve and obey him.'

²⁸ That is what I saw in my vision. I, Daniel, was terrified, with the result that my face became pale. But I did not tell anyone about the vision that I had seen."

Chapter 8

¹ During the third year that Belshazzar was the king of Babylonia, I, Daniel, had another vision. ² In that vision I was in Susa, the fortified city in the province of Elam. I was standing beside the Ulai Canal. ³ I looked up and saw a ram that was standing alongside the canal. It had two long horns, but the one that grew last was longer than the one that grew first. ⁴ The ram butted away with its horns at everything that was west and everything that was north and everything that was south of it. There were no other animals that were able to oppose it, and none who

could stop him. The ram did whatever it wanted to do and became very powerful.

⁵ While I thinking about what I had seen, I saw a goat come from the west. It ran across the land very quickly; it seemed that its feet did not touch the ground. This goat had one very large horn between its eyes. ⁶ It ran straight toward the ram with two horns, the ram that was standing alongside the canal, and the goat ran toward it in a terrible rage. ⁷ The goat struck the ram furiously and broke off its two horns. The goat knocked the ram down to the ground and trampled on it. No one could rescue the ram from the goat's power. ⁸ The goat became very powerful. But when its power was very great, its great horn was broken off. Four other distinctive horns grew up in its place. Each one pointed to one of the four winds in the sky: North, south, east, and west.

⁹ Then from one of those four horns appeared a little horn. It became very great and pointed toward the south and then toward the east and then toward the beautiful land of Israel. ¹⁰ That horn became very strong, with the result that it attacked some of the soldiers of the army of heaven and some of the stars in the sky. It threw some of them to the earth and trampled on them. ¹¹ It set itself up to be as great as the commander of the army of heaven, and it took away the daily offerings of sacrifices from him, and it also defiled the place of his temple. ¹² Because of rebellion, the army of heaven will falter, and the constant burnt offerings will be taken away. It will throw truth to the ground. The bad things it does will succeed.

¹³ Then I heard two angels who were talking to each other. One of them asked, "How long will the things that were in this vision continue? How long will the man who rebels against God and causes the temple to be defiled be able to prevent

priests from offering sacrifices? How long will he trample on the temple and on the armies of heaven?"

¹⁴ The other angel replied, "It will continue for 2,300 days. During each of those days, people will not be permitted to offer sacrifices in the morning or in the evening. After that, the temple will be purified and set in order again."

¹⁵ While I, Daniel, was trying to understand what the vision meant, suddenly an angel who resembled a man stood in front of me. ¹⁶ And I heard a man call out between the banks of the Ulai Canal, saying, "Gabriel, explain to him the meaning of the vision that he saw!"

¹⁷ So Gabriel came and stood beside me. I was very terrified, and I fell onto the ground. But he said to me, "Man, it is necessary for you to understand that the events that you saw in the vision will occur at the time of the end."

¹⁸ While he was speaking, I fell into a deep sleep with my face on the ground. But Gabriel put his hand on me and lifted me up in order that I could stand again.

¹⁹ Then he said, "I have come here to show you what will happen at the time when God releases his terrible anger. These things will happen at the time God has set for the end that is coming. ²⁰ As for the ram with two horns that you saw, those horns represent the kingdoms of Media and Persia. ²¹ The goat that you saw represents the kingdom of Greece, and the horn that appeared between its eyes represents its first king. ²² As for the four horns that grew after the first horn was broken off, they represent four kingdoms into which that first kingdom will be divided. Those four kingdoms will not be as strong as the first kingdom.

²³ But then the time will come for those kingdoms to end. This will be after those

wicked leaders will have done all the evil that God will allow them to do. Then one of those kingdoms will have a king rise up who will be very proud and very intelligent in doing evil. ²⁴ He will become very powerful, but it will not be because of what he himself does. He will destroy things in many places, and he will succeed in everything he does. He will get rid of many brave soldiers and the people who are holy. ²⁵ Because he is very cunning, he will succeed by deceiving others. He will become very arrogant, and he will destroy many people without warning. He will even rebel against God, the greatest king, who will destroy him without any human power.

²⁶ These are the true visions of the evenings and the mornings. But seal them up and do not reveal the vision to others, because it will be many years before those things happen."

²⁷ Then I, Daniel, was overcome and lay in bed weak for several days. Then I arose and returned to doing the work that the king had given to me, but I was perplexed about the vision. No one could understand it.

Chapter 9

¹ In the first year of the reign of Darius (who was a descendant of the Medes and son of Ahasuerus, who conquered the Babylonians)—² in the first year that he was the king, I, Daniel, was studying in the holy books the message Yahweh had given to the prophet Jeremiah, that Jerusalem would be destroyed and remain ruined for seventy years. ³ After I read that, I pleaded with the Lord my God by prayer and fasting to help us. I put on clothing made from old grain bags and sat in ashes.

⁴ I prayed to Yahweh my God, and I confessed the sins we had committed:

"Lord, I beg you, for you are great and powerful. You have faithfully done what you said you would do for us. You faithfully love those who love you and who do what you have commanded them to do. ⁵ But we have sinned and done things that are wrong. We have done wicked things, and we have rebelled against you. We have turned away and disobeyed your commands. ⁶ Your prophets spoke for you, giving your messages to our kings, to our other rulers, to our other ancestors, and to all the Israelite people, but we did not listen to them.

⁷ Lord, you act justly. However, we are covered in shame. This is true for the people of Judah who live in Jerusalem and who live in other places in Judea. It is also true about your people the Jews, that you scattered to other countries because we were very unfaithful to you. ⁸ Yahweh, we and our kings and our other rulers and our other ancestors are ashamed because we have sinned against you. ⁹ Although we have rebelled against you, you act mercifully toward us and you are willing to forgive us. ¹⁰ When you gave your laws to your prophets who served you, and they told us to live our lives according to those laws, we did not listen to the voice of Yahweh our God. ¹¹ All Israel has disobeyed your law, and we have turned away from it and have refused to do what you told us to do. Because we have sinned against you, you have sent to us the terrible things that your servant Moses said would happen to us if we sinned against you.

¹² You warned us and our rulers that you would punish Jerusalem severely by causing a great disaster there, a disaster that would be worse than any disaster that any other city had ever experienced, and you have done what you said that you

would do. ¹³ You punished us just as Moses wrote that you would do. But we still have not turned away from our bad deeds to the truth, or begged you for mercy. ¹⁴ So because we did not obey you, Yahweh, you prepared to punish us, and then you did punish us, because you always do what is righteous.

¹⁵ Lord our God, you brought your people out of Egypt by your great power, and by doing that you have caused people from that time until the present time to know that you are great even though we have sinned and done wicked things. ¹⁶ But now, because everything you do is righteous, we request you not to be angry with Jerusalem any longer, O Lord. Jerusalem is your city, and your temple was built there on your sacred hill. Now all the people who live in nearby countries despise Jerusalem because of our sins and because of the evil things that our ancestors did.

¹⁷ Our God, I, your servant, ask you to listen to my prayer and my requests. For your own sake, act kindly toward your sanctuary in Jerusalem, which has been destroyed by the armies of Babylonia. ¹⁸ My God, listen to my prayer. Look at us and do what you must. See, this city that belongs to you is ruined. We are praying to you because you are merciful, not because we have done what is right. ¹⁹ Lord, listen to us! Lord, forgive us! This city and these people belong to you. So I plead with you, my God, to pay attention to what I am saying and act to help us right now, for your own sake!"

²⁰ I continued praying and confessing the sins that I and my people Israel had committed, and pleading with Yahweh my God that he would restore the temple on the sacred hill in Jerusalem. ²¹ While I was praying, Gabriel, the angel whom I had seen in the first vision, came flying

rapidly to me at the time in the evening when the priests offered sacrifices. ²² He said to me, "Daniel, I have come to you to enable you to understand clearly the message that God gave to Jeremiah. ²³ When you began to plead with God to be merciful to Israel, he gave me a message to give to you. He loves you very much, so he has sent me to tell you what he said to me. So now, pay attention in order that you may understand the meaning of what he revealed to Jeremiah.

²⁴ God has decided that there will be 490 years until he frees your people and city that belongs to him from the guilt of their sins and to atone for the evil things that they have done. Then God will rule everyone justly, and he will do that forever. What you saw in the vision and what Jeremiah prophesied will come true, and the sacred temple will be dedicated to God again.

²⁵ You need to know and understand this: There will be forty-nine years and then 434 years between when a king commands that Jerusalem be rebuilt, and when the leader comes, the one whom God chooses. Then Jerusalem will be rebuilt, and it will have streets and will have a moat around it to protect the city, in spite of the fact it will be a time of great trouble. ²⁶ After those 434 years, the leader whom God has selected will be killed, and everything will be taken away from him. After that, the temple will be destroyed by the army of a powerful ruler. The city and the temple will be destroyed as a flood destroys everything. When this happens, these wars and destruction will cease. ²⁷ That ruler will make a covenant with many people. He will do what he promised for seven years. But when that time is half finished, he will prevent priests from giving any more offerings and sacrifices to God. After this

ruler does these disgusting things, someone will pollute the temple by putting an idol in the very holy place. It will stay there until God completely destroys the one who put it there."

Chapter 10

¹ During the third year that Cyrus was the king of Persia, a message from God was sent to Daniel (who had been given the name Belteshazzar), and the message was true. It was about a great war, and Daniel understood the message because of what he saw in the vision.

² "At that time I, Daniel, had been sad for three weeks about what had happened to Jerusalem. ³ I did not eat any tasty food or any meat nor did I drink any wine. I did not even put any perfumed oil on my face or hair for those three weeks.

⁴ When those three weeks ended, on the twenty-fourth day of the first month, my companions and I were standing on the bank of the Tigris River. ⁵ I looked up and saw someone there who was wearing fine white clothes and a belt made of pure gold. ⁶ His body shone like a precious beryl stone. His face was as bright as a flash of lightning. His eyes were like flaming torches. His arms and legs shone like gleaming bronze. His voice was very loud like the roar of a huge crowd.

⁷ I, Daniel, was the only one who saw this vision. The men who were with me did not see anything, but they sensed that someone was there, and they became terrified. They ran away and hid themselves. ⁸ So I was left there by myself, looking at this very unusual vision. I had no strength left. My face became very pale, with the result that no one would have recognized me. ⁹ I saw a man there, and when I heard him speak, I fell to the ground. I

fainted, and I lay there with my face on the ground.

¹⁰ Suddenly someone's hand took hold of me and lifted me, with the result that I was on my hands and knees, but I was still trembling. ¹¹ The angel said to me, "Daniel, God loves you very much. Stand up and listen to what I am going to say to you because God sent me to you." When he said that, I stood up, but I was still trembling.

¹² Then he said to me, "Daniel, do not be afraid. God has heard what you have prayed ever since the first day that you determined to humble yourself in order to understand the vision. I have come to you because of what you prayed. ¹³ The evil spirit who rules the kingdom of Persia resisted me for twenty-one days, and I had to stay there for that time with the various kings over whom the Persian king was ruling. But Michael, who is one of God's chief angels, came to help me. I left him there in Persia to resist that evil spirit. ¹⁴ I have come here to help you understand what will happen to the Israelite people in the future. Do not forget that the vision you saw is about things that will happen in the future, and not about things that will happen very soon."

¹⁵ While he was still saying that, I looked down at the ground and was unable to say anything. ¹⁶ Suddenly the angel, who resembled a human, touched my lips. Then I was able to speak, and I said to him, "Sir, because I have seen this vision, I have become very weak, with the result that I cannot stop trembling. ¹⁷ I am only your servant, and am not able to talk to you. I have no strength left, and it is very difficult for me to breathe."

¹⁸ But he took hold of me again, and enabled me to become stronger again. ¹⁹ He said to me, "Man, God loves you very much. So do not be afraid. I desire that

things will go well for you and that you will be encouraged." When he had said that, I felt even stronger, and I said, "Sir, tell me what you want to tell me. You have enabled me to feel stronger."

²⁰⁻²¹ Then he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? It is to reveal to you what is written in the book which reveals God's truth. But now I must return to fight against the evil spirit who rules the kingdom of Persia. After I have defeated him, the evil angel who guards Greece will appear and I must defeat him. Michael, who guards you Israelite people, will certainly help me, but there is no one else to help me."

Chapter 11

¹ In the first year of Darius the Mede, I myself came to help and encourage Michael.

² What I am going to reveal to you now will truly happen. There will be three more kings to rule Persia, one after the other. Then there will be a fourth king, who will be much richer than the others. He will gain his power through money. Then he will incite everyone to fight against the kingdom of Greece.

³ Then a very powerful king will rise up. He will rule over a very large empire, and he will do everything he wants to do. ⁴ But when he has become very powerful, his kingdom will be divided into four parts. Kings who are not his descendants will rule, but they will not be as powerful as he was. His kingdom will be torn up and given to others. ⁵ Then the king of the South will become very powerful. But one of his army generals will become more powerful than he is and will also become a powerful ruler. ⁶ At the right time, they will make an agreement. The daughter of the king of the South will come to the

king of the North to make the agreement secure. But she will lose her power and will come to nothing—she and all who accompanied her, and her father, as well as the king of the North and his children.

⁷ Soon after that, one of her relatives will take power in her place, and his army will attack the army of the king of the North. They will enter the fortress of the soldiers and defeat them. ⁸ They will carry off their idols and gods to Egypt, and they will take their statues (made by casting metal into a form) and many items made of silver and gold. Then for several years his army will not attack the army of the king of the North. ⁹ Then the army of the king of the North will invade the kingdom of the king of the South, but he will then return to his own land. ¹⁰ However, his sons will prepare to start a war, and they will gather a large army. That army will march south and spread all over Israel like a huge flood. They will attack a strong fortress in the south of Israel.

¹¹ Then the king of the South, having become very angry, will march with his army north and fight against a great army. The king of the North will gather together a very large army, but the army of the king of the South will defeat them. ¹² The king of the South will become very proud because his army will defeat a very large number of soldiers and will kill many of his enemies. But he will not succeed. ¹³ The king of the North will again gather together an army that will be bigger than the one that he had before. After a few years, the king of the North will come again with a large army and a lot of equipment for fighting battles.

¹⁴ At that time, many will rebel against the king of the South. In order to fulfill a certain vision, some violent people from your country of Israel will also rebel against him, but they will not succeed. ¹⁵ Then

the king of the North will come with his army and pile up earth against the walls of a city that is well protected, and they will break through those walls and will capture the city. The soldiers from the South who have come to defend that city, even the best troops, will not be strong enough to continue to fight. ¹⁶ So the king of the North will do whatever he wants against the king of the South, and no one will be able to oppose him. He will occupy the glorious land of Israel and will have the power to destroy it. ¹⁷ Then the king of the North will decide to march south with all the soldiers from his kingdom. He will make an alliance with the king of the South and in order that his daughter will help him to destroy the kingdom of the South, he will give her to the king of the South to become his wife. But that plan will fail. ¹⁸ After that, the army of the king of the North will attack the regions that are close to the Mediterranean Sea, and his army will conquer many of them. But the army of a leader from another country will defeat him and will stop him from being proud. He will also turn his pride against him. ¹⁹ Then the king of the North will return to the fortresses in his own land. But he will be defeated, and no one will be able to find him.

²⁰ Then another man will succeed him. He is one who will force taxes upon the people to supply the beauty of the palace, but that king will die after a short time. However, he will not die as a result of people being angry with him or in a battle.

²¹ The next king will be an evil man who is hated because he is not the son of the previous king, and he will not have the right to become king. But he will come in without any objection when people do not expect it, and he will become king by tricking the people. ²² When his army advances, they will attack any

armies that oppose him and their enemies will be swept away before them like a flood. Their enemies and the head of the priests will be swept away. ²³ By making treaties with the rulers of other nations, he will deceive them, and he will become very powerful, even though he rules a nation that does not have a lot of people. ²⁴ Suddenly his army will invade a province that is very wealthy, and they will do things that none of his ancestors did: They will capture in battles all kinds of possessions from the people whom they defeat. Then the king will divide those possessions among his friends. He will also plan for his army to attack fortresses, but only for a short time.

²⁵ The king of the North will gather a large and powerful army to attack the army of the king of the South. The king of the South will meet him in battle with a huge and powerful army. However, he will fail, and his plan will not succeed because of all the plots that are devised against him. ²⁶ Even the most trusted advisors of the king of the South will plan to get rid of him. His army will be defeated and many of his soldiers will be killed. ²⁷ Then the two kings who both want to rule that area will sit down at the same table and talk together, but they will both lie to each other. Neither of them will get what he wants because only God will cause the result of their actions to happen, at the future time that he has determined. ²⁸ The army of the king of the North will return to its land, taking with them all the valuable things that they have captured. The king will try to make the people stop obeying God's covenant with them. He will do what he wants to in Israel, and then he will return to his own country.

²⁹ When it is the time that God has decided, the king of the North will invade the South again. But this time he will not be

successful as he was before. ³⁰ Ships will come from Kittim and oppose his army and cause him to be afraid. So he will be very angry, and with his army he will return to Israel and seek to destroy the worship and the law. The king will show preference and favor to those who have abandoned God's holy covenant with Israel. ³¹ Some of his soldiers will do things to defile the temple. They will prevent the priests from offering sacrifices each day, and they will put in the temple something disgusting that will make it like a wilderness.

³² By deceiving those who have abandoned God's covenant with Israel, he will win them over to become his supporters. But those who are devoted to their God will firmly oppose them. ³³ The wise among the leaders of Israel will teach others also. But for a while, they will be killed in battles, or burned to death, or made slaves, or robbed.

³⁴ While God's people are being persecuted, some people will help them a little, although some of those who help them will not do it for good reasons. ³⁵ After some of those wise leaders suffer these things, God will make his people become the best possible people for himself. Also, God has set a time in the future when he will finish doing all these things.

³⁶ The king will do what he wants. He will boast and say that he is greater than any god. He will even insult the most high God. He will be able to do what he wants until the time when God is ready to show that he is angry with him, for what God has ordered will happen. ³⁷ The king will ignore the gods that his ancestors worshiped and the god that women love. He will ignore every god because he will pretend to be greater than any of them. ³⁸ But he will honor the god of fortresses. That is a god whom his ancestors did not honor. He will

give gold and silver, jewels and other expensive gifts to that god. ³⁹ He will employ people from another country who worship a different god to help him attack the strongest fortresses. He will greatly honor those who allow him to be their ruler. He will appoint some of them to important positions in the government, and he will reward them by dividing up the land among them.

⁴⁰ But when his time to rule is almost ended, the army of the king of the South will come, but the king of the North will attack first. The army will fight, moving against its enemies like a flood, and they will attack with many ships. ⁴¹ They will invade the glorious land of Israel and many will fall, but the people of Edom, Moab, and the people of Ammon who survive will escape alive. ⁴² He will invade other countries and conquer them. He will also defeat the people of Egypt. ⁴³ The army of the North will take away the treasures of gold and silver, and the riches of Egypt. The Libyans and the Ethiopians will serve the king of the North. ⁴⁴ But he will become very frightened when he hears reports about what is happening in the east and in the north. So he will become very angry and will send his army to fight furiously and to kill many of their enemies. ⁴⁵ The king will set up his royal tents in the area between the Mediterranean Sea and the hill in Jerusalem, the location of the temple. But someone will kill him there, and there will be no one to help him.” f

Chapter 12

¹ The angel also said to me, “After those things happen, the great angel Michael, who protects the Israelite people, will appear. Then there will be a time when

there will be great troubles. The troubles will be greater than any troubles since any nation began. At that time, all of your people whose names have been written in the book will be saved. ² Many of those who have died will become alive again. Some of them will live in everlasting life, and some in shame and everlasting contempt. ³ Those who were wise will shine as brightly as the sky. Those who have shown to others the way to live righteously will shine forever like the stars. ⁴ But as for you, Daniel, close up the scroll in which you are writing and seal it until the time of the end. Before that happens, many people will travel here and there, learning more and more about many things.”

⁵ When that angel finished speaking, I, Daniel, looked up, and suddenly I saw two other angels. One was standing on the side of the river where I was, and one was standing on the other side. ⁶ One of them called to the other one who was wearing linen clothes and who was now standing further up the river, “How long will it be until the end of these amazing events?”

⁷ The one wearing the linen clothes and standing further up the river raised his hands toward the sky and solemnly promised to the one who lives forever, “It will be three and a half years, and when God’s holy people and their strength are no longer being shattered to pieces, then all these things are finished.”

⁸ I heard what he said, but I did not understand it. So I asked, “Sir, what will be the result when these things end?”

⁹ He replied, “Daniel, you must leave now. I cannot answer your question. The words are closed and sealed until the time of the end. ¹⁰ Many people will be made pure, and they will be refined, but the wicked people will continue to act wickedly. Only those who are wise will understand these

things. ¹¹ There will be 1,290 days from the time that people are prevented from offering sacrifices each day, that is, from the time that the enemy brings into the temple the abominable thing that will make it like a wilderness unacceptable to God. ¹² God will be pleased with those who remain faithful until the end of 1,335 days.

¹³ So now I say to you, continue to faithfully trust God until your life on earth ends. You will die, but when everything ends, you will receive your reward from God.”

HOSEA

Chapter 1

¹ Yahweh gave Hosea these messages during the years that Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah were kings of Judah, and when Jeroboam son of Jehoash was king of Israel.

² When Yahweh spoke for the first time through the prophet Hosea, he said, "Go and marry a prostitute. She will have children because she has given herself to other men. When you marry a prostitute, this will show how my people have been so shamefully unfaithful to me. It will show them how they have left me, their God." ³ So Hosea married Gomer, daughter of Diblaim. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son.

⁴ Yahweh said to Hosea, "Give your baby the name Jezreel, because I will soon punish the family members of King Jehu for the murders that he committed in the city of Jezreel. I will also bring the kingdom of Israel to an end. ⁵ On that day I will destroy the fighting strength of the army of Israel, there in the Valley of Jezreel."

⁶ Gomer soon became pregnant again, and this time she gave birth to a daughter. Then Yahweh spoke to him, "Give her the name Lo-Ruhamah, which means 'no mercy,' because I will no longer have any mercy for the people of Israel, and I will not forgive them for even one sin they have committed. ⁷ But I will have mercy on the people of Judah. I will save them—but not by deadly weapons, the bow, the sword, or battle. I will not save them by armies or by strong horses and those who ride on them. Instead, I, Yahweh myself, will save them."

⁸ After Gomer had weaned Lo-Ruhamah,

she became pregnant again and gave birth to a son. ⁹ Yahweh said "Give him the name Lo-Ammi, which means 'not my people,' because you, O Israel, are not my people—and I will no longer protect you as your God.

¹⁰ One day in the future, the people of Israel will be as numerous as the grains of sand by the sea. No one will be able to count them. I have said to Israel, 'You are not my people,'—but one day I will say to them, 'You are the people whom I will protect and love.' ¹¹ On that day I, Yahweh, will gather all the people of Judah and bring them together with all the people of Israel. They will choose from among themselves a single leader, and they will go out of that land in which they were held as exiles. On that day they will say, 'Great is the day of Jezreel!' (Jezreel means, 'God plants his people in his land.')

Chapter 2

¹ Call your male fellow Israelites, 'You are Yahweh's people,' and call your female fellow Israelites, 'Yahweh has been kind to you.'"

² Yahweh said to me, "I want you to accuse Israel, who is like a mother to you, of being like an unfaithful wife to me.

This nation is no longer like a wife to me,

and I am no longer like a husband to her.

Tell Israel that they must stop acting like a prostitute; she must stop worshiping idols.

Israel must stop worshiping idols. She must stop acting like a woman who leaves her husband and goes to other men.

³ If she does not stop,

I will take her clothes off her and make her naked like she was when she was born.

I will make her like the barren wilderness—dry and lifeless; I will make her like a woman dying from thirst in the desert.

⁴ I will have no pity on her people, the people of Israel,

because their nation is like a prostitute.

⁵ Israel is like a prostitute;

she is like a woman who has had these children from doing shameful things with other men.

Israel decided to hurry after these idols whom she loved, to worship other gods.

She thought that it was those gods who gave her bread and water.

She thought that it was those gods who gave her wool, linen, and olive oil, and also wine to drink.

⁶ So I will block Israel's road with thorn-bushes,

and I will build a wall around her,

so that she cannot find the path to take.

⁷ Israel will run after her idols

but she will not find them.

She will search for her false gods,

but she will not find them.

Then, like a prostitute who wants to return to her husband, she will say to me, 'I will go back to you, the one I loved at first,

because my life was better with you than it is now.'

⁸ The people will say this, because they did not know that it was I, Yahweh, who

had given them their grain, new wine, and olive oil.

It was I who had given them much silver and gold so they would become wealthy.

But then they made all that gold and silver into objects to use in worshiping the idol Baal.

⁹ Therefore I will take away from Israel all the grain I gave them.

When the wheat is ready for harvest, I will keep them from getting it.

The new wine that I gave them, I will take it away.

I will take away from them all the wool and linen I gave them to make clothes for themselves,

the clothes that covered their nakedness.

¹⁰ I will treat Israel as a man treats his wife when he finds her with other men.

I will strip her naked in front of her lovers.

No one will be able rescue her from what I will do to her.

¹¹ I will make the people in Israel stop holding their celebrations;

they will stop holding their festivals every year.

They will no longer celebrate the beginning of every month.

They will no longer celebrate the Sabbath days.

They will no longer be able to hold the festivals scheduled throughout the year.

¹² I will destroy all of Israel's grapevines and fig trees.

This is because Israel is like a woman who says, 'These were the things that my lovers gave me in payment.'

I, Yahweh, will turn those places into a forest, a thicket in which no vines can grow,

and where wild animals will devour any fruit that grows there.’

¹³ I will punish this woman named Israel for all the times that she burned incense to worship the Baal idols.

She decorated herself with rings and jewelry, as a prostitute would adorn herself for her lovers.

She used to follow her lovers—like Israel has gone after the Baals—those false gods that she worshiped.

And she forgot about me.” This is what Yahweh says.

¹⁴ “I will lead her into the wilderness and tell her that I love her.

I will persuade her to love me again. ¹⁵ I will give her vineyards back to her once more,

and in the Valley of Achor I will cause her to hope once more.

She will answer me with love and delight, as it was back in the first days when we first loved each other—

when I set her free, and she came up out of Egypt.

¹⁶ At that time,

Israel will call me, ‘My Husband,’ as a woman would say to her human husband.

She will no longer call out to a god, ‘My Baal,’ but she will call out to me as ‘My Husband.’

¹⁷ I will not allow Israel to speak the names of the images of Baal that she used to worship.

My people will forget the names of those Baals and their idols, and my people Israel will never worship them again.

¹⁸ At that time I will make a covenant for them:

it will be with all the wild animals and birds,

and even with the little animals that crawl along the ground.

They will never harm my people again.

I will promise to remove all the weapons that are used for fighting battles,

the bows and arrows, and the swords, and every war, I will take them all away and destroy all of them.

And I will let all of my people rest in peace;

they will be not be afraid anymore.

¹⁹ You will be like my wife forever, Israel.

I will promise myself to you, by doing what is right, and by loving what is just.

I promise to love you and to show you kindness even when you do not deserve it.

²⁰ I will keep my promise to you, Israel. I will never lie to you;

and you will come to know me—my name is Yahweh.

²¹ At that time,

I will help you,” says Yahweh.

“I will give a command to the sky,

and the sky will pour out rain onto the ground.

²² And the ground will provide grain, new wine and olive trees, and they will grow for the people of Israel.

²³ At that time, I will take care of the Israelite people

as a farmer plants his own land and takes care of his crops.

I will show my love to those people whom I called ‘Not my People’.

And those whom I called 'Not my People',

I will now call by a new name: 'You are my People'.

They will say to me, 'You are our God.'"

Chapter 3

¹ Then Yahweh said to me, "Go and love a woman, even though she is loved by another man, and she is also unfaithful to her husband. You will be like me, because I love the people of Israel, even though they worship other gods and eat raisin cakes in their honor."

² Even though she was a slave, owned by another person, I bought her for 170 grams of silver, and 330 liters of barley grain. ³ Then I said to her, "You will live with me from now on. You will no longer be a prostitute who sleeps with various men. You will not belong to any other man, only to me, and I will be faithful to you and live with you for the rest of my life."

⁴ When I do these things, this is to show that the people of Israel will live for a long time and not have any king ruling over them. They will have no prince, no sacrifices or pillars set up for worship, ephods or idols in their houses. ⁵ After some time, the people of Israel will return to Yahweh; they will hope that he will receive them back. They will hope to have a descendant of David for their king again. In the later time, they will come to Yahweh to honor him and tremble before him because of his goodness to them.

Chapter 4

¹ Listen to the message Yahweh has for you.

"You people of Israel, Yahweh is accusing you, you who live in this place."

He says, "I cannot find anyone here who tells the truth.

I cannot see anyone who loves me.

None of you can honestly say that he knows me.

² You curse and lie, you kill and steal, and you commit adultery.

You have broken every law,
and you commit one murder after another.

³ Because of what the people are doing, the land is now a wilderness.

Every creature that lives here is dying,
from the animals that live in the fields,
to the birds that fly in the sky;
even the fish in the sea, they are also dying.

⁴ But you must not accuse anyone else for this trouble.

You must not allow anyone to correct another person; no one has that right, because everyone is guilty.

And I am also accusing the priests. ⁵ You priests sin during the day

and the prophets with you sin at night.

I promise you, I will destroy Israel, who is like a mother to you.

⁶ My people are perishing because you priests have refused to understand me.

And why do you understand me so little? Because you have rejected the things I have instructed you to do.

So I am rejecting you from being priests to me.

Look at what you have forgotten: You have forgotten the instructions that I, your God, gave to you.

Because you forgot me, I will forget your children.

⁷ The more numerous you priests become,

the more you do the things that I have forbidden.

You have abandoned me in order to become shameful.

⁸ When other people sin, they bring sacrifices to me, some of which you eat.

So you want the people to sin more and more.

⁹ I will punish you priests just as I punish the people.

I will punish all of you for your behavior;

I will pay you all back for all the wicked deeds you have done.

¹⁰ You all will eat, but you will never get enough. You will always be hungry.

They will continue to sleep with other women, but the women will not conceive,

because you have all abandoned me, Yahweh.

¹¹ You love to do forbidden sexual acts,

and to drink wine and new wine.

All these things have made it impossible for you to know right from wrong.

¹² My own people pray to an idol made from a piece of wood.

They ask their walking staffs to tell them which way they should go!

They are always wanting to sin in sexual ways, so they have stopped obeying me, the God whom they should worship.

¹³ They worship other gods in the places on the tops of the mountains where they have set up idols. They burn offerings to the idols up on those hills—

in all the places where they worship those idols—under the oak trees, poplar trees, and the terebinth trees—

because these trees give good shade.

Following your example, your daughters decided to become prostitutes,

and your daughters-in-law committed adultery.

¹⁴ But I will not punish the women for turning to prostitution,

or your daughters-in-law when they commit adultery.

It is the men who are doing the very same thing!

The men sleep with prostitutes,

and they offer sacrifices in the houses of idols where there are prostitutes.

It is true: "A people who have not lived as they were taught to live, will come to destruction."

¹⁵ Israel, you have left me and gone to idols.

But I hope that Judah will not do the same thing.

You people of Judah, do not go to Gilgal. Do not go up to Beth Aven to worship idols there.

Do not make solemn oaths, calling on me to make good on your promises, adding to your vows the words, 'As Yahweh lives!'" ¹⁶ Israel is as stubborn as a young cow.

Can I now feed them as if they were little lambs in a meadow?

¹⁷ Ephraim has gone to join idols.

Leave those people alone! ¹⁸ When they have finished drinking all their alcoholic drinks

then they will commit even more sexual sins.

Their rulers love to do these shameful things. ¹⁹ Someone will attack them; he will be like a whirlwind that lifts them up and carries them away to another place.

Only then will they be ashamed because they gave offerings to the idols.”

Chapter 5

¹ “Listen, you priests!

Pay attention, you people of Israel!

And you members of the king’s family, you also need to listen!

For I will punish all of you.

The things you have done have been like a trap for the people at Mizpah.

The things you have done have become like a net spread out to catch the people who live on Mount Tabor. ² Those who rebelled against me have now killed so many that they are standing deep in their blood. I tell you that I will punish them all.

³ You, the people in Ephraim, the center of Israel—I know you.

I know very well what you are like, you people of Israel.

You people in Ephraim, you have acted like prostitutes.

Yes, you people in Israel are polluted.

⁴ Ephraim and Israel are not able to ask me to forgive them, because of what they have done.

They have chosen to be unfaithful and immoral,

and they do not know me, Yahweh.”

⁵ Israel is proud; because of this others know how guilty she is.

The sins that the people of Israel have committed are making them faithless to Yahweh.

Judah is becoming faithless, too.

⁶ They are hoping to persuade Yahweh to have mercy on them.

They are coming to sacrifice sheep and cattle to him from their flocks and herds.

But they will find that Yahweh will have no mercy on them

because he has stopped helping them; he is leaving them alone.

⁷ They did not keep their promises to Yahweh.

and they have had children by foreign women.

So at the time of the new moon festivals, they will perish, together with their cultivated fields.”

⁸ Yahweh says, “Blow the ram horns at the city of Gibeah!

Blow the trumpets at the city of Ramah!

Shout a battle cry at the city of Beth Aven!

Lead us into battle, you people of the tribe of Benjamin!

⁹ I will punish the people of Ephraim and turn their city into a pile of rubble.

This is my promise to the tribes of Israel—I pledge to you all that I will do this.

Chapter 6

¹⁰ The leaders of Judah are as bad as people who steal farmland by moving boundary markers;

they steal land that does not belong to them.

I will punish them in a way that will make them perish.

¹¹ Ephraim will suffer greatly; the people will perish when I punish them,

because they were determined to worship idols.

¹² I will destroy Ephraim as a moth destroys wool;

I will destroy Judah as rot destroys wood.

¹³ When the people of Ephraim realized how weak they were,

then they asked the people of Assyria for help.

When the people of Judah realized how weak they were,

they sent messengers to the great king of Assyria.

But he could not help you people;

he could not make you people strong again.

¹⁴ I will become like a lion to the people of Ephraim in Israel;

I will become like a young lion to the people of Judah.

I will destroy them and leave them;

I will carry them far away,

and no one will be able to rescue them.

¹⁵ Then I will go back to where I came from;

from there I will wait for them to admit that they have sinned;

I will wait for them to come and ask me to help them."

¹ The people say, "Come, let us return to Yahweh.

He has torn our flesh to pieces as a lion tears up his victim.

He did this, but he will heal our wounds.

He has hurt us and made us fall down, but he will treat our wounds and bind them up so they will heal.

² After the second day he will restore our strength;

and on the third day he will raise us up,

so we will live close to him.

³ Try to know Yahweh;

do all you can to be faithful to him.

It is as certain as tomorrow's sunrise

that he will come to us; he will come to us like the rain,

like the rain comes in the spring on our fields."

⁴ But Yahweh says, "What can I do with you, you people of Ephraim?

What can I do with you, you people of the tribe of Judah?

You love me for just as long as the clouds come in the morning before they disappear again.

You love me for just as long as the dew stays before the warm sun shines on it.

⁵ I sent my prophets to you,

and it was as though I had cut you into pieces when they spoke the messages I gave them.

You were devastated by what they said to you.

It was as though I had killed you with the words I spoke to you.

I spoke about how I would punish you.

I told you by the prophets that I was angry with you, and they told you this.”

”Yahweh, you will punish them by commanding that it happen;

your words are like lightning bolts.”

⁶ Yahweh says, ”I want you to be faithful to me forever.

I want that more than I want you to offer me sacrifices.

I want you to know me—that is much more important to me

than when you give me offerings that the priests burn on the altar.

⁷ But like Adam, the first man,

the covenant that they made with me and that I, Yahweh, made with them—they broke it.

When they did that, they were not faithful to me.

⁸ Gilead is a city of people who do wicked things;

in the streets of that city are the footprints of murderers.

⁹ As robbers make their plans to hide and then rob someone walking past them,

so are the priests—they band together making their plans, just like the robbers,

and they commit murder along the way to Shechem.

They commit terrible crimes.

¹⁰ Among the people of Israel, I have seen a horrible thing—

the people of Ephraim worship idols everywhere.

The people of Israel have become filthy by what they have done.

¹¹ And for you also, you people of Judah,

I have set for you a time when I will separate out your good people from your bad people.

Just as in the harvest when you take all the crops in,

and you keep the good and throw away the bad,

that is what is coming for you, people of Judah.

That will be the day when I bring back the blessings and riches of my people once more.”

Chapter 7

¹ As often as I try to heal Israel,

the people openly show that they are sinning,

and the people in the city of Samaria show the same thing.

They lie and cheat in their buying and selling;

they are like lawless men who attack people who are walking in the streets.

² But they do not take a moment to think that I, Yahweh, see everything they do.

Everywhere they go, they commit evil, and I see it all.

³ The wicked things they do bring delight to their king,

and the king’s officials are happy when they tell lies.

⁴ They are all sexually immoral;

they burn with lust like a baker’s oven that is burning hot;

once he lights the fire, he does not need to put any more wood on it,

until he is ready to bake the bread.

⁵ At the king's festivals, his officials do outrageous things because they are drunk with wine,

and the king joins in with them as they mock me.

⁶ But these same officials then set about making plans to murder the king.

They are quietly angry all night,
and they are openly angry in the morning.

⁷ All those officials become so angry at the king,

that they kill all their rulers.

In the end, all their kings were killed;
not one of them called on me, Yahweh, to help."

⁸ "Israel joins with other people groups,

but all the people are like a flat cake that is only cooked on one side; they are weak.

⁹ People who come from far away have taken away Israel's strength.

The nation is growing very weak, like an old man whose hair is turning gray.

But the nation does not know it is weak.

¹⁰ Israel is so proud that everyone else sees it.

Even so, they will not return to me—to Yahweh their God.

They will not try to persuade me to have mercy on them, no matter what happens to them.

¹¹ Israel is like a foolish bird, a dove that anyone can easily deceive.

He calls out first to Egypt, and then like a bird, he flies up to Assyria.

¹² But when they are on their way there,

I will spread my net over them,

I will bring them down as a hunter brings down birds from the air into a net.

I will punish them all together.

¹³ How terrible it will be

for my people, because they have abandoned me!

They will perish

because they have rebelled against me.

I wanted to rescue them,

but they kept telling lies against me.

¹⁴ They do not cry out to me; they do not call to me from their hearts;

they only lie on their beds and howl and cry out.

They meet together to ask their idols for their grain and new wine.

They have rebelled against me.

¹⁵ Even though I trained them and helped them become strong,

even now they are planning to do evil against me.

¹⁶ They go this way and that, but never to me, God Most High.

They are like a bow that cannot shoot.

Their officers will be killed by their enemies' swords; they will die because they have insulted me.

This is why the people in Egypt will insult them."

Chapter 8

¹ Yahweh says, "Get a trumpet and blow it.

There are enemies swooping down over my people,

as an eagle swoops down over a victim.

This is because my people have left my covenant with them

and have violated the law I gave them.

² My people Israel cry out to me and say,
‘Our God, we are loyal to you!’

³ But the people of Israel have thrown away what is good,
so their enemies will chase after them.

⁴ Israel has appointed kings for themselves,

but they did not consult with me about it.

They chose their own kings

without asking me to approve them.

They took their silver and gold and formed them into the idols they worshiped,

but the people will perish as a result.”

⁵ The prophet says, “Yes, Yahweh has rejected your idol, you people of Samaria—an idol made in the form of a calf!”

Yahweh says, “Perhaps these people will never again be innocent of evildoing. I am very angry with them!

⁶ The shame of it is that this idol came from Israel! A craftsman made it.

It is only an idol; it cannot be the true and living God!

I will ensure that someone will smash it to bits.

⁷ This is because these people do useless things, so something terrible will destroy them.

Their grain standing in the fields will give no harvest.

And even if it does, foreign soldiers will eat everything it produces.

⁸ Other nations have destroyed Israel’s power.

Now Israel is like an old, broken pot that no one wants.

⁹ They asked the king of Assyria for help; they were like a wild donkey wandering off by itself.

The people of Israel have tried to pay other nations to protect them.

¹⁰ Although they do this,

I will soon gather them up to destroy them.

They will begin to become poor because they will have to pay money to Assyria’s king.

¹¹ The people of Ephraim have built many altars on which to offer sacrifices for their sins;

however, these altars have become places where the people commit terrible sins against me.

¹² Even if I wrote out for the people of Israel my laws ten thousand times,

they would refuse to obey them.

They would say they had never heard of them.

¹³ Let us think about the sacrifices that they give to me.

They sacrifice the meat and then they eat it;

but I, Yahweh, am not pleased with those sacrifices.

I will think about their sins and will punish the people for them.

I will make them go back to Egypt.

¹⁴ And why has this happened?

The people of Israel have forgotten me, the God who made them a nation. Instead of honoring me, they have built huge homes to live in.

And instead of worshiping Yahweh, the people of Judah have built walls around their cities for protection.

So this is what I, Yahweh, will do:

I will send a fire that will destroy all their palaces and all their fortified cities.”

Chapter 9

¹ Hosea says this: Do not be happy, O Israel; do not celebrate like other people groups!

You have been unfaithful to your God. You have refused to do what he told you.

At every place where people thresh their grain,

you give your offerings and sacrifices to idols.

You are just like men who pay money to sleep with women.

² Now you will not have enough grain or wine to feed your people.

You will have no hope for any new wine, for the vines will fail you.

³ The people of Israel will not continue to live in the land that Yahweh has chosen as his own.

Instead, they will go back to Egypt one day.

And in Assyria they will have to eat the kind of food that God had forbidden them to eat.

⁴ No longer will they pour out wine to offer it to Yahweh;

their sacrifices will not please him at all.

Their sacrifices will be as unacceptable to God as the food that people eat at funerals;

and everyone who eats that food becomes unacceptable to God.

That food will be all they eat;

they will not be able to bring it into Yahweh’s house to offer it to him.

⁵ There, in a country far from your home, you will not be able to celebrate the festivals that Yahweh commanded you to celebrate.

⁶ Look! If you escape and the Assyrians do not kill you,

the army of Egypt will capture you.

You will die there, and the people in the city of Memphis will bury you.

All your wealth in silver will be covered up

and lost when the desert plants grow into your homes and take them over.

⁷ It is now the time for God to punish you;

the time has come in which God will pay you back for every sin you have committed.

And all you people of Israel must realize that these things will happen.

So your false prophets are fools,

and those who you thought were inspired by God are actually insane.

This is because you have sinned so much

and because you have become Yahweh’s enemies.

⁸ True prophets are people whom God has assigned to guard the people of Israel.

But everywhere they go, others set traps for them;

even in the temple of their God, others hate them.

⁹ The people have polluted themselves by sinning

as the Israelites did at Gibeah long ago.

God will not forget the wicked things they did;

he will certainly punish them.

¹⁰ Yahweh says, "When I found Israel, it was like someone finding grapes growing in the wilderness.

When I saw your ancestors, they were like the very first figs that appear in the year, figs growing on a young fig tree.

But when they came to Mount Peor,

they gave themselves completely to that disgusting idol Baal,

and they became as detestable as the idol they loved.

¹¹ The honor of Ephraim is like a bird that is flying away.

I will make their women so they cannot give birth, no woman will be pregnant, and no one will even conceive a child in the womb.

¹² Even if they raise children not their own,

I will take them from their mothers.

It will be the worst that could happen to them,

when I abandon them!

¹³ I have seen the people of Israel;

they were like Tyre; they were like a tree planted in a beautiful meadow.

But they will have to lead their own children out to their enemies, who will slaughter them."

¹⁴ Hosea says, Yahweh, give them—

what should you give them?

Give them wombs that miscarry,

and let their mothers' breasts have no milk for their babies.

¹⁵ Yahweh says, "Because of all the wicked things my people did at Gilgal,

that is where I started to hate them.

And because of all the sinful deeds they have done,

I will drive them out of the place they live.

I will not love them any more;

all their officials fight against me.

¹⁶ Ephraim is like a vine that has dried up

and produces no fruit.

Even if they give birth,

I will put to death those children they love."

¹⁷ Hosea says, My God rejected the people of Israel

because they have not obeyed him,

and they will wander from one nation to another.

Chapter 10

¹ Israel is like a vine

that produces many bundles of grapes.

But the more their fruit increased, the richer they became.

With that money they made more stone columns in honor of their idols.

² They are deceitful and cannot be trusted;

but the time has come that they must pay for their sins.

Yahweh will break their altars into pieces—

the places where they gave sacrifices to their idols,

and he promises to destroy those pillars beside which they worshiped their false gods.

³ They say, "We have no king now because we did not honor or respect Yahweh.

But even if we had a king,
how could a king help us?"

⁴ The people of Israel make lying promises and false covenants;

and because their promises are not kept,

their sort of justice kills people, as poisonous weeds in a field would do.

⁵ Those people of Samaria tremble with fear because of what happened to the calf idols at Beth Aven.

Those people mourn over what happened to those idols,

as did the priests who served them;

they rejoiced over them and praised their splendor,

but now those idols have been taken away from them.

⁶ Their idols will be carried to Assyria
to be a gift for the great king.

The people of Israel will be disgraced;
they will be ashamed

for having trusted in the advice they received by consulting idols.

⁷ The king of Samaria will die.

He will be like a small piece of wood that floats away down a stream.

⁸ The hilltop places known for their wickedness—altars where the people worshiped idols—will all be destroyed.

Thorns and thistles will grow and cover all the altars that were in Samaria.

The people will beg the mountains and say,

"Cover us!"

and to the hills, "Fall on us!"

⁹ People of Israel, since the days of Gibeah you have been sinning;

it is as if you have been living there ever since then, because you think as they did.

Enemies will attack you evildoers at Gibeah.

¹⁰ Yahweh says, "When I decide to act, I will punish them.

People groups will gather to fight against them;

those people groups will capture them and put them in chains

because of their many sins.

¹¹ Ephraim is like a trained calf

that loves to thresh grain, separating out the grain from the chaff,

and I did not put a heavy yoke on her tender neck.

But now I will put Ephraim under that yoke,

and Judah must plow.

and Jacob must break up the ground with the harrow.

¹² Plow, now, and do what is right,

and you will reap the fruit of faithful love.

Do the hard work of breaking up the unplowed ground,

for now is the time for you to ask Yahweh to have mercy on you,

so that he may come and rescue you because he does what is right.

¹³ You have sinned wickedly, and now you will have to bear the consequences.

You told lies, and now you must suffer the results of the lies you told.

You have trusted in your own abilities and wisdom,

and you have relied on the soldiers in your armies.

¹⁴ The sound of war will be among your people;

all your fortified cities will be destroyed.

It will be as when Shalman destroyed Beth Arbel in battle,

when mothers were killed while they were holding their children.

¹⁵ That is what will be done to you, you people of the city of Bethel,

because of all the evil things you have done.

When the battle begins at dawn,

the king of Israel will be destroyed; the enemy will kill him."

Chapter 11

¹ Yahweh says, "When the nation of Israel was like a young man, I loved him.

He was like a son to me, whom I called out of Egypt.

² But the more I called out to them, the more they ran away.

Day after day they offered their sacrifices to the idols named Baal,

and they burned incense to honor them.

³ But it was I who taught them to do everything good, as a father teaches his son to walk.

I was like a father, holding them by their little arms.

But they did not understand that I was the one who was taking care of them.

⁴ With kindness I guided them, with the tender cords of human kindness I led them.

I loved them so much that I guided them and led by my own hand.

They worked very hard, like a yoke of oxen pulling a plow, but I made their yoke light and loosened its weight on their jaws, so they did not suffer pain.

⁵ But Israel will certainly return to Egypt,

and Assyria will certainly rule over them,

because they refused to turn back to me and worship me as their God.

⁶ Their enemies will attack Israel's cities with swords;

their enemies will destroy the bars that keep their gates closed and safe.

Their enemies will destroy the people of Israel and put an end to all the plans they made.

⁷ My people are determined to turn away from me.

They pretend to call out to me, the Most High God,

but I will allow no one to help them.

⁸ But you people of Israel—dear Israel—I cannot abandon you.

I cannot give you over to your enemies.

I do not want to act toward you as I acted toward Admah or make you like Zeboyim—

cities that I destroyed along with Sodom.

I have changed my mind about punishing you;

I earnestly long to have mercy on you.

⁹ I have decided not to punish you severely.

I do not want to destroy you, the people of my Israel, whom I love.

Human beings would easily decide to do that,

but I am God, not human.

I am the Holy One who lives among you;

I will not come to you and be angry with you.

¹⁰ They will live their lives following my commands.

I will roar like a lion.

And when I roar, my people will hear and will come trembling.

They will come back to me from far away—

from the west they will come back to me.

¹¹ They will come fluttering into the land like a flock of birds coming up from Egypt.

And some will be like pigeons that fly in from Assyria.

I will let them live in their own homes once more, in the land of Israel.

I, Yahweh, have promised this.”

¹² ”The people of Israel have continually lied to me.

But the people of Judah they still obey me and are faithful to me, the Holy One.”

Chapter 12

¹ The people of Israel do only what is useless;

they do only things that will destroy them.

They tell more and more lies; they do more and more acts of violence.

They make a treaty with Assyria,
and they send olive oil to Egypt,
to persuade those nations to protect them.

² Yahweh is also accusing the people of Judah of breaking his covenant.

He will punish those descendants of Jacob for what they have done.

He will pay them back; he will give them what they deserve.

³ When Jacob was in his mother's womb, he grabbed his brother Esau's heel because he wanted to take his brother's place and be the firstborn.

When Jacob grew up, he wrestled with God.

⁴ When the angel appeared to him, he struggled with him and won.

Jacob cried out to the angel and begged him to bless him.

Jacob found Yahweh at Bethel;
it was there that Yahweh spoke with him.

⁵ This is Yahweh, the God of the angel armies!

“Yahweh” is the name by which we should worship him.

⁶ Turn to your God!
Obey his covenant and do what is right.

Never stop trusting in your God for him to help you.

⁷ The merchants are wicked; they use scales that give wrong weights and measures,

so they can cheat those who buy from them.

⁸ The people of Israel boast,

"We are very rich,

and we have found ways to make ourselves even more wealthy than we are now.

In all our buying and selling, no one can see anything wrong in what we do."

⁹ But Yahweh says, "I am Yahweh, whom you should worship;

I am the one who brought your ancestors out of Egypt.

I will force you away from your homes and make you live in tents again,

just as when you live in tents for a few days every year

when you celebrate the Festival of Shelters.

¹⁰ Many times I spoke to the prophets and gave them messages, for them to give to you;

and I gave them many visions for you,

and I gave them parables, for them to speak to you."

¹¹ The prophet says that if it is true that the people in the region of Gilead are wicked,

then surely they are also worthless!

In Gilgal they kill bulls and offer them to their idols;

but these altars will be pulled down and turned into piles of stones in their fields.

¹² Jacob fled to the land of Aram;

he, whose name God would later change to Israel, worked many years so he could marry a woman.

He took care of his uncle's sheep in order to marry her.

¹³ Yahweh used the prophet Moses to bring Israel out of Egypt,

and he took care of them by the prophet who led them.

¹⁴ The people of Israel have caused Yahweh to become very angry;

their Lord says that they are guilty of the death of many, and that their guilt remains on them.

He will pay them back because they have insulted him with their shameful deeds.

Chapter 13

¹ Yahweh says, "When the leaders of Israel spoke, the people trembled;

they were respected in Israel.

But because they all worshiped Baal, they became guilty,

and they died.

² Now they sin more and more;

they make cast metal figures out of silver

to make them their idols.

Those idols are statues that are very cleverly made,

but those statues are made only by craftsmen.

But other people see

that the men of Israel sacrifice to these calf-idols and kiss them to worship them.

³ So the people of Israel will disappear

as quickly as the clouds that form in the morning,

as quickly as the dew, when the sun dries it up.

They will disappear as easily as the chaff that the wind blows away from the threshing place.

They will disappear as easily as the smoke that goes out of the chimney.

⁴ But I am Yahweh, whom you should worship;

I am the one who brought you out of the land of Egypt.

You must worship no other God; you must worship only Me.

There is no one else who can rescue you.

⁵ I took charge of you in the wilderness, in a desert where there was no water to drink.

⁶ When I provided food for you, you ate as much as you wanted and were satisfied.

But when you were no longer hungry, you became proud and forgot about me.

⁷ So I will attack you like a lion;

I will attack you like a leopard that waits beside the road to suddenly jump on a traveler.

⁸ I will come against you like a female bear when someone steals her cubs, and I will rip open your chests.

Like a lion that attacks—

as a wild animal would tear you apart.

⁹ You people of Israel, I will destroy you.

No one will be able to help you.

¹⁰ You no longer have any king

who can save you in any of your cities.

You no longer have any of the rulers whom you asked me to give you.

¹¹ When I gave you a king, I gave him to you because I was angry with you.

And because I was angry with you, I took your kings away.

¹² I have kept track of all the wicked deeds that you people of Israel have committed; I have recorded all your guilt.

¹³ You are like a baby ready to be born, but you are foolish,

because you are like a child who refuses to be born.

¹⁴ Will I really keep you from dying?

Will I rescue you from dying?

No! I will let you die

I will let you perish.

I have no more compassion left for you."

¹⁵ The prophet Hosea says: "Even though you people of Israel are wealthier than those of Judah,

the day is coming when Yahweh will destroy you.

You will meet disaster.

Your enemies will take everything valuable away from you.

¹⁶ The people of the city of Samaria are guilty because they have rebelled against God.

Their enemies will kill them with swords.

they will throw their children far down to the ground and kill them;

they will rip open their pregnant women."

Chapter 14

¹ Israel, return to Yahweh your God!

You have sinned because you have done wicked things.

² So now, return to Yahweh, and think about how you will confess your sins to him.

Say this to him:

”Take away all our sins,

and accept us; please be kind to us.

Please accept us back, so that we may praise you in our words and song.

³ Assyria cannot save us.

It is useless for us to ride horses into battle.

We will never again say, ‘You are our gods’

to the idols we have made with our own hands.

Even children with no fathers look to you, Yahweh, and they find that you are kind to them.”

⁴ Yahweh says, “I will forgive these people for having stopped honoring me;

I will love them without ceasing,

because I have decided to stop being angry at them.

⁵ I will help the people of Israel as the dew helps the ground.

They will prosper like the lilies bloom.

They will become as strong as the cedar trees in Lebanon.

⁶ They will be like trees whose branches spread out.

They will be as beautiful as the olive trees,

and they will please others as much as the fragrant cedar trees in Lebanon.

⁷ They will return and live under the protection that Israel has from me;

I will protect them from hardship.

They will be successful like a field of grain that grows well, like grapevines that are growing well.

They will become as famous as the wine that people produce in the land of Lebanon.

⁸ You people of Israel, I will completely stop you from worshiping idols.

It is I, Yahweh, who will take care of you. No idol can do that.

I am like a cypress tree that grows and stays fresh the entire year;

all your good gifts come from me.”

⁹ Every wise person will understand the things about which I have written;

those who have understanding will study these things and pay careful attention to them.

The way in which Yahweh wants us to live is right.

Those who do what is right live by them.

The rebellious people, however, sin, unable to obey him.

JOEL

Chapter 1

¹ I am Joel son of Pethuel. This is a message that Yahweh gave to me.

² You leaders of Israel, and everyone else who lives in this country, listen to this message!

Nothing like this has ever happened during the time that we have lived

or during the time when our ancestors lived.

³ Tell your children about it,
and tell your children to tell it to their children,

and tell your grandchildren to tell it to their children.

⁴ I am talking about the locusts that have eaten our crops.

The first swarm of locusts came and cut many of the leaves of the crops;

then another swarm came and ate the rest of the leaves,

then another swarm came hopping along,

and finally another swarm came
and they destroyed everything else.

⁵ You people who are drunk, wake up!

Wake up and wail loudly,

because all the grapes are ruined,

and so there will be no new wine!

⁶ Huge swarms of locusts have entered our country.

They are like a powerful army
that has very many soldiers;

no one can count them.

The locusts have teeth that are as sharp as the teeth of lions!

⁷ They have destroyed our grapevines and our fig trees

by stripping off and eating all the bark,

with the result that the branches are white and bare.

⁸ Cry and wail as a young woman does when the young man to whom she was engaged has died.

⁹ There is no more flour or wine for us to offer to be sacrifices at the temple,

so the priests who serve Yahweh are mourning.

¹⁰ The crops in the fields have been ruined;

it is as though the ground itself had died.

The grain has been destroyed,

there are no grapes to make wine,

and there is no more olive oil.

¹¹ You farmers, grieve!

You who take care of grapevines, wail,
because the grain has been destroyed;

there is no wheat or barley growing.

¹² The grapevines and the fig trees have withered,

and the pomegranate trees, palm trees,
and apricot trees have also dried up.

The people are no longer joyful.

¹³ You priests, put on rough sack clothes and wail.

You who serve God by offering sacrifices on the altar,

wear those sack clothes all night to show that you are mourning,

because there is no flour or wine to be offered at the temple of your God.

¹⁴ Set apart a day for when the people should go without food.

Tell the leaders and the other people to gather at the temple

and to cry out to Yahweh there.

¹⁵ Terrible things are happening to us!

It will soon be the time when Yahweh, who is the Almighty God, will punish us,

when he will cause us to experience more disasters.

¹⁶ Our crops are already gone,

and no one is rejoicing at all at the temple of our God.

¹⁷ When we plant seeds, they do not grow;

they dry up in the ground,

so there are no crops to harvest.

Our barns are empty;

there is no grain to store in them.

¹⁸ Our cattle groan, searching for a pasture with some grass to eat,

and the sheep bleat because they are suffering.

¹⁹ Yahweh, I cry out to you,

because our pastures and our forests have dried up in the hot sunshine.

²⁰ It is as though even the wild animals cry out to you

because all the streams have dried up.

The dryness is like a fire burning up the wilderness pastures.

God's sacred hill in Jerusalem!

Tell the people of Judah that they should be afraid and tremble,

because it will soon be the time for Yahweh to punish us further.

² That will be a very dark and gloomy day;

there will be black clouds and it will be very dark.

A huge swarm of locusts has covered the mountains like a black cloud.

Nothing like this has ever happened before,

and nothing like this will ever happen again.

³ It is as though they bring flames of fire from which no one can escape.

In front of them, the land was as beautiful as the garden of Eden,

but behind them the land is like a desert,

and nothing survives.

⁴ The locusts resemble horses,

and they run like soldiers on horses.

⁵ Leaping over the mountaintops,

they make a noise like rumbling chariots,

like a mighty army that is preparing for a battle,

or like the roar of a fire that burns up stubble in a field.

⁶ When people see them coming,

they become very pale and frightened.

⁷ The locusts climb over walls like soldiers do;

they march along in columns

and never turn aside from their lines.

Chapter 2

¹ Blow trumpets on Mount Zion,

⁸ They rush straight ahead
without pushing each other.

Even though people throw spears and
javelins at them,

that will not cause them to stop.

⁹ They swarm over the city walls and
enter our houses;

they enter through our windows as
thieves do.

¹⁰ It is as though they cause the earth to
shake and the sky to tremble.

The sun and the moon become dark,
and the stars do not shine

because there are so many locusts in
the sky.

¹¹ Yahweh leads this army of countless
locusts,

and they obey his commands.

This time when he is judging and pun-
ishing us is very terrible,

with the result that it seems that no
one can survive it.

¹² But Yahweh says,

"In spite of these disasters that you have
experienced,

you can return to me with all your
inner being.

Weep, and mourn, and fast to show that
you are sorry that you have abandoned
me.

¹³ Do not tear only your clothes

to show that you are sorry;

more importantly, show in your inner
being that you are sorry."

Yahweh is merciful and kind;

he does not quickly become angry;
he faithfully loves people.

He does not quickly become angry;
instead, he greatly and faithfully loves
you,

and he does not like to punish us.

¹⁴ No one knows if he will change his
mind about punishing you

and instead act mercifully toward
you.

If he does that, he will bless you

by giving you plenty of grain and wine
in order that you can offer some of
those things for sacrifices to him.

¹⁵ Blow the trumpets on Mount Zion!

Gather the people together!

Set apart time to fast, to show that you
are sorry for your sins.

¹⁶ Perform the rituals to cause your-
selves to be acceptable to Yahweh.

Come apart and join together as a
group with a purpose—

the old people and the children, even
the babies,

and summon brides and bridegrooms
from their rooms.

¹⁷ Tell the priests who serve Yahweh to
cry between the altar and the entrance to
the temple

and to pray this:

"Yahweh, rescue us, your people;

do not allow people from other na-
tions to despise us;

do not allow them to ridicule us and say,

"Why has their God abandoned
them?"

¹⁸ But Yahweh showed that he was con-
cerned about his people

and that he would act mercifully to-
ward them.

¹⁹ When the people prayed,
Yahweh answered and said,

"I will give you plenty of grain and wine
and olive oil,

and you will be satisfied.

I will no longer allow other nations to
insult you.

²⁰ Another army of locusts will come
from the north to attack you,

but I will force them to continue past
Jerusalem

into the desert.

Some will go into the Dead Sea in the
east,

and some will go into the Mediter-
ranean Sea in the west.

There they will all die, and their bodies
will stink."

God will certainly do wonderful
things.

²¹ Yahweh will indeed do wonderful
things!

So even the ground should rejoice!

²² And the wild animals should not be
afraid,

because the meadows will soon be-
come green again;

the fig trees and other trees will be full
of fruit,

and the grapevines will be covered
with grapes.

²³ You people of Jerusalem,

rejoice about what Yahweh, your God,
will do for you.

He will send abundant rain at the right
time—

in the spring and in the autumn,
as he did previously.

²⁴ The ground where you thresh the
grain will be covered with grain,

and your vats where you store the
fresh grape juice and olive oil will over-
flow.

²⁵ Yahweh said, "I will repay you for
everything that was destroyed by those
great swarms of locusts,

that enormous army that I sent to
attack you.

²⁶ You, my people, will eat until your
stomachs are full.

Then you will praise me, Yahweh,
your God,

for the wonderful things that I have
done for you.

And never again will I let others shame
you.

²⁷ When that happens, you will know
that I am always among you,

that I am Yahweh, your God,

and that there is no other God.

Never again will I let others shame
you."

²⁸ "Some time later, I will give my Spirit
to many people.

You sons and daughters will proclaim
messages that come directly from me.

Your old men will have dreams that
come from me,

and your young men will have visions
that come from me.

²⁹ At that time, I will give my Spirit even
to servants, both men and women.

³⁰ I will do unusual things on the earth
and in the sky.

On the earth, there will be much blood
shed,

and there will be very large fires and
smoke that resembles huge clouds.

³¹ In the sky, the sun will become dark, and the moon will become as red as blood.

Those things will happen before that great and terrible day when I, Yahweh, come to judge all people.

³² But at that time I will save everyone who worships me.

I promise that some people in Jerusalem will escape those disasters;

those whom I have chosen will survive.”

Chapter 3

¹ Yahweh says this:

“At that time, I will bring back the people whom their enemies took away from Jerusalem and from other places in Judah.

² Then in the Valley of Jehoshaphat I will gather together the people of all the other nations;

I will judge and punish them

because they scattered my Israelite people

and forced them to go to other countries,

and because they divided up my land among themselves.

³ They played games of chance to determine who would get each of my people.

Then they sold some of the Israelite boys and girls

to get money to pay for prostitutes and wine to drink.

⁴ You people of the cities of Tyre and Sidon, and you people of Philistia—you are angry at me, but you have no reason to be. If you are trying to get revenge on me, I will very quickly get revenge on you. ⁵ You

took the silver and gold and other valuable things from my temple and put them into your own temples. ⁶ You dragged away the people of Jerusalem and other places in Judah, and you took them far away and sold them to Greek traders.

⁷ But I will make it possible for my people to return from the places to which you sold them, and I will do to you what you did to them. ⁸ Then I will cause some of your sons and your daughters to be sold to the people of Judah! And they will be sold to the Sabea people group, who live far away. That will certainly happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.”

⁹ Proclaim to the people of all nations,

“Prepare for a war!

Summon your soldiers;

tell them to stand in their battle positions.

¹⁰ Take your plows and make swords from them;

take your pruning knives and make spears from them.

Even the weak people must also say they are strong soldiers.

¹¹ All you people from the nations that are near Judah

must come quickly and gather there.”

But Yahweh, when that happens, send your army of angels to attack them!

¹² Yahweh says, “The people in the nations near Judah must get ready and come to the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

There I will sit as a judge, and I will punish them.

¹³ They are like crops that are ready to be harvested;

so strike them as a farmer swings his sickle to cut the grain.

They are like grapes that are piled high
in the pits where they will be pressed;

because they are very wicked,
punish them severely now,

as a farmer tramples on the grapes
until the pits overflow with juice.”

¹⁴ There will be the noise of huge crowds
of people in that Valley of Judgment.

It will soon be the time that Yahweh
will punish them.

¹⁵ At that time there will be no light from
the sun or moon,

and the stars will not shine.

¹⁶ From Mount Zion in Jerusalem Yah-
weh will shout;

his voice will be like thunder,

and his voice will cause the sky and
the earth to shake.

But Yahweh will protect his people;

he will be like a strong wall be-
hind which the people of Israel will be pro-
tected.

¹⁷ Yahweh says, ”At that time, you Is-
raelite people will know that I am Yahweh,
your God.

I live on Zion, the hill I have set apart
for myself.

Jerusalem will be a city very special to
me,

and soldiers from other countries will
never conquer it again.

¹⁸ At that time, there will be vineyards
covering the hills,

and your cattle and goats on those
hills will produce plenty of milk.

The streams in Judah will never dry
up,

And a stream will flow from my temple
into the Valley of Acacia northeast of the
Dead Sea.

¹⁹ The armies of Egypt and Edom at-
tacked the people of Judah

and killed many people who had not
done anything that was wrong.

So now those countries will be ruined,
with no one living there any longer.

²⁰ But there will always be people living
in Jerusalem and in other places in Judea.

²¹ I, Yahweh, live on Mount Zion in
Jerusalem,

and I will get revenge on the people
of Egypt and Edom who killed many of my
people.”

AMOS

Chapter 1

¹ This is the message that Yahweh gave to Amos, a shepherd near the town of Tekoa south of Jerusalem. He received this message about Israel in a vision two years before the big earthquake. It was when Uzziah was the king of Judah and Jeroboam son of King Jehoash, was the king of Israel.

² This is what Amos said:

”Yahweh will shout very loudly;

when he speaks from Mount Zion in Jerusalem, his voice will sound like thunder.

When that happens, the pastures where you shepherds take care of your sheep will dry up,

and the grass on top of Mount Carmel will wither

because Yahweh will order the rain not to fall.”

³ This is also what Yahweh said to me:

”I will punish the people of Damascus, the capital of Aram, because of the many sins that they have committed;

I will not change my mind about punishing them,

because of the cruel things that they did to the people of the region of Gilead.

⁴ I will cause a fire to burn the palace that King Hazael built and lived in,

the fortress where his son King Ben Hadad also lived.

⁵ I will cause the gates of Damascus to be broken down;

I will get rid of the king of Biqat Aven

and the man who rules in Beth Eden.

The people of Aram will be captured and taken to the region of Kir.”

⁶ Yahweh also said this to me:

”I will punish the people of the cities of Philistia;

I will punish the people of Gaza because of the many sins that they have committed;

I will not change my mind about punishing them,

because they captured large groups of people and took them to Edom

and sold them to become the slaves of the people there.

⁷ I will cause a fire to completely burn the walls of Gaza

and also destroy its fortresses.

⁸ I will get rid of the king of the city of Ashdod

and the king who rules in the city of Ashkelon.

I will also strike the people of the city of Ekron,

and all the people of Philistia who are still alive will be killed.”

⁹ Yahweh also said this to me:

”I will punish the people of the city of Tyre because of the many sins that their people have committed;

I will not change my mind about punishing them

because they also captured large groups of our people and took them to Edom,

disregarding the treaty of friendship that they had made with your rulers.

¹⁰ So I will cause a fire to completely burn the walls of Tyre

and also destroy its fortresses.”

¹¹ Yahweh also said this to me:

"I will punish the people of Edom because of the many sins that their people have committed;

I will not change my mind about punishing them,

because they pursued the people of Israel, who descended from Esau's brother Jacob, and killed them with swords;

they did not act mercifully toward them at all.

They were extremely angry with the people of Israel,

and they continue to be angry with them.

¹² I will cause a fire to burn the district of Teman in Edom

and completely burn the fortresses of Bozrah, the biggest city in Edom."

¹³ Yahweh also said this to me:

"I will punish the people of Ammon because of the many sins that they have committed;

I will not change my mind about punishing them,

because their soldiers even ripped open the bellies of pregnant women

when their army attacked the region of Gilead to gain more territory.

¹⁴ I will cause a fire to completely burn the walls of the city of Rabbah

and to completely burn its fortresses.

During that battle, their enemies will shout loudly

and the fighting will be like a great storm.

¹⁵ After the battle, the king of Ammon and his officials will go into exile."

Chapter 2

¹ Yahweh also said this:

"I will punish the people of Moab because of the many sins that they have committed;

I will not change my mind about punishing them,

because they dug up the bones of the king of Edom and burned them completely,

with the result that the ashes became as white as lime.

² So I will cause a fire to completely burn the fortresses of the city of Kerioth in Moab.

People will hear soldiers shouting and blowing trumpets loudly

while I am causing Moab to be destroyed

³ and while I am getting rid of its king and all its leaders.

That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it!"

⁴ Yahweh also said this:

"I will punish the people of Judah because of the many sins that they have committed;

I will not change my mind about punishing them,

because they have rejected what I taught them

and they have not obeyed my commands.

They have been deceived and persuaded to worship false gods,

the same gods that their ancestors worshiped.

⁵ So I will cause a fire to completely burn everything in Judah, including the fortresses in Jerusalem.”

⁶ Yahweh also said this:

”I will punish the people of Israel because of the many sins that they have committed;

I will not change my mind about punishing them,

because they sell righteous people to get a small amount of silver;

they sell poor people, causing them to become slaves,

getting for each of them only the amount of money with which they could buy a pair of sandals.

⁷ It is as though they trample the poor people into the dirt

and do not treat the helpless fairly.

Men and their fathers dishonor me by sleeping with the same slave girl.

⁸ When poor people borrow money,

the lenders force those people to give to them a piece of clothing for them to keep until he can pay back the money.

But at the end of each day, instead of returning that garment as Yahweh had commanded them to,

they lie down on that garment at the places where they worship their gods!

They make people pay money for various reasons,

and then they drink it in the temples of their gods.

⁹ Long ago, to assist your ancestors, I got rid of the Amor people group.

They seemed to be as tall as cedar trees

and as strong as oak trees,

but I got rid of them completely,

as easily as someone cuts off the branches of a tree and then digs out all the roots.

¹⁰ I brought your ancestors out of Egypt, and then I led them through the desert for forty years.

Then I enabled them to conquer the land of the Amorites, Canaan.

¹¹ I chose some of you Israelites to be prophets,

and I chose others to be Nazir who were completely dedicated to me.

You people of Israel certainly know that what I have said is true!

¹² But you commanded the prophets to not speak the messages that I gave to them,

and you persuaded the Nazir to drink wine,

which I told them never to do.

¹³ So I will crush you

as the wheels of a wagon that is loaded with grain crushes whatever it rolls over.

¹⁴ Even if you run fast,

you will not escape;

even if you are strong, it will be as though you are weak,

and warriors will be unable to save themselves.

¹⁵ Even if you are able to shoot arrows well,

you will be forced to retreat;

even if you run fast or if you ride away on a horse,

you will not be able to save yourself.

¹⁶ Even warriors who are very brave will drop their weapons

when they try to flee on the day that I get rid of them.

That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.”

Chapter 3

¹ ”You people of Israel, I brought all your ancestors out of Egypt;

so listen to what I am saying about you.

² From all the people groups on the earth,

I chose and took care of only you.

That is the reason that I will punish you for the sins that you have committed.”

³ Two people certainly cannot walk together

if they have not already agreed what place they will start walking from.

⁴ A lion in a forest certainly does not roar

if it has not killed another animal.

It does not growl in its den

if it is not eating the flesh of an animal that it has caught.

⁵ No one can catch a bird

if he does not set a trap for it.

A trap does not spring shut

when some animal has not sprung the trap.

⁶ Similarly, all the people in a city certainly become afraid

when they hear someone blowing a trumpet

to signal that enemies are attacking.

And when a city experiences disaster,

Yahweh is the one who has caused it.

⁷ Whatever Yahweh plans to do, he tells his prophets about it.

⁸ Everyone certainly becomes terrified when they hear a lion roar;

Yahweh the Lord has given messages to prophets,

they certainly must proclaim those messages,

even though they terrify people.

⁹ Proclaim to the people who guard the strongholds in Ashdod,

and to those who protect the fortresses in the land of Egypt, and say this,

”Come together on the hills of Samaria, and see how much the people in that city are frightened,

and see the way the people are suffering because of what they are doing to each other!”

¹⁰ Yahweh says that the people there do not know how to do things that are right.

Their homes are filled with valuable things that they have stolen or taken violently from others.

¹¹ So Yahweh our God says that soon their enemies will come

and tear down their defenses

and take away those valuable things.

¹² Yahweh has declared this:

”When a lion attacks a sheep, sometimes a shepherd is able to snatch from the lion’s mouth

only two legs or an ear of the sheep.

Similarly, only a few people from Samaria will escape,

just as if someone could save only a part of a couch or a bed from a fire in the house.”U

¹³ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says this:

”Proclaim this message about the descendants of Jacob:

¹⁴ When I, Yahweh, punish the people of Israel

because of the sins that they have committed,

I will cause the altars at the town of Bethel to be destroyed;

even the projections at the corners of the altars will be cut off and fall to the ground.

¹⁵ I will cause the houses that they live in during the winter to be torn down;

and the houses they live in during the summer, they will also be torn down.

Beautiful big houses and houses that are decorated with ivory will be destroyed.

That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it!”

Chapter 4

¹ You wealthy women of Samaria who have grown fat like the fat cows of the region of Bashan.

You oppress poor people,

and you cause needy people to suffer.

And you say to your husbands,

“Bring us more wine to drink!”

² But Yahweh our God has said this:

”Because I am holy, I solemnly promise this:

It will soon be the time when you all will be taken to another country;

your enemies will take you away using sharp hooks to grab you.

³ Your enemies will drag you out

and you will go through breaks in your city walls,

and they will force you to go toward Harmon.

That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it!

⁴ Go ahead: go to the hilltop places of idol worship that are at Bethel and Gilgal, where many people worship me;

go and rebel more and more against me!

Offer sacrifices on the morning after you arrive,

and bring me a tenth of your crops the next day.

⁵ Bring offerings of bread to thank me,

and other offerings that are not required,

and boast about these offerings that you bring,

because that is what you like to do;

but you do it to impress others, not to please me.

That is certainly true, because I, Yahweh, have said it.

⁶ I am the one who caused there to be no food in any of your cities and towns,

but you rejected me in spite of that.

⁷ When it was still three months before the time of harvesting crops,

at the time when your crops needed rain the most,

I prevented rain from falling.

Sometimes I allowed rain to fall on some towns

and prevented it from falling on other towns.

Rain fell on some fields,

but it did not fall on other fields,

with the result that the soil in those fields where it did not rain dried up.

⁸ Your people would stagger from one town to another town to find water,

but they could not even get enough water to drink,

but in spite of that, you have not returned to me.

That is certainly true because I, Yahweh, have said it!

⁹ Many times I struck your crops with disease and mildew.

The locusts devoured your gardens and vineyards,

your fig trees and olive trees, yet you did not return to me

—this is Yahweh's declaration.”

¹⁰ I caused you to experience plagues

like the plagues that I sent to the people of Egypt.

I caused many of your young men to die in battles.

and allowed your enemies to capture your horses.

Many of your soldiers were killed,

and your camps were filled with the smell of their corpses.

But in spite of that, you rejected me.

That is certainly true, because I, Yahweh, have said it!

¹¹ I got rid of many of you,

like the people in Sodom and Gomorrah.

Those of you who did not die were like a burning stick that was snatched from a fire so that it would not burn completely.

But in spite of that, you rejected me.

That is certainly true, because I, Yahweh, have said it!

¹² So now, you people of Israel, I am going to punish you.

Prepare to stand in front of me, your God, when I judge you!

¹³ I created the mountains,
and the winds.

I reveal to humans what I am thinking,
and sometimes cause the daylight to become dark like the night.

I rule over everything,

and even walk on the highest mountains on the earth!

I am Yahweh, commander of the angel armies!”

Chapter 5

¹ You people of Israel, listen to this funeral song that I will sing about you:

² “You are like a young woman,

but in spite of that, you will certainly be struck down

and you will never get up again!

You will lie on the ground, abandoned,
and there will be no one to help you stand up.”

³ This is what Yahweh the Lord says to the people of Israel:

“When your enemies attack you,

and when a thousand of your soldiers go into battle,

only a hundred will survive.

When a hundred soldiers march out
from a city to fight,

only ten will remain alive.”

⁴ Yahweh continues to say to the people of Israel:

”You Israelite people, return to me!

If you do that, you will continue to
remain alive.

⁵ Do not go to Bethel to seek my help;
do not go to Gilgal to worship;

do not go to Beersheba,

because your enemies will drag away
the people of Gilgal to other countries,

and they will completely destroy
Bethel.”

⁶ So come to Yahweh;

if you do that, you will remain alive.

If you do not do that,

Yahweh will come down on you de-
scendants of Joseph like a fire;

that fire will burn everything in Bethel

and nothing will be able to save that
town.

⁷ You people distort what is right;
you make others think that it is something
very bitter;

you treat good things as though they
were evil.

⁸ God created all the groups of stars
and he put them in their places.

Each morning he causes the darkness
to become the dawn,

and each evening he causes the day-
light to become darkness.

He scoops up water from the oceans to
become clouds,

and then he dumps the water from
the clouds onto the earth.

The one who does those things is Yah-
weh.

⁹ He causes strong soldiers to be killed,

and he causes the high walls around
cities to fall down.

¹⁰ He is the one who will punish you

because you hate those who chal-
lenge anyone who tries to make unjust de-
cisions;

you hate those who tell the truth in
your courts.

¹¹ You oppress poor people and force
them to pay big taxes.

So you have built big stone mansions
for yourselves,

but you will not be able to live in them.

You have planted vineyards,

but there will not be any grapes for
you to harvest to make wine.

¹² I know all of your sins

and the terrible crimes that you have
committed.

You oppress righteous people,

and you accept bribes.

You do not allow judges to treat poor
people justly.

¹³ This is a time when many people do
evil things,

so people who have good sense say
nothing at all.

¹⁴ In order to remain alive,

you must stop doing what is wrong,
and start doing what is right.

If you do that, Yahweh, commander of
the angel armies, will be with you

as you claim that he always is.

¹⁵ Love what is good, and hate what is evil!

Try to cause judges in your courts to make decisions that are right!

If you do those things, perhaps Yahweh, commander of the angel armies,

will act mercifully toward you descendants of Joseph who are still alive.

¹⁶ "Because I, Yahweh, will punish you for your sins, this is what I have solemnly declared:

People will be wailing loudly in every street,

and people will be shocked in every plaza.

Farmers will be called to come and weep,

along with the other official mourners who will wail for those who have died.

¹⁷ People will be wailing in your vineyards,

because I will punish you severely.

That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it!"

¹⁸ Terrible things will happen to you who want Yahweh to punish his enemies,

because that will be a day of darkness, not of light.

¹⁹ At that time, when you try to run from a lion,

you will face a bear.

When you run into your house to be safe,

and you put your hand on the wall,
it will be bitten by a snake.

²⁰ That day, when he punishes people, will certainly be awful, like a dark night without even a little bit of light.

²¹ Yahweh says, "I hate your religious celebrations

and the times when you gather to worship me;

I detest them all.

²² Even if you bring me offerings to burn on the altar and offerings of grain,

I will no longer accept them.

Even if you bring me offerings to restore fellowship with me,

I will not pay any attention to them.

²³ So stop singing noisy songs!

I will not listen when you play harps.

²⁴ Instead, act justly and righteously; you should do this and never stop;

if you do, it will be like the water in a river that never stops flowing.

²⁵ You Israelite people, your ancestors wandered through the wilderness for forty years;

and during that time, they never brought any sacrifices and offerings to me!

²⁶ But you carried the two idols that you have made—

Sikkuth, the god whom you call 'king,'

and Kaiwan, the image of the star that you worship.

²⁷ For I will now force you to go to a country that is far beyond Damascus!

That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, have said it!"

Chapter 6

¹ Terrible things will happen to you people in Jerusalem who are not worried about anything,

and also to you leaders who live on the hill of the city of Samaria, you who think that you are safe.

You call yourselves the most important people in the world,

and you are the leaders to whom Israelites go for help.

² You tell them, "Just go to the city of Kalneh and look at it.

Then go to see the great city Hamath

and to Gath in Philistia and look at it. They are all prosperous.

Now your lands are better than those places, and your two countries—Judah and Samaria—are bigger. So you are safe."

³ Terrible things will happen to you leaders! You are trying to avoid thinking about the coming time when you will experience disasters,

when your enemies will violently attack you.

⁴ You follow foreign customs in reclining to dine on couches decorated with expensive ivory,

on soft couches.

You eat the tender meat of lambs

and fat calves.

⁵ You create new songs as if you had nothing better to do,

and you play them on your harps like King David did.

⁶ You drink entire bowlfuls of wine,

and you put expensive oils on your bodies,

but you do not grieve about our country of Israel, which is about to be destroyed.

⁷ Your feasting and lounging on soft couches will soon end,

and you will be among the first ones to be forced by your enemies to go into exile.

⁸ Yahweh the Lord has solemnly declared this:

"I hate the people of Israel because they are very proud;

I detest their fortresses.

I will enable their enemies to capture their capital city

and everything in it."

⁹ When that happens, if there are ten people in one house, they will all die. ¹⁰ If a relative who has the task of burning their corpses comes to the house and inquires of anyone who is still hiding there, "Is there anyone here with you?" and that person replies "No," the one who inquired will say, "Be quiet! You must not call Yahweh's attention to us by mentioning his name, or he may have a reason to kill us!"

¹¹ Terrible things like that will happen because Yahweh has commanded that the large houses in Israel must be smashed into pieces,

and small houses must be smashed into tiny bits.

¹² Horses certainly do not run on big rocks,

and certainly people cannot plow the rocks with oxen.

But you have done things that no one should do:

You have distorted what is fair;

you have changed what is right and consider it to be like things that are bitter.

¹³ You are proud because you have captured the town of Lo Debar,

and you have said, "We captured Karnaim by our own power!"

¹⁴ But Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, declares,

"I will cause a certain nation to attack you people of Israel;

they will oppress you all the way from Hamath Pass in the northwest

to the brook of the Arabah.

Chapter 7

¹ Yahweh our God showed me in a vision that he was going to send locusts to destroy our crops. It was going to happen right after the king's share of the hay had been harvested and before the rest of the hay was ready to be harvested. ² In the vision I saw those locusts come, and they ate everything that was green. Then I cried out, "Yahweh our Lord, please forgive us! We Israelite people are very helpless; how will we be able to survive?"

³ So Yahweh changed his mind and said, "That will not happen."

⁴ Then this is what Yahweh our Lord showed me in another vision: He was calling to a fire to come and punish his people. In the vision I saw that the fire had dried up the water under all the land and also had burned everything on the land. ⁵ Then I cried out again, "Yahweh our Lord, I plead with you, please stop this! We Israelite people are very helpless; how will we be able to survive?"

⁶ So Yahweh changed his mind again, and said, "That also will not happen."

⁷ Then Yahweh showed me another vision. I saw him standing beside a wall. It was very straight because it had been built using a plumb line. Yahweh had the plumb line in his hand. ⁸ Yahweh asked me, "Amos, what do you see?"

I replied, "A plumb line."

Then Yahweh said, "Look, I am going to use a plumb line among my Israelite peo-

ple, to show that they are like a wall that is not straight. I will not change my mind again about punishing them.

⁹ The hilltop places of idolatry where the descendants of Isaac worship idols will be destroyed.

And the other important holy places in Israel will also be destroyed.

And I will enable your enemies to attack your people with swords,

and they will get rid of King Jeroboam and all his descendants."

¹⁰ Then Amaziah the priest at Bethel, sent a message to Jeroboam, the king of Israel. In the message he said, "Amos is plotting against you among the Israelite people. I am worried that the people of this country will not know that he is wrong. ¹¹ This is what he is saying:

'Jeroboam will soon be killed by someone using a sword,

and the people of Israel will be exiled.'"

¹² Then Amaziah came to me and said, "You prophet, get out of here! Go back to the country of Judah! Do your prophesying there if you want to earn money! ¹³ Do not prophesy anymore here at Bethel, because this is where the national temple, the king's temple, is!"

¹⁴ I replied to Amaziah, "I was previously not a prophet and my father was not a prophet; I was a shepherd. I also took care of sycamore fig trees. ¹⁵ But Yahweh took me away from taking care of my sheep, and he said to me, 'Go to Israel and prophesy to my people there!'

¹⁶ You said to me, 'Do not prophesy and say that terrible things will happen to the people of Israel;

stop saying those things!'

¹⁷ So listen to what Yahweh says about you:

'Your wife will become a prostitute in this very city;

your sons and daughters will die because their enemies will kill them.

Others will measure your land

and divide it up among themselves;

and you yourself will die in a foreign country.

And the people of Israel will certainly have to leave their country and go into exile.'"

Chapter 8

¹ Yahweh showed me in a vision a basket full of ripe fruit. ² He asked me, "Amos, what do you see?"

I replied, "A basket of very ripe fruit."

He said, "That indicates that it almost the end for my Israelite people. I will not change my mind again about punishing them.

³ Soon the people will be wailing instead of singing in the temple. There will be corpses everywhere, and people will say nothing as they remove them. These things will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it!"

⁴ It is as though you people were trampling on the needy people,

and you destroy the poor people.

⁵ You habitually say,

"We wish that the new moon festival would end soon,

in order that we may be allowed to sell our grain.

We wish that the Sabbath would end soon,

in order that we may again be permitted to sell our wheat.—

When we sell it,

we can charge a big price for it,

and we can cheat people by using scales that do not weigh correctly.

⁶ We will sell wheat that is no good.

Those who are needy and poor and who do not have money to buy things,

we will make them our slaves

by buying them with the little amount of silver with which we could buy a pair of sandals!"

⁷ Yahweh has declared, "As I live, I, whom you should worship: I solemnly declare that I will not forget the evil things that you have done.

⁸ Because of those evil things, your country will certainly soon tremble,

and all of you will mourn.

It will be as though it will repeatedly rise and fall

like the Nile River that gets full of water and overflows its banks

and then settles back into its riverbed.

⁹ At the time when I punish my people,

I will cause the sun to set at noontime,

and the entire earth will be dark in the daytime.

¹⁰ I will cause your religious celebrations to become times when you mourn;

instead of singing, everyone will be weeping.

Because of what I will do, all of you will wear rough sackcloth and shave your heads

to show that you are sorrowing.

I will cause that time to be like when people mourn after an only son has died.

All of you will be very sad all of that time.”

¹¹ And Yahweh our God says this:

”It will soon be the time when I will cause something to be very scarce throughout the country.

But it will not be a time when there is no food or water;

it will instead be a time when there will be no messages from me for anyone to hear.

¹² People will stagger from the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean Sea,

and wander from the north to the east,

searching for a message from me,

but there will not be any.

¹³ At that time,

even beautiful young women and strong young men will faint

because they will be very thirsty.

¹⁴ Those who make oaths using the name of their shameful god of Samaria,

and those who solemnly promise to do something using the name of the god of Dan,

and those who swear using the name of the god of Beersheba—

they will all die;

they will never get up again.”

”Strike the tops of the pillars of the temple,

until they become loose and fall down, so that the foundation will shake.

Then cause the pieces of the temple to fall down on the people who are inside.

I will kill with a sword anyone who tries to flee;

no one will escape.

² If they dig deep pits in the ground, even all the way to the place of the dead,

or if they try to climb up to the sky

in order to escape,

I will reach out and grab them.

³ If they go to the top of Mount Carmel to escape,

I will search for them and seize them.

If they try to hide from me at the bottom of the sea,

I will command the huge sea monster to bite them.

⁴ If their enemies capture them and force them to go to other countries,

I will command that they be killed there with swords.

I am determined to get rid of them, not to help them.”

⁵ When Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, touches the earth, it melts,

and all over the earth many people die, and the others mourn for them.

It is as though Yahweh causes the earth repeatedly to rise and fall

like water in the Nile River rises and falls.

⁶ He builds his beautiful palace in heaven

Chapter 9

¹ Yahweh showed me another vision. In the vision, I saw him standing next to the altar. He said,

and sets the sky to be like a dome over the earth.

He scoops up the water from the ocean and puts it into clouds,

and then empties the clouds onto the earth.

His name is Yahweh.

⁷ Yahweh says, "You people of Israel,

you are certainly now no more important to me than the people of Ethiopia.

I brought your ancestors here from Egypt,

but I also brought the people of Philistia from the Island of Crete,

and I brought the people of Aram from the region of Kir.

⁸ I, Yahweh the Lord, have seen that you people in the kingdom of Israel are very sinful,

so I will destroy you.

But I will not get rid of all you descendants of Jacob.

That is what will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.

⁹ When I command it, it will be as though I will shake you Israelite people who are living in various nations,

as farmer shakes a sieve to separate the stone pebbles from the grain

in order that they do not fall on the ground with the grain.

¹⁰ From among my people,

all you sinful people who say, 'We will not experience disasters; nothing evil will happen to us,'

your enemies will kill you with their swords."

¹¹ "The kingdom over which King David ruled has been destroyed, like a house that collapsed and then became ruins.

But some day I will cause it to be a kingdom again.

I will cause it to prosper again

just like it did previously.

¹² When that happens, your armies will seize the remaining part of the region of Edom,

and they will also seize the other nations that previously belonged to me.

I, Yahweh, have said that I will do these things,

and I will certainly cause them to happen.

¹³ There will be a time when your crops will grow very well;

very soon after the crops are harvested, farmers will plow the ground to plant more crops in it again,

and soon after the vineyards are planted,

farmers will harvest grapes and tread on them to make wine.

And because there will be very much wine,

it will seem as though wine is flowing down from the hills.

¹⁴ I will cause you, my Israelite people, to prosper again.

You will rebuild your towns and live in them.

You will plant vineyards and drink the wine made from the grapes that grows in them.

¹⁵ I will enable you to live in your land again,

the land that I gave to your ancestors;

never again will you be forced to leave
it.

That is what will surely happen be-
cause I, Yahweh, have said it.”

OBADIAH

Chapter 1

¹ This is a message that Yahweh our God gave to me, Obadiah, about the Edom people group.

Yahweh our God has told me this about the people of Edom:

"I, Yahweh, have sent a messenger to other nations,

telling them to prepare to go and attack Edom."

² And Yahweh says this to the people of Edom:

"I will soon cause you to become the weakest and most despised nation on the earth.

³ Your capital city is high in the rocky cliffs,

and you are very proud;

you think that you are safe because no army can attack you,

but you have deceived yourselves.

⁴ And I tell you that even if you had wings and could fly higher than eagles fly,

and if you could make your homes among the stars,

I would bring you crashing down from there.

⁵ When thieves break into someone's house during the night,

they certainly steal only the things that they want.

And people who pick grapes always leave a few grapes on the vines.

But your country will be completely destroyed!

⁶ Everything that is valuable will be taken away.

Your enemies will find and take away even the valuable things that you have hidden.

⁷ All your allies will turn against you, and they will force you to leave your country.

Those with whom you have peace now will trick you and defeat you.

Those who eat meals with you now are planning to trap you,

and then they will say to you, 'You are not as clever as you thought you were!'

⁸ I, Yahweh, declare that at the time that I destroy Edom,

I will punish the men who live in those cliffs who thought that they were wise.

⁹ The soldiers from Teman town will become terrified;

all you people who are descendants of Esau will be wiped out."

¹⁰ "You acted cruelly to your relatives who are descendants of Jacob, the twin brother of your ancestor Esau.

So now you will be disgraced, and you will be destroyed forever.

¹¹ Foreigners entered the gates of Jerusalem

and cast lots to share out among themselves the valuable things they found;

but you were as bad as those foreigners, because you just stood there and did not help the Israelites.

¹² You should not have gloated about the disaster that the Israelites were experiencing.

You should not have been happy when their towns were ruined.

You should not have made fun of them when they were suffering.

¹³ They are my people,

so you should not have entered their city gates when they were experiencing those disasters

and you should not have laughed at them.

And you should not have taken away their valuable possessions.

¹⁴ You should not have stood at cross-roads

to catch those who were trying to escape.

You should not have captured them and put them into the hands of their enemies

when they were experiencing those disasters.”

¹⁵ ”There will soon be the time when I, Yahweh, will judge and punish all the nations.

And you people of Edom will experience the same disasters that you caused others to experience.

The same evil things that you have done to others will happen to you.

¹⁶ It is as though you drank a cup of very bitter liquid on Zion, my sacred hill.

But I will punish all the other nations just as severely,

and cause them to disappear completely.

¹⁷ But some people in Jerusalem will escape,

and Jerusalem will become a very holy place.

Then the descendants of Jacob will conquer and possess again the land that truly belongs to them.

¹⁸ The descendants of Jacob and his son Joseph will be like a fire,

and the people of Edom will be like stubble that will be completely burned in that fire.

Not one person will remain alive.

That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it.”

¹⁹ The Israelites who live in the southern Judean wilderness are the ones who will capture Edom.

And those who live in the western foothills will capture the region of Phoenicia and the areas of Ephraim and Samaria.

And people of the tribe of Benjamin will conquer the region of Gilead.

²⁰ The great number of the people of Israel who were captured and taken away, they will return to the land,

and they will capture the land that was ruled by the people of Canaan, and they will take possession of the land as far north as Zarephath.

Those people of Israel who were captured and taken away from Jerusalem, and who live in Sepharad, they will take possession of the cities in the Negev, which is the southern Judean wilderness.

²¹ The army of Jerusalem will attack Edom and conquer it,

and Yahweh will be their king.

JONAH

Chapter 1

¹ One day Yahweh said to the prophet Jonah son of Amittai, ² “I have seen how wicked the people are who live in the great city of Nineveh. Therefore go there and warn the people that I am planning to destroy their city because of their sins.” ³ But instead of going to Nineveh, Jonah went in the direction of the city of Tarshish, to get away from Yahweh. He went down to the city of Joppa. There he paid the money to travel on a ship that was going to the city of Tarshish, and he got on.

⁴ Then he went down to a lower deck, lay down, and went to sleep. But Yahweh caused a very strong wind to blow, and there was such a violent storm that the sailors thought that the ship would break apart. ⁵ The sailors were very frightened. Because of that, they each started to pray to their own gods to save them. Then they threw the cargo into the sea to make the ship lighter so that it would not sink easily.

⁶ Then the captain went down to where Jonah was sleeping soundly. He awoke him and said to him, “How can you sleep during a storm like this? Get up and pray to your god! Perhaps he will pity us and save us, so that we will not drown!”

⁷ Then the sailors said to each other, “We need to cast lots, to determine who has caused all this trouble!” So they did that, and the lot indicated Jonah.

⁸ So various ones of them asked him, “Who is the one who has caused us all this trouble?” “What work do you do?” “Where are you coming from?” “What country and what people do you belong

to?” ⁹ Jonah replied, “I am a Hebrew. I worship Yahweh God, who lives in heaven. He is the one who made the sea and the land. ¹⁰ I am running away from Yahweh, he is the one who called me to be a prophet.” After the sailors heard that, they were terrified. So they said to him, “Do you realize what trouble you have caused?”

¹¹ The storm kept getting worse and the waves kept getting bigger. So one of the sailors asked Jonah, “What should we do with you in order to make the sea become calm for us?” ¹² He replied, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea. If you do that, it will become calm for you. I know that this terrible storm happened because I did not do what Yahweh told me to do.”

¹³ But the sailors did not want to do that. Instead, they tried hard to row the ship back to the land. But they could not do that, because the storm continued to get worse.

¹⁴ Therefore they prayed to Yahweh, and one of them prayed, “O Yahweh, please do not say we are guilty if we make this man die; please do not kill us. O Yahweh, you have done what you wanted to do.” ¹⁵ Then they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea. Then the sea became calm. ¹⁶ When that happened, the sailors became greatly awed at Yahweh’s power. So they offered a sacrifice to Yahweh, and they strongly promised him that they would do things that would please him.

¹⁷ While they were doing that, Yahweh sent a huge fish that swallowed Jonah. Then Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights.

Chapter 2

¹ While he was inside the huge fish, Jonah

prayed to Yahweh God, whom he worshiped. ² Jonah said,

"Yahweh, when I was greatly distressed here, I prayed to you, and you heard what I prayed. When I was about to descend way down into the place where dead people go, you heard me when I called out for you to help me.

³ You threw me down into the deep water, into the bottom of the sea. The currents you made in the sea swirled around me, and the huge waves crashed above me.

⁴ Then I thought, 'You have banished me, and I will never be able to enter your presence again. But in spite of what you do to me, one day I will again see your holy temple in Jerusalem!'

⁵ The water surrounded me and almost drowned me. Seaweed was wrapped around my head.

⁶ I sank down to where the mountains start rising from the bottom of the sea. I thought that forever it would be as though my body would be in a prison inside the earth below me.

But you, Yahweh God, whom I worship, rescued me from going down to the place of the dead!

⁷ When I was almost dead, Yahweh, I thought about you. You heard my prayer, up there where you are, in your holy temple.

⁸ All those who worship worthless idols are rejecting you, the one who could act faithfully toward them.

⁹ But I will sing to thank you, and I will offer a sacrifice to you. I will surely do what I have solemnly promised to do. Yahweh, you are the one who is able to save us."

¹⁰ Then Yahweh commanded the huge fish

to vomit out Jonah, and the fish vomited out Jonah onto the dry land.

Chapter 3

¹ Then Yahweh said to Jonah again, ² "Go to that huge city of Nineveh, and tell them the message that I gave you previously."

³ So this time Jonah obeyed Yahweh, and he went to Nineveh. That city was very big. A person had to walk for three days to completely go through it. ⁴ When Jonah arrived, he began walking through the city for one day. Then he started to proclaim to the people, "Forty days from now, Nineveh will be destroyed!"

⁵ The people of Nineveh believed God's message. They all decided that everyone should begin fasting. So everyone, including all the important people and all the unimportant people, did that. They also put on coarse cloth, to show that they were sorry for having sinned.

⁶ The king of Nineveh heard about Jonah's message. So he took off his royal robes, and he also put on coarse cloth. He left his throne and sat down where there were cold ashes, to show that he also was sorry for having sinned. ⁷ Then he sent messengers to proclaim to the people in Nineveh: "My advisors and I have decreed that no one may eat or drink anything. Do not even allow your animals to eat or drink. ⁸ Instead, every person must put on coarse cloth. Put coarse cloth on your animals, too. Then everyone must pray fervently to God. And everyone must stop doing evil actions, and stop acting violently toward others. ⁹ Perhaps, if everyone does that, God may change his mind and be merciful to us, and stop being very angry with us. If that happens, we will not die."

¹⁰ When they all did that, God saw what

they were doing, and he saw that they had stopped doing evil actions. So he pitied them, and he did not get rid of them as he had threatened to do.

Chapter 4

¹ But Jonah felt that it was very bad that God had not destroyed Nineveh. He became very angry. ² He prayed to Yahweh, "Oh, Yahweh, what you have done is just what I thought that you would do even before I left home. The reason I ran away to go to Tarshish was to stop this very thing from happening, because I knew that you act very kindly and compassionately toward all people. You do not quickly become angry with people who do evil. You love people very much, and you change your mind about punishing people who sin. ³ So now, Oh Yahweh, since you will not destroy Nineveh as you said you would, please allow me to die, because now it would be better for me to die than to continue to live."

⁴ Yahweh replied, "Is it right for you to be angry that I did not destroy the city?"

⁵ Jonah did not reply. He went out of the city to the east side of it. He made a small shelter in order that he could sit under it and be protected from the sun. He sat under the shelter and waited to see what would happen to the city. ⁶ Then Yahweh God caused a vine to grow up immediately to shade Jonah's head from the sun and to save him from his discomfort. Jonah was very happy about having the vine over his head. ⁷ But before dawn the next day, God sent a worm that chewed the vine, with the result that the vine withered. ⁸ Then, when the sun rose high in the sky, God sent a very hot wind from the east, and the sun shone very strongly on Jonah's head, with the result that he felt

faint. He wanted to die, and he said, "It would be better for me to die than to continue to live!"

⁹ But God asked Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about what happened to the vine?" Jonah replied, "Yes, it is right! Now I am angry enough to die!"

¹⁰ But Yahweh said to him, "You were concerned about that vine when I caused it to wither, even though you did not take care of it, and you did not make it grow. It just grew up during one night and it completely withered at the end of the next night. ¹¹ But there are more than 120,000 people in Nineveh, that huge city, who cannot tell right from wrong, and there are also many cattle. So is it not right for me to be concerned about those people, and not want to destroy them?"

MICAH

Chapter 1

¹ Yahweh gave Micah, who was from Moresheth in Judah, these messages in visions about Samaria and Jerusalem during the time when Jotham, and then Ahaz, and then Hezekiah were the kings of Judah.

² You people everywhere on the earth, pay attention to this.

Yahweh our God is accusing you from his holy temple in heaven.

³ He will come down from heaven
and walk over the high places where you worship idols.

⁴ It will be as though the mountains will melt under his feet
as wax melts in front of a fire,
and as water disappears
when it rushes down into a valley.

⁵ Those things will happen because of the terrible sins that the people of Israel, the descendants of Jacob, have committed.

But it was the people of the city of Samaria who persuaded all the people of Israel to sin.

And it was because the people of Jerusalem set up altars to worship their gods

that the other people of Judah thought they should also worship idols on the hilltops.

⁶ Yahweh says this: "I will cause Samaria to become a heap of rubble;

it will be only a field for planting vineyards.

I will cause the stones of its buildings to roll down into the valley.

I will destroy the buildings down to their foundations.

⁷ I will make others smash the idols in Samaria to pieces.

The gifts given to prostitutes at the temples of their idols will be burned in fire.

Because people paid prostitutes there,
their enemies will take away those idols and sell them to pay prostitutes in other countries.

⁸ Because Samaria will be destroyed, I will weep and wail.

I will walk around barefoot and naked.
I will howl like a jackal
and screech like an owl.

⁹ I will lament because Samaria will be completely destroyed;
nothing can save that city.

But the same thing will happen to Judah.

It is as though the enemy army had already reached the city gates of Jerusalem,
the main city where my people live.

¹⁰ Do not tell that to our enemies in the city of Gath in Philistia!

Do not cry, or the people there will find out what is happening.

Instead, just roll on the ground in Beth Leaphrah.

¹¹ You people who live in Shaphir,
naked and ashamed, you will be taken to another country.

You people in Beth Ezel should mourn,
because no one from Zaanan will go out to help you.

¹² The people of Maroth

are anxiously waiting for good things to happen to them.

But I will make terrible things to happen to them,

and they will soon happen at the gates of Jerusalem.”

¹³ You people in the city of Lachish,

hitch your horses to pull the chariots in which you can ride to flee from your enemies.

The Israelite people rebelled against Yahweh,

and you imitated them,

and that caused the people of Jerusalem to start sinning, too.

¹⁴ You people of Judah, send a farewell gift to the people of Moresheth,

because their enemies will soon destroy it.

The kings of Israel will soon find out that the people of the town of Akzib will disappoint them.

¹⁵ You people of Mareshah,

Yahweh will soon send someone to conquer your town.

It will be necessary for the great leaders of Israel to go and hide in the cave near Adullam.

¹⁶ You people of Judah, shave your heads and go into mourning,

because the children whom you love will soon go into exile.

Chapter 2

¹ Terrible things will happen to you who lie awake at night,

planning to do wicked things.

Then you get up at dawn, and you do those things

as soon as you are able to do them.

² You want fields that belong to other people,

so you seize them;

you also take their houses.

You cheat people to get their homes,

taking away the property that belongs to their families.

³ Therefore, this is what Yahweh says:

”I will cause you people of Israel to experience disasters,

and you will not be able to escape from them.

You will no longer walk around proudly,

because when that happens, it will be a time of much trouble for you.

⁴ At that time, your enemies will make fun of you rich people;

they will ridicule you by singing this sad song about you:

’We Israelites are completely ruined;

Yahweh is taking our land from us, and he will give it to those who capture us.”

⁵ So when it is the time for the land to be given back to you people who belong to Yahweh,

there will be no one alive among you rich families to receive back any of that land.

⁶ The people who heard me say that replied to me,

”Do not prophesy such things!

Do not say that Yahweh is going to humiliate us by causing us to experience disasters!”

⁷ But you people talk like that!

You say that Yahweh never gets angry,
and that he never really punishes us.”

Of course, what I say certainly helps
those who live in the right way.

⁸ But Yahweh says,

”Recently my people have been acting
toward me like an enemy.

You rich people refuse to return the
coats of those who have borrowed money
from you,

the coats they gave you to promise
that they would repay their debts.

You take their coats without warn-
ing, surprising them as much as soldiers
returning from war would be surprised
by attacks instead of safety at home.

⁹ You have forced women to leave their
nice homes,

and you have stolen from their chil-
dren forever the blessings that I wanted to
give them.

¹⁰ So get up and leave here!

This is not a place where you can rest
and be safe,

because you have defiled it.

I will make sure it will be completely
destroyed.

¹¹ You people want a prophet who will
lie to you,

saying, ‘I will preach that you should
drink plenty of wine and other alcoholic
drinks!’

That is the kind of prophet who would
please you.”

¹² ”But some day, you descendants of
Jacob, I will bring back from exile the Is-
raelite people who have survived.

I will gather you together

like a shepherd gathers his sheep into
a pen,

and there will be many of you in your
land.

¹³ Your leader will enable them to leave
the countries where they have been ex-
iled;

he will lead them out of the gates of
their enemies’ cities,

back to your own country.

Your king will lead them;

it is I, Yahweh, who will be their king!”

Chapter 3

¹ Then I said, ”You Israelite leaders, listen
to what I say!

You should certainly know what things
are right to do

and what things are wrong,

² but you hate what is good

and love what is evil.

You act like butchers:

it is as though you strip the skin off my
people

and tear the flesh from their bones.

³ It is as though you chop them into
pieces like meat to be cooked in a pot.

⁴ Then, when you have troubles, you
plead to Yahweh to help you,

but he will not answer you.

At that time, he will turn his face away
from you

because of the evil things that you
have done.”

⁵ This is what Yahweh says

about your false prophets who are deceiving the people:

"If someone gives them food,

those prophets say that things will go well for him.

But they declare that I will punish anyone who does not give them food.

⁶ So now it is as though night will descend on you prophets;

you will not receive any more visions.

It is as though the sun will set for you;

the time when you are greatly honored will end.

⁷ Then you seers will be disgraced;

you will cover your faces because you will be ashamed,

because when you ask me what will happen, there will be no answer from me."

⁸ But as for me, I am full of God's power,
power from the Spirit of Yahweh.

I am just and strong

and declare to the Israelite people

that they have sinned and rebelled against Yahweh.

⁹ You leaders of the people of Israel, listen to this:

You hate it when people do what is just,

and when people say what is true,

you say it is false.

¹⁰ It is as though you are building houses in Jerusalem on foundations

that consist of murdering people and doing what is corrupt.

¹¹ Your leaders make favorable decisions only if they receive bribes.

Your priests teach people only if those people pay them well.

Your false prophets require people to pay them to tell people what will happen to them in the future.

Those prophets say, "Yahweh is telling us what we should say,

and we say that we will not experience any disasters."

¹² Because of what you leaders do,

Mount Zion will be plowed like a field;
it will become a heap of ruins.

The top of the hill, where the temple is now, will be covered with trees.

Chapter 4

¹ Yahweh says that some day his temple will be on top of a mountain,

and that mountain will be the most important one on the earth;

it will be as though it was higher than all the hills,

and huge groups of people from all over the world will come there to worship.

² People from many nations will say to each other,

"Let us go to the mountain where Yahweh is,

to the temple where we can worship the God whom Jacob worshiped.

There he will teach us how he wants us to conduct our lives,

and we will do what he wants us to do."

Mount Zion is the place where he will teach people;

and people will go out from Jerusalem to tell others his messages.

³ Yahweh will settle disputes between many different people and groups who are fighting against each other,

and he will also settle disputes between powerful nations that are far away.

Then people will hammer their swords to cause them to become plow blades,

and hammer their spears to cause them to become pruning knives.

Armies of nations will no longer fight against armies of other nations,

and they will no longer train men how to fight in wars.

⁴ Everyone will sit peacefully under his own grapevines,

and under his own fig trees;

no one will cause them to be afraid.

That is what will surely happen because Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has said it.

⁵ Many of the people of other nations will worship their own gods,

but we will worship Yahweh our God always, forever.

⁶ Yahweh says, "There will soon be a time when I will gather the people whom I have punished,

who have been exiled,

all those whom I have caused to suffer much.

⁷ My people who did not die while they were exiled will become a strong nation again.

Then I, Yahweh, will be their king,

and I will rule from Jerusalem forever.

⁸ As for you people of Jerusalem,

you who guard all of my people as a shepherd guards his sheep from a tower,

you who live on Mount Zion will have great power again.

You people who live in Jerusalem will again rule as you did previously.

⁹ So why are you wailing now?

Is it because you have no king?

Have all your wise people died?

You are weeping loudly like a woman who is giving birth to a baby.

¹⁰ Well, you people of Jerusalem should twist and groan as a woman who is having birth pains,

because now you must leave this city.

While you are traveling, you will set up tents in open fields at night;

you will go to live in Babylon.

But while you are there,

I, Yahweh, will rescue you;

I will free you from the power of your enemies.

¹¹ Now the armies of many nations have gathered to attack you.

They are saying, 'Jerusalem must be destroyed!

We want to see this city when it becomes ruins!'"

¹² The prophet says, they do not know what Yahweh thinks;

and they do not understand what he is planning.

He will gather them and punish them

as farmers thresh grain on the ground.

¹³ Yahweh says, "So, you people of Jerusalem, rise up and punish the nations who oppose you.

I will cause you to be very strong,

as if you had horns made of iron,

as if you had hooves made of bronze;
and you will crush many nations.

Then you will take from your enemies
the valuable things that they have taken
from other countries,

and I will cause you to dedicate those
things to me, the one who is the Lord of all
the people on the earth.”

Chapter 5

¹ You people of Jerusalem, gather your
troops together.

Even though you have a wall around
your city to protect it,

enemy soldiers are surrounding the
city.

Soon they will strike your leader on
his face with a rod.

² But you people of Bethlehem in the
district of Ephrathah,

even though your town is a very small
one among all the towns in Judah,

someone who will rule Israel will be
born in your town.

He will be someone whose family ex-
isted a very long time ago.

³ Now God will allow your enemies to
conquer you, you people of Israel,

but it will be for only a short time,

like the short time that women have
great pain while their babies are being
born.

After that, your fellow countrymen
who were exiled will return to their own
country.

⁴ And that a man who will rule there in
Jerusalem will stand and lead his people
well,

because Yahweh, his God, will cause
him to be strong and greatly honored.

Then the people whom he rules will live
in Jerusalem safely;

he will be greatly honored by people
all over the earth

so no one will dare to attack Jerusalem.

⁵ And he will cause things to go well
with his people.

When the army of Assyria attacks our
country

and breaks though our fortresses,
we will appoint seven or eight leaders
to lead our army to fight against them.

⁶ With their swords our army will defeat
the army of Assyria, whose capital Nim-
rod founded long ago. Our army will rule
their cities.

So our army will rescue us from the
Assyrian army

when they invade our country.

⁷ The descendants of Jacob who survive
will be a blessing to the people of other na-
tions

like dew and rain sent by Yahweh do
good to the grass.

They will not trust in humans to help
them;

instead, they will rely on Yahweh.

⁸ In the midst of their enemies in many
people groups,

the descendants of Jacob who remain
alive will be like a lion among the other
wild beasts of the forest,

like a strong young lion that attacks
sheep in a flock,

and no one will be able to rescue their
enemies.

⁹ You Israelites will defeat all your ene-
mies

and completely destroy them.

¹⁰ Yahweh says,

"At that time, I will destroy you Israelite people's horses that your soldiers use in war,

together with your chariots.

¹¹ I will tear down your city walls

and destroy all your fortified cities.

¹² I will get rid of all those among you who practice magic

and the fortune tellers.

¹³ I will destroy all your idols and stone pillars,

and then you will no longer bow down and worship things that you yourselves have made.

¹⁴ I will get rid of your poles that represent the goddess Asherah,

and I will also destroy all your idols.

¹⁵ Because I will be very angry,

I will also punish the people of all the nations who have not obeyed me."

Chapter 6

¹ Pay attention to what Yahweh will say:

Micah says to Yahweh, "Stand up in court and accuse the Israelites.

Allow the hills and mountains to hear what you will say.

² The mountains must listen carefully to what Yahweh says about his people, so they can be witnesses.

Indeed, Yahweh has many things to accuse his people Israel about.

³ He says this: "My people, what have I done to cause trouble for you ?

What have I done to cause you to experience difficulties?

Answer me!

⁴ I did great things for your ancestors;

I brought them out of Egypt;

I rescued them from that land where they were slaves.

I sent Moses to lead them,

and his older brother Aaron and his older sister Miriam.

⁵ My people, think about when Balak, the king of Moab, requested Beor's son Balaam to curse your ancestors,

and think about what Balaam replied.

Think about how your ancestors crossed the Jordan River miraculously while they were traveling from Acacia to Gilgal.

Think about those things in order that you may know that I, Yahweh, do what is right."

⁶ The Israelite people ask, "What shall we bring to Yahweh who lives in heaven

when we come to him and bow down before him?

Should we bring calves that are a year old

that will be offerings that will be killed and completely burned on the altar?

⁷ Would Yahweh be pleased if we offered to him a thousand rams

and ten thousand streams of olive oil?

Should we offer our firstborn children to be sacrifices

to pay for the sins that we have committed?"

⁸ No, because he has shown each of us what is good to do;

he has shown us what he requires each of us to do:

he wants us to do what is just and to love to act mercifully toward others,

and he wants us to live humbly while we fellowship with him, our God.

⁹ God says this: "I am Yahweh, so if you are wise, you should honor me.

I am calling out to you people of Jerusalem to tell you this:

The armies that will destroy your city are coming,

so pay careful attention to me, the one who is causing them to punish you with my rod.

¹⁰ You wicked people have filled your homes with valuable things

that you acquired by cheating others.

You use false measures when you buy and sell things.

Those are things that I hate.

¹¹ You do not think that I should say nothing about people who use scales that do not weigh correctly,

and who use weights that are not accurate, do you?

¹² The rich people among you always act violently to get money from poor people.

All of the people in Jerusalem are liars,

and they always deceive people.

¹³ Therefore, I have already begun to get rid of you,

to ruin you because of the sins that you have committed.

¹⁴ Soon you will eat food, but you will not have enough to satisfy you;

your stomachs will still feel as though they are empty.

You will try to save up money,

but you will be able to save nothing, because I will send your enemies to take it from you in wars.

¹⁵ You will plant crops,

but you will not harvest anything.

You will press olives,

but others, not you, will use the olive oil.

You will trample on the grapes and make wine from the juice,

but others, not you, will drink the wine.

¹⁶ Those things will happen to you because you obey only the wicked laws of King Omri,

and you do the terrible things that King Ahab and his descendants commanded.

So I will destroy your country,

and I will cause the other people groups to despise you, my own people."

Chapter 7

¹ I am very miserable!

I am like someone who is hungry, who searches for fruit to eat

and who finds no grapes or figs to eat

because all the fruit has been picked.

² Everyone who honored God has disappeared from this land;

not one of them is left.

The people who are left are all murderers;

it is as though everyone is eager to kill his fellow countryman.

³ They do what is evil with all their might.

Government officials and judges all ask for bribes.

Important people tell others what they want,

and they plot together about how to get it.

⁴ Even the best people are as worthless as briars;

the people who we thought to be the most honest are worse than thornbushes.

But Yahweh will soon judge them.

Now is the time that he will punish people,

when they will be very confused because of it.

⁵ So do not trust anyone!

Do not trust even a friend;

even be careful what you say to your wife, whom you love.

⁶ Boys will despise their fathers,

and girls will defy their mothers.

Women will defy their mothers-in-law.

Your enemies will be those who live in your own house.

⁷ As for me, I wait for Yahweh to help me.

I confidently expect that God, my Savior, will answer me when I pray.

⁸ You who are our enemies,

do not gloat about what has happened to us,

because even if we have experienced disasters,

those disasters will end, and we will be prosperous again.

Even if it is as though we are sitting in the darkness,

Yahweh will be our light.

⁹ We must be patient while Yahweh punishes us

because we have sinned against him.

But later, it will be as though he will go to court and defend us.

He will make sure that the judge makes a right decision about us.

It will be as though he will bring us out into the light,

and we will see him rescue us.

¹⁰ Our enemies will also see it, and they will be disgraced

because they ridiculed us, saying

“Why is Yahweh, that God of yours, not helping you?”

But with our own eyes we will see them be defeated;

we will see them trampled

like mud in the streets.

¹¹ You people of Israel, at that time your cities will be rebuilt,

and your territory will become larger.

¹² Your people will come back to you from many countries,

from Assyria, from near the Euphrates River in the east, and from Egypt in the south,

from the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean Sea,

and from many mountains.

¹³ But the other countries on the earth will become desolate

because of the evil deeds that their people have done.

¹⁴ Yahweh, protect your people as a shepherd protects his sheep with his staff.

Lead the people whom you have chosen to belong to you.

Even though some of them live by themselves in a forest,

give them the fertile pastureland
in the regions of Bashan and Gilead,
which they possessed long ago.

¹⁵ Yahweh says,

“Yes, I will perform miracles for you
like the miracles that I performed
when I rescued your ancestors from being
slaves in Egypt.”

¹⁶ People from many nations will see
what Yahweh does for you,

and they will be ashamed
because they do not have any power.

They will put their hands over their
mouths and their ears because they will
be very amazed at what Yahweh does.

They will not be able to say anything
or hear anything, because they will be ter-
rified.

¹⁷ Being very humiliated, they will crawl
on the ground like snakes.

They will come out of their homes trem-
bling

and stand to honor Yahweh our God.

They will be very afraid of him
and will tremble in front of him.

¹⁸ Yahweh, there is no God like you;
you forgive the sins that the people
who have survived committed,
the people who belong to you.

You do not remain angry forever;
you are very happy to show us that
you faithfully love us.

¹⁹ You will again act kindly toward us.

You will get rid of the scroll on
which you have written the sins that we
have committed,

as though you were trampling it under
your feet

or throwing it into the deep ocean.

²⁰ You will show that you faithfully do
what you promised for us and faithfully
love us,

just as you solemnly promised long
ago to our ancestors Abraham and Jacob
that you would do.

NAHUM

Chapter 1

¹ I am Nahum, from the village of Elkosh. This is a message about the city of Nineveh, a message that Yahweh gave me in a vision.

² Yahweh our God tolerates no rival gods to himself.

He is very angry with those who worship other gods,

and he continues to be angry with his enemies.

³ Yahweh does not quickly become angry;

but he is very powerful,

and he will never say that his enemies are innocent.

Wherever he walks, there are whirlwinds and storms,

and clouds are like the dust stirred up by his feet.

⁴ When he commands oceans and rivers to become dry, they dry up.

He causes the grass to wither

in the fields in the region of Bashan and on the slopes of Mount Carmel,

and he causes the flowers in Lebanon to fade.

⁵ When he appears, it is as though the mountains shake and the hills melt;

the earth quakes, and the people on the earth tremble.

⁶ There is no one who can resist him when he becomes extremely angry;

there is no one who can survive when his anger is very hot.

When he is very angry, it is as though his anger is like a blazing fire,

and it is as though mountains are shattered into pieces.

⁷ But he is good;

he protects us, his people, when we experience troubles.

He takes care of those who trust in him.

⁸ But he will get rid of his enemies;

he will be to them like a flood that destroys everything.

He will chase his enemies into the darkness of the place where the dead are.

⁹ So it is useless for you people of Nineveh to plot against Yahweh.

He will not need to strike you two times to destroy you;

he will destroy you by striking you only once.

¹⁰ It will be as though his enemies are tangled in thorns

and they will stagger like people who have drunk a lot of wine.

It will be as though they will be burned up like dry stubble.

¹¹ In Nineveh there was a man who advised people to do very wicked things against Yahweh. ¹² But this is what Yahweh says to you Israelites:

"Although the people of Assyria have very many people

and their army is very powerful,

they will be destroyed and they will disappear.

I say to my people in Judah,

I have already punished you,

but I will not punish you again.

¹³ Now I will cause the people of Assyria to no longer enslave you; it will be as though I will tear off the shackles on your hands and feet.”

¹⁴ And this is what Yahweh also declares about you people of Nineveh:

”You will not have any descendants who will continue to have your family names.

And I will destroy all the statues of your gods

that were carved or formed in molds.

I will cause you to be killed and sent to your graves, because you are vile!”

¹⁵ You people of Judah. Look! A messenger will come across the mountains,

and he will bring good news to you.

He will declare that you will now have peace.

So celebrate your festivals, and do what you solemnly promised

to do when your enemies were threatening to attack you,

because your wicked enemies will not invade your country again,

because they will be completely destroyed.

Chapter 2

¹ You people of Nineveh, your enemies are coming to attack you. So place guards on the tops of the walls around the city! Guard the roads into the city! Get ready to fight! Gather your troops together! ² Even though your soldiers have destroyed the descendants of Jacob, Yahweh will cause other nations to honor them again. Invaders from your country have ruined Israel as enemies would uproot a vineyard, but Israel will prosper

again. ³ The shields of the enemy soldiers who are coming to attack you will shine red as the sun shines on them,

and they will wear bright red uniforms.

The metal of their chariot wheels will flash when they line up before the battle,

and their soldiers will lift up their cypress spear and wave them.

⁴ Their chariots dash through the streets of Nineveh

and rush furiously through the plazas.

Going as quickly as lightning,

they look like flaming torches.

⁵ An officer gives a command to his officials,

and they come to him so quickly that they stumble.

They run up the city wall to attack it,

and they set up a large wooden shield above the soldiers to protect them.

⁶ The enemy soldiers will force open the city gates on the rivers;

the palace will collapse.

⁷ The queen will have her clothes stripped off her by enemy soldiers,

and her slave girls will moan like doves

and beat their breasts to show that they are very sad. ⁸ The people will rush from Nineveh

like water rushes from a broken dam.

The officials will shout, “Stop! Stop!”

but the people will not even look back as they run away.

⁹ The enemy attackers say to each other,

”Seize the silver!

Grab the gold!

There is a huge amount of very valuable things in the city,

more valuable things than anyone can count!"

¹⁰ Soon everything valuable in the city will be seized or ruined. People will be trembling, with the result that they will not be able to fight. Their faces will all become pale with fear.

¹¹ After that happens, people will say,

"What happened to that great city of Nineveh?

It was like a den full of young lions, where the male and female lions lived and fed the young ones, where they were afraid of nothing.

¹² The soldiers in Nineveh were like lions that killed or strangled other animals and brought the meat to their dens." ¹³ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says to the people of Nineveh,

"I am your enemy;

I will cause your chariots to burn in fire and go up in smoke.

Your young men will be killed with swords.

I will make all the valuable things you stole from other nations disappear.

Your messengers will never again take messages to other nations, demanding that

their armies surrender to them."

Chapter 3

¹ Terrible things will happen to Nineveh, that city that is full of people who murder, steal and lie. The city is full of people who

the soldiers carried away from other countries. ² But now listen to the enemy soldiers coming to attack Nineveh; listen to them cracking their whips, and listen to the rattle of their chariot wheels! Listen to their galloping horses and their chariots as they bounce along! ³ Look at their flashing swords and glittering spears as the horsemen race forward! Many people of Nineveh will be killed; there will be piles of corpses, so many that the attackers will stumble over them. ⁴ All that will happen because Nineveh is like a beautiful prostitute

who lures men to where they will be ruined;

Nineveh is a beautiful city

that has attracted people of other nations to come there.

The people of Nineveh taught those people of other nations rituals of magic,

and caused them to become their slaves.

⁵ So Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says to the people of Nineveh:

"I am your enemy, and I will cause the people

in other nations to see you completely humiliated;

like women who have committed adultery are humiliated

by having their skirts lifted high,

with the result that people can see their naked bodies.

⁶ I will cause others to throw garbage at you;

I will show others that I despise you very much,

and I will cause everyone to ridicule you in public.

⁷ All those who see you will turn their backs to you and say,

'Nineveh is ruined,

but absolutely no one will mourn for it.'

Nineveh, no one will want to comfort you."

⁸ Your city is certainly no safer than the city of Thebes was.

Thebes was an important city beside the Nile River;

the river was like a wall around her.

⁹ The rulers of Ethiopia and Egypt helped Thebes; there was no limit to their power.

The governments of the nearby countries of Put and Libya

were also allies of Thebes.

¹⁰ Nevertheless, Thebes was captured, and its people were exiled.

Their babies were dashed to pieces in the streets of the city.

Enemy soldiers cast lots to decide who would get

each official in Thebes to become his slave.

All the leaders of Thebes were fastened by chains.

¹¹ You people of Nineveh will similarly become dazed and drunk,

and you will search for places to hide to escape from your enemies.

¹² Your enemies will cause the walls around your city to fall down

like the first figs that fall right into your mouths when you shake the tree.

This is how easily your city will be captured.

¹³ Look at your soldiers!

They will be like weak women!

The gates of your city will be opened

wide

to allow your enemies to enter them,

and then the bars of those gates will be burned.

¹⁴ Store up water now to use when your enemies surround the city!

Repair the forts!

Dig up clay and trample it to make it soft,

and put it into molds to make bricks to repair the walls!

¹⁵ Nevertheless, your enemies will burn your city;

they will kill you with their swords;

they will kill you as locusts destroy crops.

Go ahead and increase your population like swarms of locusts and grasshoppers.

¹⁶ In your city there are now very many merchants;

more than stars.

But when your city is being destroyed, those merchants will take the valuable things and disappear

like locusts that strip the leaves from plants and then fly away.

¹⁷ Your leaders are also like a swarm of locusts

that crowd together on the fences on a cold day,

and then fly away when the sun comes up,

and no one knows where they have gone.

¹⁸ King of Assyria, your officials will all die;

your important people will lie down
and rest forever.

Your people will be scattered over the
mountains,

and there will be no one to gather them
together. ¹⁹ You are like someone who has
a wound that cannot be healed;

it will be a wound that causes him to
die.

And all those who hear about what
has happened to you will clap their hands
joyfully.

They will say, "Everyone has suffered
because he continually acted very cruelly
toward us."

HABAKKUK

Chapter 1

¹ This is the conversation between Habakkuk the prophet and Yahweh.

² I said, "Yahweh, how long must I continue to call to you for help before you respond?"

I cry out, "The people are acting so violently!"

but you do not rescue me!

³ Why do you make me watch people do what is wrong, but you do nothing?

I see people destroying things and acting violently; they fight and quarrel everywhere.

⁴ No one obeys the law of Moses, and no one acts in a right way for very long.

Wicked people always defeat the righteous people in the courts,

because judges never make fair decisions."

⁵ Yahweh replied to me,

"This is happening, but look around at what is happening in the other nations.

If you look, you will be amazed, and even astonished, since I am doing something

during this time that you would never have believed would happen,

even if someone told you about it.

⁶ Very soon I will bring the soldiers of Babylonia, who are fierce and swift.

They will march across the entire earth and conquer many other countries.

⁷ They are a people whom others fear very much,

and they do whatever they want to,

because they believe that they are very great and that they have the right to judge everyone else.

⁸ The horses that pull their chariots go faster than leopards,

and they are fiercer than wolves are in the evening.

The horses on which the soldiers ride gallop swiftly;

the soldiers riding them come from distant places.

They are like eagles that swoop down to snatch their prey.

⁹ As they ride along,

they are determined to act violently.

They advance eagerly, as fast as the wind over the desert,

and gather up as many prisoners as there are grains of sand!

¹⁰ They make fun of kings and princes of other countries,

and they ridicule all the cities that have high walls around them.

They pile up earth around those cities to capture them.

¹¹ They rush past like the wind,

and then they go to attack other cities.

But they are very guilty,

because they think that their own power is their god!"

¹² Then I said, "Yahweh, are you not the eternal God?

You are my Holy One, so we will not die.

So why have you sent those men from Babylonia to judge us and kill us?

You are like our Rock, on top of which we can hide,

so why have you sent them to punish us?

¹³ You are pure, and you cannot endure looking at what is evil,

so why are you ignoring men who are treacherous?

Why do you do nothing

to punish those wicked men from Babylonia,

who destroy people who are more righteous than they are?

¹⁴ They treat us like fish in the sea,

or like other creatures in the sea, that have no ruler.

¹⁵ The soldiers of Babylonia think that we are fish for them to pull out of the sea with hooks

or to catch in their nets, while they rejoice and celebrate.

¹⁶ If they catch us, they will worship their weapons with which they captured us

and offer sacrifices to them and burn incense in front of them!

They will say, 'These weapons have enabled us to become rich and eat expensive food.'

¹⁷ Will you allow them to continue to conquer people forever?

Will you allow them to destroy people of other nations without any mercy for anyone?"

Chapter 2

¹ After I said that, I said to myself, "I will climb up into my guard post,

and stand there in my watchtower.

I will wait there to find out what Yahweh will say,

what he will reply and how I should answer."

² Then Yahweh replied to me,

"Write plainly on tablets what I am revealing to you in this vision,

and then read it to a messenger

so he can run with it to tell it to other people.

³ In this vision I will talk about things that will happen in the future.

Now is not the time when those things will happen,

but they certainly will happen,

and when they occur, they will occur quickly,

and they will not be delayed.

You want those things to happen immediately, but they are not happening.

But wait patiently for them to happen!

⁴ Think about the proud people!

They are certainly not doing what is righteous.

But people who are righteous will live

because they faithfully do what I want them to do.

⁵ If people live for excess such as wine, they will deceive themselves,

and proud people are never able to rest.

Greedy people open their mouths as wide as the place where dead people are,

and they never have enough,

just like the place of the dead never has enough dead people.

The armies of Babylonia conquer many nations for themselves,
and capture all their people.

⁶ But soon all those whom they have captured will ridicule the soldiers from Babylonia!

They will make fun of them, saying,

'Terrible things will happen to you who have stolen things from other countries!

You got many things by forcing people to give them to you.

But you certainly will not keep those things for long!'

⁷ Suddenly those whom you forced to be unjustly indebted to you will rise up

and cause you to tremble,

and they will take away all the things that you have stolen from them.

⁸ You stole things from the people of many nations.

You murdered people of many people groups,

and you destroyed their land and their cities.

So those who are still alive will steal valuable things from you.

⁹ Terrible things will happen to you people of Babylonia who build big houses

with money that you got by forcing others to give it to you.

You are proud, and you think that your houses will be safe

because you have built them in places where you can easily defend them.

¹⁰ But because you have destroyed others,

you have caused your family

and yourselves shame!

¹¹ The stones in the walls of your houses cry out to accuse you,

and the beams in your ceilings also say the same things!

¹² Terrible things will happen to you people of Babylonia who kill people in order to build cities,

cities that you build by using money that you have gotten by committing crimes.

¹³ But Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has declared that everything that is built by people who do things like that will be destroyed by fire;

they will have worked hard uselessly.

¹⁴ But in contrast, like the oceans are filled with water,

the earth will be filled with people who know that Yahweh is very great!

¹⁵ Terrible things will happen to you people of Babylonia,

who cause people who live in nearby countries to become drunk.

You force them to drink a lot of drugged wine

until they are drunk and then they walk around naked

because you are happy when you see that.

¹⁶ But you are the ones who soon will be disgraced instead of being honored.

It will be as though you are forced to drink a lot of wine until you will also stagger around, drunk.

You will drink the wine that symbolizes that Yahweh will punish you,

and he will cause others to dishonor you instead of honoring you.

¹⁷ You did violent things to the people in Lebanon,

and you killed the wild animals there,

but you will be punished severely for doing that.

You have killed many people

and you have destroyed their lands and their cities.

¹⁸ You people of Babylonia need to know that your idols are completely useless,

because it is people who made them.

Statues that have been carved or made in a mold deceive you.

Those who trust in idols

are trusting in things that they themselves created,

things that cannot speak!

¹⁹ Terrible things will happen to you who say to lifeless idols that are made of wood,

‘Wake up!’

Stone idols certainly cannot tell you what you should do;

they look nice because they are covered with silver and gold,

but they are not alive.

²⁰ But Yahweh is in his holy temple;

everyone on the earth should be silent in his presence!”

Chapter 3

¹ A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet. ² Yahweh, I have heard about you;

and I revere you because of all the amazing things that you have done.

In our time, do again some of those things that you did long ago!

Even when you are angry with us,
act mercifully toward us!

³ In a vision, I saw God, the Holy One, coming from the region of Teman in Edom;

I also saw him coming from the Paran hills in the region of Sinai.

His glory filled the sky,

and the earth was full of people who were praising him.

⁴ His glory was like the sunrise;

rays flashed from his hands

where he keeps his power.

⁵ He sent plagues in front of him,

and other plagues came behind him.

⁶ When he stopped, the earth shook.

When he looked at the nations,

all the people trembled.

The hills and mountains that have existed since the beginning of time collapsed and crumbled.

He is the only one who exists eternally!

⁷ In the vision I saw the people who live in tents in the region of Cushan were very afraid,

and the people in the region of Midian were trembling.

⁸ Yahweh, was it because you were angry with the rivers and streams that you struck them?

Did the seas cause you to be furious,
with the result that you rode through them with horses that were pulling chariots

that you used to bring victory to your cause?

⁹ It was as though you uncovered your bow and prepared to shoot it,

and had grasped arrows to put to your bow.

Then you split open the earth,
and streams burst out.

¹⁰ It is as though the mountains saw you doing that,

and they trembled in pain.

The water rushed by in floods;

it was as though the deep ocean roared and caused its waves to rise up high.

¹¹ The sun and moon stopped moving in the sky,

while your lightning flashed past like a swift arrow,

and your glittering spear flashed.

¹² Being very angry, you walked across the earth

and trampled the armies of many nations!

¹³ But you also went to rescue your people,

and to save the one whom you have chosen.

You struck down the leader of those wicked people

and took away all his power completely.

¹⁴ With his own spear you destroyed the leader of those soldiers who rushed like a whirlwind to attack and scatter us,

thinking that they could conquer us as easily as they defeat the weak people who hide from them.

¹⁵ You walked through the sea with your horses to destroy our enemies,

and caused the waves to surge.

¹⁶ When I saw that vision,

my heart pounded

and my lips quivered

because I became afraid.

My legs became weak

and I shook, because I was terrified.

But I will wait quietly for the people of Babylonia, those who invaded our country, to experience disasters!

¹⁷ Therefore,

even if there are no blossoms on the fig trees,

and there are no grapes on the grapevines,

and even if there are no olives growing on the olive trees,

and there are no crops in the fields,

and even if the flocks of sheep and goats die in the fields,

and there are no cattle in the stalls, this is what I will do.

¹⁸ I will rejoice because of Yahweh!

I will be joyful because my God is the one who saves me!

¹⁹ Yahweh the Lord is the one who gives me strength,

and he enables me to climb safely like a deer does,

he makes me walk on my high hills.

(This message is for the choir director:

When this prayer is sung, it is to be accompanied by people playing stringed instruments.)

ZEPHANIAH

Chapter 1

¹ Yahweh's message came to Zephaniah son of Cushi, the grandson of Gedaliah, and the great-grandson of Amariah, whose father was King Hezekiah. Yahweh gave this message during the time when King Amon's son Josiah was the king of Judah.

² Yahweh said,

"I will sweep away everything that is on the earth.

³ I will sweep away people and animals.

I will sweep away birds and fish.

I will get rid of wicked people;

so that there will be no more wicked people on the earth."

⁴ "These are some of the things that I will do:

I will punish the people who live in Jerusalem and other places in Judah,

and destroy everything that has been used in the worship of Baal and

and cause people to no longer remember the names of the pagan priests

or the other priests who have turned away from me.

⁵ I will get rid of those who go up on the roofs of their houses and worship the sun, moon, and stars,

and those who claim to worship me but also swear using the name of their king.

⁶ Finally, I will get rid of all those who previously worshiped me but no longer do;

those who no longer seek my help or request me to tell them what they should do."

⁷ Be silent in front of Yahweh the Lord,

because it will soon be the time when Yahweh will judge and punish people.

Yahweh has prepared himself to get rid of the people of Judah;

they will be like animals that are set apart to be slaughtered for sacrifices,

and he has chosen their enemies to be the ones who will get rid of them.

⁸ Yahweh says, "On that day when I will get rid of the people of Judah,

I will punish their officials and the king's sons,

and all those who worship foreign gods—

⁹ including those who show that they revere their god Dagan by avoiding stepping on the threshold of his temple,

and those who do violent things and tell lies in the temples of their gods."

¹⁰ Yahweh also says,

"On that day, people will cry out at the Fish Gate of Jerusalem.

People will wail in the Second Quarter of the city,

and people will hear a loud crash of buildings collapsing in the hills.

¹¹ All you people who live in the market area of Jerusalem should wail,

because all those who sell goods for money will be slaughtered.

¹² It will be as though I will light lanterns to search in dark places in Jerusalem

for those who have become very satisfied with their behavior and complacent about their sins.

They think that I, Yahweh, will do neither good nor bad things, as if I do not even exist!

¹³ So I have decided that armies will come and carry off their valuable possessions,

after destroying their houses.

The people will build new homes,

but they will not live in them;

they will plant vineyards again,

but they will never drink any wine made from grapes that grow.”

¹⁴ It will soon be the day when Yahweh will punish people.

It will be here quickly.

It will be a time when even brave soldiers will cry loudly.

¹⁵ It will be a time when God shows that he is very angry,

a time when people experience much distress and trouble.

It will be a time when many things are ruined, destroyed, and when everyone goes away.

It will be a time when it is very gloomy and dark,

when the clouds are very black.

¹⁶ It will be a time when soldiers will blow trumpets to call other soldiers to battle.

Your enemies will tear down the walls around your cities

and the high towers at the corners of those walls.

¹⁷ Because you sinned against Yahweh,

he will cause you to experience great distress;

you will walk around groping as blind people do.

Your blood will flow from your bodies like falling soil,

and your corpses will lie on the ground and rot.

¹⁸ At the time that Yahweh shows that he is very angry with you,

you will not be able to save yourselves by giving silver or gold to your enemies.

Because Yahweh is very jealous,

he will send a fire to burn up the entire world,

and he will completely get rid, in a most terrifying way, of all the wicked people who live on the earth.

Chapter 2

¹ You people of Judah who ought to be ashamed,

gather together to ask for God to be merciful to you.

² Yahweh is very angry with you,

so gather together now,

before he punishes you—before he punishes you

and sweeps you away as the wind blows away the chaff.

³ All you people in Judah who are humble,

worship Yahweh and obey what he has commanded.

Try to do what is right

and to be humble.

If you do that, perhaps Yahweh will protect you

on the day when he punishes people.

⁴ When Yahweh punishes Philistia,

the cities of Gaza and Ashkelon will lose all their inhabitants.

Ashdod will be attacked and the people will be driven away at noon, when they are resting.

The people of the city of Ekron will also be driven out.

⁵ And terrible things will happen to you people of Philistia who live near the sea,

because Yahweh has said he will punish you, also.

He will get rid of all of you; not one of you will survive!

⁶ The land of Philistia near the sea will become a pasture,

a place for shepherds and their sheep pens.

⁷ The people of Judah who survive will possess that land.

At night they will sleep in the deserted houses in Ashkelon.

Yahweh will take care of them;

he will enable them to prosper again.

⁸ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, the God of the Israelites, says this:

"I have heard the people of Moab and Ammon

insult my people and plan to conquer my people's country.

⁹ So now, as surely as I live, I will destroy Moab and Ammon

as I destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.

Their land will be a place where there are nettles and salt pits;

it will be ruined forever, with none of their people living there!

My people who survive will take away all their valuable possessions

and also occupy their land."

¹⁰ The people of Moab and Ammon will get what they deserve for being proud,

because they made fun of the people who belong to Yahweh, commander of the angel armies.

¹¹ Yahweh will cause them to be terrified when he destroys all the gods of their countries.

Then people from every nation will worship Yahweh,

each in his own country.

¹² Yahweh says that he will also slaughter the people of Ethiopia.

¹³ Yahweh will punish and destroy Assyria,

that land northeast of us, and cause its capital Nineveh

to become ruined and deserted, and as dry as the desert.

¹⁴ Flocks of sheep and herds of cattle and many kinds of wild animals will lie down there.

Owls and crows will sit on the columns of the destroyed buildings,

and they will hoot through the windows.

There will be rubble in the doorways,

and the valuable cedar beams in the roofs of the buildings will become visible.

¹⁵ The people of Nineveh used to be happy and proud,

thinking that they were very safe.

They were always saying,

"Our city is the greatest city;

there is no city as great as ours!"

But now it will become a horrible place to see,

a place where wild animals make their dens.

And everyone who passes by there will hiss and scorn that city,

and shake their fists to show that they detest that city very much.

Chapter 3

¹ Terrible things will happen to Jerusalem,

the city whose people have rebelled against Yahweh

and who have become unacceptable to him because of the sins that they have committed.

They act violently toward others and they oppress other people.

² The people there pay no attention to the prophets whom Yahweh has sent to tell them the wrong things that they are doing

and try to correct them.

The people in Jerusalem do not trust in their God or worship him.

³ Their leaders are like roaring lions;

they are like wolves that attack during the evening,

and eat everything that they kill,

with the result that the next morning there is nothing left of those animals to eat.

⁴ The prophets in Jerusalem are proud,

and the priests give messages that no one should trust.

They make the temple unholy by doing things that are against the law of Moses.

⁵ But Yahweh is also in the city, and he never does what is wrong.

He treats people justly, day after day;

but wicked people are never ashamed about their wrongdoing.

⁶ Yahweh says this:

"I have destroyed many nations;

I have destroyed their strong city walls and towers.

Now I have caused the streets in those cities to be completely deserted.

Those cities are ruined and there is no one still alive there.

They are all dead.

⁷ So I said to myself,

'Because of what I have done to those other nations,

surely the people of Jerusalem will honor me now

and allow me to correct them.

If they do that, I will not destroy them;

I will not punish them like I said that I would do.'

But in spite of knowing how I punished those other nations,

they were still eager to get up early each morning

and continue to perform evil deeds."

⁸ This is what Yahweh declares:

"Wait for the day when I will take action to plunder you!

I have decided to gather the people of the kingdoms of the earth

and cause them to know that I am very angry with them.

All over the earth I will punish and destroy people;

I will burn them up with my anger as if it were fire!

⁹ When that happens, I will cause all people to be changed

and enable them to speak only what is pure,

in order that everyone can worship me as one people.

¹⁰ Then my people who were forced to go to other countries, those who live along the upper part of the Nile River in Ethiopia,

will come to me and bring offerings to me.

¹¹ At that time, you people in Jerusalem will no longer be ashamed about what has happened to you,

because you no longer will be rebelling against me.

I will get rid of all the people among you who are very proud.

No one on Zion, my holy hill, will strut around proudly anymore.

¹² Those who are still alive in Israel will be poor and humble;

they will trust in me.

¹³ Those people who are still alive in Israel will not do anything wrong;

they will tell no lies or deceive anyone.

They will eat and sleep safely,

because no one will cause them to be afraid."

¹⁴ You people who live in Jerusalem and other places in Israel,

sing and shout loudly!

Be glad, and rejoice with all your inner being,

¹⁵ because Yahweh will take away the charges against you,

and he will make your enemies go enemies far away from you!

Yahweh himself, the king of the Israelites, will live among you,

and you will never again be afraid that others will harm you.

¹⁶ At that time, other people will say to us people of Jerusalem,

"You people of Jerusalem, do not be afraid; do not become weak or discouraged."

¹⁷ Yahweh your God will live among you.

He is mighty, and he will rescue you.

He will be very happy about you;

because he loves you, he will cause you to rest without being anxious.

He will sing loudly to rejoice about you,

¹⁸ like people who are happy at a festival. Yahweh says, "I will no longer allow any enemies to destroy you. You will no longer be defeated or ashamed.

¹⁹ Truly, I will severely punish all those who oppressed you.

I will rescue those who are helpless and those who were forced to go to other countries, just as a shepherd would rescue his lost sheep.

I will give them praise and honor in every country where they were exiled,

places where they had been disgraced.

²⁰ At that time, I will gather you together and bring you back home to Israel.

I will cause you to greatly praised and honored

among all the nations of the earth.

You will see when I bring your people home again."

This is what Yahweh, has declared!

HAGGAI

Chapter 1

¹ Haggai, who was a prophet, received a message from Yahweh. Yahweh spoke this message to him in the second year after Darius had become king of Persia. This happened on the first day of the sixth month of that year. Haggai told this message to Shealtiel's son Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, and to Jehozadak's son Joshua, the high priest.

² Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, told him that the people were saying that it was not yet time for them to rebuild Yahweh's temple.

³ Then Yahweh gave him this message to tell to the people of Jerusalem: ⁴ "It is not right for you to be living in luxurious houses while my temple is only ruins! ⁵ I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says this: 'Think about what you are doing. ⁶ You have planted a lot of seeds, but you are not getting many crops to harvest. You eat food, but you never get enough. You drink wine, but you are still thirsty. You wear clothes, but you do not stay warm. You earn money, but it is spent as quickly as you make it.'

⁷ So this is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says: 'Think about what you are doing. ⁸ Then go up into the hills, cut down trees, bring timber down here, and rebuild my temple. When you do that, I will be pleased and I will appear there with my glory. ⁹ You expected to harvest plenty of crops, but there were few crops to harvest because I removed them. I did this because my temple is a ruin, while each of you are busy building your own beautiful house. ¹⁰ It is because of what you are doing that rain does not fall from

the sky, and as a result there are no crops. ¹¹ I have caused a drought over both fields and mountains and all your other crops—whether grain or wine or oil—have dried up. Because of that, you and your cattle do not have enough food, and the hard work that you have done will be for nothing.'"

¹² Then Zerubbabel and Jeshua and all the others of God's people who were still alive obeyed the message that Yahweh their God had spoken, and they listened to the message that Haggai had given them, because they knew that Yahweh their God had sent him. Then they honored Yahweh, for he was present with them.

¹³ Then Haggai, who was Yahweh's messenger, gave this message from Yahweh to the people: "I, Yahweh, declare that I am with you." ¹⁴ So Yahweh motivated Zerubbabel and Joshua and the other people to want to rebuild the temple of their God, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies. So they gathered together and started to work to rebuild it. ¹⁵ They started that work on the twenty-fourth day of the same month in which Yahweh had spoken to Haggai.

Chapter 2

¹ Almost one month later, on the twenty-first day of the next month, Yahweh gave the prophet Haggai another message. ² The message was that he should say this to Shealtiel's son Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, Jehozadek's son Jeshua the high priest, and to the other people who were still alive in Jerusalem: ³ "Do any of you remember how glorious our former temple was? If you do, what does it look like to you now? It must seem like nothing at all. ⁴ But now Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says to all of you, to Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the rest of you people

who live in this nation, 'Do not be discouraged; instead be strong! ⁵ My Spirit remains among you, like I promised your ancestors when they left Egypt. So do not be afraid!'

⁶ This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says: 'Soon I will shake again the sky and the earth, the oceans and the ground. ⁷ I will shake again the people of all the nations, and as a result they will bring their treasures to this temple. I will fill this temple with my glory. ⁸ The silver and the gold that they own are really mine, so they will bring them to me. ⁹ Then this temple will be more glorious than the former temple was. And I will cause things to go well for you all. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, have said it.'"

¹⁰ Then on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month of that same year, Yahweh gave still another message to the prophet Haggai: ¹¹ "This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies says: 'Ask the priests this question about what is written in the laws of Moses about sacrifices: ¹² If one of you priests takes from the altar some meat that was sacrificed and is carrying it in his robes, if his robe touches some bread or stew or wine or olive oil or some other food, does that food also become holy?'"

When he said that to the priests, they replied, "No."

¹³ Then Haggai asked them, "If someone becomes unacceptable to God by touching a corpse, and then he touches any of those foods, will the food also become unacceptable to God?"

The priests replied, "Yes."

¹⁴ Then Haggai replied, "Yahweh says this: 'It is the same with you people and with this nation. Everything that you do and

all the sacrifices that you all offer are unacceptable to me because of the sins that you have committed.

¹⁵ Think about what has been happening to you before you began to lay the foundation of my temple. ¹⁶ When you expected to harvest twenty measures of grain, you harvested only ten. When someone went to a big wine vat to get fifty measures of wine, there were only twenty in the vat. ¹⁷ I sent blight and mildew to destroy all your crops. But still you did not return to me.' This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says to you.

¹⁸ Starting from this day, the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month of this year, the day when you have laid the foundation of my new temple, continue to think carefully about your situation. ¹⁹ Is there now any grain seed left in your barns? No, because you have eaten the small amount that you harvested. And there is no fruit on your grapevines and fig trees and pomegranate trees and olive trees.

But, from now on, I will bless you!"

²⁰ On that same day, Yahweh gave another message to Haggai. ²¹ He said, "Tell Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, that I am going to shake the sky and the earth. ²² I will end the power of the kings of many nations. I will cause their chariots and their drivers, their horses and the soldiers who are riding on them to be destroyed. The soldiers will kill each other with their own swords.

²³ Zerubbabel, you will become my servant on that day. And I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, declare that like kings wear signet rings to show that they have authority to rule people, I will appoint you and cause you to have authority to rule. I will do that because I have chosen you. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, commander of the angel

armies, have said it.”

ZECHARIAH

Chapter 1

¹ When Darius had been the emperor of Persia for two years, in the eighth month his reign, Yahweh gave Zechariah the prophet, son of Berekiah and grandson of Iddo the prophet, this message:

² "I was very angry with your ancestors.

³ So tell this to the people: Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says this: 'Return to me, and if you do that, I will help you again. ⁴ Do not be like your ancestors. Prophets, who have now died, continually proclaimed to your ancestors that they should stop doing the evil things that they were always doing. But they refused to pay attention to what I said. ⁵ Your ancestors have died and are now in their graves. Even the prophets did not live forever either. ⁶ But the commands and the decrees that I had instructed my servants the prophets to tell them—your ancestors did not obey them, so I punished them. So then they repented and said that I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, had done to them what they deserved for their evil behavior, just like I had said I would do.'"

⁷ On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, Yahweh gave another message to me.

⁸ During the night I had a vision. In the vision I saw an angel who was on a red horse. He was in a narrow valley among some myrtle trees. Behind him were angels on other horses—red, reddish-brown, and white horses.

⁹ I asked the angel who had been talking to me, "Sir, who are those angels on the horses?"

He replied, "I will show you who they are."

¹⁰ Then the angel who had stopped under the myrtle trees explained. He said, "They are the angels whom Yahweh has sent to patrol the entire world."

¹¹ Then those angels reported to the angel of Yahweh who was under the myrtle trees, "We have traveled throughout the world, and we have found out that the army of the emperor has conquered nations throughout the world, and that they are now helpless and inactive."

¹² Then the angel asked, "Yahweh, Commander of the angel armies, how long will you continue to not act mercifully toward Jerusalem and the other towns in Judah? You have been angry with them for seventy years!" ¹³ So Yahweh spoke kindly to the angel who had talked to me, saying things that comforted him.

¹⁴ Then the angel who had been talking with me said to me, "Proclaim this to the people of Jerusalem: Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says that he is very concerned about the people who live on Mount Zion and in the other parts of Jerusalem. ¹⁵ And he is very angry with the nations that are proud and feel safe. He was only a little bit angry with Judah, but they caused them to suffer much more.

¹⁶ Therefore, he says that he will go back to Jerusalem and help the people. It will be as if he himself had surveyed and measured all the land in the city. ¹⁷ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, also said to tell people in his cities in Judah that they will soon be very prosperous again. He will encourage the people of Jerusalem again, and he will again choose Jerusalem as his special city."

¹⁸ Then I looked up and saw four animal horns in front of me. ¹⁹ I asked the angel who had been speaking to me, "What are

those horns?”

He replied, “Those horns represent the nations that forced the people of Jerusalem and other places in Judah and Israel to go to other countries.”

²⁰ Then Yahweh showed me four blacksmiths. ²¹ I asked, “What are those men coming to do?”

He replied, “The nations that those horns represent scattered the people of Judah, so they suffered greatly. But these blacksmiths are coming to frighten and destroy those nations and to throw down their horns, their power—all those nations who had attacked the land of Judah.”

Chapter 2

¹ Then I looked up and saw a man with a surveyor’s line. ² I asked him, “Where are you going?”

He replied, “I am going to survey Jerusalem, to determine how wide it is and how long it is.”

³ Then the angel who had been talking to me started to leave, and another angel walked toward him. ⁴ The second angel said to him, “Run and tell that young man with the surveyor’s line: Some day there will be very many people and livestock in Jerusalem, so they will not all be able to live inside the city walls; many will live outside the walls in the open country. ⁵ Yahweh says that he himself will be like a wall of fire around the city, and he will be among the people with his glory.”

⁶ Yahweh declares to the people who the Babylonians took away as slaves: “Run! Run! Flee from Babylonia, and flee from the places where I scattered you to the four winds!”

⁷ Run! You who now live in Babylon, run here to Jerusalem!” ⁸ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, honored me by telling me to go to the nations who took everything you owned, for those who harm you harm what is most precious to him! After he did that, he said this to me: ⁹ “Tell them that I, Yahweh, will attack them. Their own slaves will take back their possessions from them, the people who had taken them in the first place.” When that happens, you Jewish people will know that Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, is the one who sent me, Zechariah, as a prophet.

¹⁰ Yahweh says, “You people of Jerusalem, shout and be happy, because I will come to you and live among you!”

¹¹ At that time, people of many nations will join with Yahweh and become his people. He will live among all of you; and you will know that Yahweh, powerful Commander of the angel armies, is the one who sent me to you as a prophet. ¹² The people of Judah will be a very special part of his own land, and Jerusalem will again be the city that he has chosen. ¹³ Everyone, everywhere, should be silent in the presence of Yahweh, because he is about to come down again from where he lives in heaven to do great things for us.

Chapter 3

¹ Then Yahweh showed me Joshua, the high priest, who was standing in front of the angel that Yahweh had sent. And Satan was standing at Joshua’s right side, ready to accuse him of having sinned. ² But the angel of Yahweh said to Satan, “Satan, may Yahweh rebuke you! He has chosen Jerusalem to be his special city, and may he rebuke you! This man, Joshua, has been brought back from Babylonia; he is

certainly like a burning stick that someone has snatched from a fire.”

³ Now as Joshua was standing in front of the angel, he was wearing filthy clothes.

⁴ So the angel said to those other angels who were standing in front of him, “Take off those clothes he is wearing!”

After they did that, the angel said to Joshua, “Look! I have taken away the guilt of your sins, and I will put beautiful clothes on you instead.”

⁵ Then the angel said to them, “Put a clean turban on his head!” So they put a clean turban on his head and new clothes on him, while the angel of Yahweh was standing there looking on.

⁶ Then the same angel said this to Joshua: ⁷ “Yahweh, Commander of the angel armies, says that if you do what I want you to do and obey my instructions, you will be in charge of my temple and its courtyard. And I will allow you to be part of this group of angels who are always standing near to me and can speak with me at any time.

⁸ Joshua, you are the high priest, and your associates are sitting in front of you. The fact that they are here means that I will bring a special servant of mine, someone who I will call the Branch.” ⁹ Then the angel of Yahweh placed a stone in front of Joshua and said to him and to the other men with him: “Look at the stone that I have put in front of Joshua. There are seven sides on the stone. I will engrave a message on that stone, and in one day I will remove the guilt of all the people of this country.

¹⁰ At that time, each of you will invite his friends to come and sit under his grapevine and under his fig tree. That is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, declares.”

Chapter 4

¹ Then the angel who had been talking with me returned, and he called to me while I was thinking deeply, as though I had been asleep. ² He asked me, “What do you see?”

I replied, “I see a lampstand made completely of gold. There is a small bowl for olive oil at the top, and there are seven small lamps around the bowl, and a place for seven wicks on each lamp. ³ Furthermore, I see two olive trees, one at the right side of the lampstand and one at the left side.”

⁴ I asked the angel who was talking with me, “Sir, what do these things mean?”

⁵ He replied, “Surely you know what they mean.”

I replied, “No, I do not know.”

⁶ Then the angel said to me, “This is the message from Yahweh to you, Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah: ‘You will do what I want you to do, but it will not be by your own strength or power. It will be done by the power of my Spirit,’ says Yahweh, commander of the angel armies.” ⁷ The angel continued to speak to me: “Zerubbabel, you have many difficult matters to handle. They are like high mountains. But it will be as though they became flat land. And you will bring to the new temple the final stone, the highest stone, to complete it. When you set it in place, all the people will shout repeatedly, ‘It is beautiful! May God bless it!’”

⁸ Then Yahweh gave me another message.

⁹ He said to me, “Zerubbabel himself laid some of the stones for the foundation of the temple, and he will put some of the last stones in their places.” Then I said to the other men with him, “When that happens, the people will know that it is

Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, who has sent me to you.

¹⁰ The people who are mocking the slow way in which they are building the temple again—these same people will be glad when they see Zerubbabel holding a plumb line in his hand.

The seven lamps represent the eyes of Yahweh, who looks back and forth at everything that happens all over the earth.” ¹¹ Then I asked the angel, “What is the meaning of the two olive trees, one on each side of the lampstand? ¹² And what is the meaning of the two olive branches, one alongside each of the gold pipes from which olive oil flows to the lamps?”

¹³ He replied, “Surely you know what they are.”

I replied, “No, sir, I do not know.”

¹⁴ So he said, “They represent the two men whom the Lord who rules the whole earth has appointed.”

Chapter 5

¹ I looked up again, and I saw a scroll that was flying through the air.

² The angel asked me, “What do you see?”

I replied, “I see a flying scroll that is huge, nine meters long and four and a half meters wide.”

³ Then he said to me, “On this scroll Yahweh has written the words that he is speaking to curse the entire land of Judah. On one side of the scroll it is written that every thief will be banished. On the other side it is written that everyone who tells a lie when he is calling on Yahweh to witness that he is telling the truth will also be banished from the country. ⁴ The Commander of the angel armies says, ‘I will send this scroll to the places where thieves

live and to the houses of those who use my name when they call on me to witness that they are telling the truth. This scroll will stay in their houses until those houses and all their wood and stones are destroyed.”

⁵ Then the angel who had been talking to me came closer to me and said, “Look up and see what is coming!”

⁶ I asked him, “What is it?”

He replied, “It is a big barrel for measuring grain. But it contains a record of the sins that everyone in this nation has committed.”

⁷ Then the angel lifted the barrel’s cover, which was made of lead. There was a woman sitting inside the barrel! ⁸ The angel said, “She represents the wicked things that people do.” Then he pushed her back into the barrel and closed the very heavy lid again.

⁹ Then I looked up and saw two women in front of me. They were flying toward us, with their wings spread out in the wind. Their wings were large, like storks’ wings. They lifted the barrel up into the sky.

¹⁰ I asked the angel who had been talking to me, “Where are they taking that barrel?”

¹¹ He replied, “They are taking it to Babylon to build a temple for it. When the temple is finished, they will set the barrel there on a pedestal for people to worship it.”

Chapter 6

¹ I looked up again, and I saw four chariots coming toward me. They were coming between two mountains that were made of bronze. ² The first chariot was pulled by red horses, the second chariot was pulled by black horses, ³ the third chariot was

pulled by white horses, and the fourth chariot was pulled by spotted gray horses. ⁴ I asked the angel who had been speaking to me, "Sir, what do those chariots mean?"

⁵ The angel replied, "These chariots and their horses represent the four winds going out from heaven; they have come from standing in the presence of the Lord who controls the entire earth. They will go across the sky in four directions. ⁶ The chariot pulled by black horses will go north, the one pulled by white horses will go west, and the one pulled by spotted gray horses will go south."

⁷ When those powerful horses left, they were eager to go throughout the world. As they were leaving, the angel said to them, "Go throughout the world and see what is happening!" So they left to do that.

⁸ Then the angel called to me and said, "Look, the chariots that have gone north will mollify the Spirit of Yahweh by punishing the people in that region."

⁹ Then Yahweh gave me another message.

¹⁰ He said, "Today Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah will be bringing some silver and gold from the people who were exiled in Babylon. As soon as they arrive, go to the house of Josiah son of Zephaniah. ¹¹ Take some of that silver and gold from them and make a crown. Then put it on the head of Jehozadak's son Joshua, the high priest. ¹² Tell him that I, the Commander of the angel armies, say that the man who is called the Branch will come. He will leave the place where he is now, and he will supervise those who build my temple. ¹³ He is the one who will tell those who will build my temple what to do. He will wear royal clothing and he will sit on his throne and rule. He will also be a priest sitting on his throne, and there will be peace between the two roles. ¹⁴ The crown was handed over to Heldai, Tobi-

jah, Jedaiah, and Hen son of Zephaniah, and they were to place it in the house of Yahweh, as a way to honor them." ¹⁵ People who are living far away will come and help to build Yahweh's temple. When that happens, you people will know that Yahweh, the Commander of the angel armies, have sent me to you people. That will happen if all of you faithfully obey Yahweh, your God.

Chapter 7

¹ When Darius had been the emperor for almost four years, on the fourth day of Kislev (which was the ninth month in their calendar), Yahweh gave me another message. ² The people of the city of Bethel sent two men, Sharezer and Regem-Melek, along with some other men, to the temple of Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, to request that Yahweh be kind to them. ³ They also asked the priests at Yahweh's temple and the prophets this question: "For many years, during the fifth month and during the seventh month of each year, we have mourned and fasted. Should we continue to do that?"

⁴ Then Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, gave me a message. ⁵ He told me to say this to the priests and, in fact, to everyone in the whole land: "Tell me whom you were honoring when you did not eat but went around in dirty clothing. You were not really honoring me, were you?"

⁶ And when you feasted at my temple, you did it just to have a good time; you did not really intend to honor me, did you?"

⁷ This is exactly what I kept telling the former prophets to proclaim to the people, when the people in Jerusalem and the nearby towns were many and prosperous, and when people also lived in the southern Judean wilderness, and in the foothills to the west."

⁸ Yahweh gave another message to me: ⁹ "Tell the people that this is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says: 'I told you to do what is just, to act kindly and mercifully toward each other, in order to honor my covenant with you. ¹⁰ I told you not to oppress widows or orphans or foreigners or poor people. I said to not even think about doing evil to anyone else.'"

¹¹ But the people refused to pay attention to what Yahweh had said. They refused to cooperate with him; they refused to listen to what he said. ¹² He had given these messages for his Spirit to repeat to the prophets in earlier times. The prophets were meant to speak these messages to the people. But the people were very stubborn; they would not listen to the law of Moses or to any message from God. So Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, became very angry with them.

¹³ In those times, when Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, called to the people, they refused to listen. So he said, "In exactly the same way, I will refuse to listen when they call to me. ¹⁴ And I will scatter them among many nations, nations that they have never been to before. I will scatter them as a storm scatters leaves. After they are gone, their own land will be empty, with no one living there. No one will travel through it and no one will come back to it, because they have turned it, their most pleasant land, into a wilderness."

Chapter 8

¹ Yahweh gave me another message. He said, ² "This is what I, Yahweh the Commander of the angel armies, say: I love the people of Jerusalem; I love them very

much, and I am very angry with their enemies.

³ So this is what I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, say: Some day I will return to Mount Zion and I will live there. At that time, Jerusalem will be called The City of Faithful People, and Mount Zion will be called The Mountain that Belongs to Yahweh."

⁴ Yahweh, the Commander of the angel armies, also says this: "Some day old men and old women will again sit along the streets of Jerusalem, each of them holding a cane because of their being very old. ⁵ And the city streets will be full of boys and girls playing."

⁶ Yahweh, the Commander of the angel armies, also says this: "When those things happen, it will seem marvelous to the people who are still alive, but it certainly will not seem marvelous to me!"

⁷ Yahweh also says this: "I will bring my people back from the land to the east—Babylonia—and from the land to the west—Egypt—to which they had to go.

⁸ I will bring them back to Judah, and they will again live in Jerusalem. They will again worship me as my people, and I will be their God. I will be faithful to them and act toward them in a just manner."

⁹ Yahweh, the Commander of the angel armies, also says this: "When the foundation for my temple was laid, there were prophets there who gave messages from me. Some of you people heard what those prophets said. So be brave while you are building the temple, in order that you may finish building it. ¹⁰ Before you started to rebuild the temple, your fields gave no crops, no return for either man or beast working in them. And people were afraid to go anywhere because I had caused people to be against each other. ¹¹ But now I will act differently toward you people

who are still alive, differently than I did previously. That is what I, Yahweh, the Commander of the angel armies, say.

¹² From now on, I will give you peace. Your grapevines will produce grapes, and good crops will grow in your fields. There will be rain from the sky. I will always give all these things to you people who are still alive. ¹³ You people of Judah and Israel, the people of other nations think of you when they speak of what a curse means. But I will rescue you, and I will give you many good things. So do not be afraid; work hard to finish building the temple.”

¹⁴ Yahweh, the Commander of the angel armies, also says this: “When your ancestors caused me to become very angry, I did not change my mind about that. Instead, I indeed punished them. ¹⁵ But now I will do something different. I am planning to do good things to the people of Jerusalem and other towns in Judah again. So do not be afraid. ¹⁶ These are the things that you should do: You should always tell the truth to each other. In the courts, your judges must make decisions according to what is correct and fair. ¹⁷ Do not plan to do evil things to others, and do approve of swearing false accusations against others. I hate all those things.”

¹⁸ Yahweh, the Commander of the angel armies, spoke to me again. ¹⁹ This is what he said: “The times when you people of Judah abstain from food during the fourth, fifth, seventh, and tenth months of each year will become times when you celebrate pleasant and joyful festivals instead. But you must want to speak truthfully and to be peaceful.”

²⁰ Yahweh, the Commander of the angel armies, also says this: “Some day people from many people groups and foreign cities will come here to Jerusalem. ²¹ People from one city will go to the people in

another city and say, ‘Let us go together to Jerusalem to worship Yahweh and request him to bless us; we ourselves are going.’

²² And people from many people groups and from powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to worship Yahweh and request him to bless them.”

²³ Yahweh, the Commander of the angel armies, also says this: “At that time, this is what will happen everywhere: For every Jewish person, there will be ten foreigners, people who speak a different language, who will come and grab the fringe of his robe. They will say to him, ‘We have heard people say that God is with you. So allow us to go with you to Jerusalem to worship him.’ People from every nation and language will do this.”

Chapter 9

¹ This is another message that I received from Yahweh about the region of Hadrach and the city of Damascus, the place where they get their rest. All the eyes of the nations and the people of the tribe of Israel are all looking toward Yahweh, to see what he will say. ² This message is also about the people in the region of Hamath near to Damascus, and about the people in the cities of Tyre and Sidon, people who are very wise. ³ The people in Tyre have built a high wall around their city. They piled up huge amounts of silver and gold like other people pile up soil when they dig in the streets. ⁴ But I, Yahweh, will make them lose everything, including their ships in which their men fight on the sea. Their city will burn to the ground. ⁵ The people in the city of Ashkelon will see that happen, and they will become very afraid. The people in the city of Gaza will shake because they are terrified, and the people in the city of Ekron will shake too,

because they no longer hope to escape enemies. The king of Gaza will die; no one will live any longer in Ashkelon. ⁶ Yahweh says, "Foreigners will occupy the city of Ashdod. I will no longer allow the people in all those cities of Philistia to be proud. ⁷ I will no longer allow them to eat meat that still has blood in it, and I will forbid them to eat food that they offered to idols. At that time, the people in the region of Philistia who survive will worship me; they will become like a clan in Judah. The people of the city of Ekron will become part of my people, as the people of the city of Jebus did when the Israelites conquered them. ⁸ I will protect my land, and I will not allow any enemy soldiers to enter it. No enemies will harm my people again, because I myself will be watching over them carefully. ⁹ Rejoice very much, you people of Jerusalem and shout joyfully,

because your king will be coming to you.

He is righteous and victorious;

he will be gentle,

and he will be riding on a donkey,

on a young female donkey. ¹⁰ I will destroy the chariots in the region of Ephraim that are used in war and all the horses in Jerusalem that they take into battle. I will break all the bows they use in wars.

Your king will proclaim that he will cause things to go well and peacefully among the nations. He will rule the area from the Mediterranean Sea to the Dead Sea, and from the Euphrates River to the most distant places on the earth. ¹¹ As for you, my people of Jerusalem, because of the blood that flowed when I made my covenant with you, I will free your people whom they took to other countries, where it was as though they were prisoners in a waterless pit. ¹² You people who were pris-

oners in those countries who still believe that I will help you, return to Judah, for I will defend you there. Today I declare that I will give you two blessings for each of the troubles that you have experienced. ¹³ I will cause Judah to be like my bow, and I will cause Israel to be like my arrow. I will enable you young men of Jerusalem to fight against the soldiers of Greece; you will be like a warrior's sword." ¹⁴ One day Yahweh will appear in the sky above his people, and the arrows that he shoots will be like lightning bolts. Yahweh our Lord will blow his trumpet, and he will march with the powerful storms that come from the land of Teman in the south. ¹⁵ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, will protect his people; the soldiers of Judah will attack and defeat their enemies who attack them using slings and stones. Those soldiers of Judah will drink and celebrate and shout like people who are drunk; they will be as full of wine as the bowl that holds the blood of the animals priest kill at the altar—the blood that the priests sprinkle on the corners of the altar. ¹⁶ On that day, Yahweh our God will save his people like a shepherd saves his flock of sheep from danger. In our land, they will be like jewels that sparkle in a crown. ¹⁷ They will be delightful and beautiful. The young men will become strong from eating grain, and the young women will become strong from drinking new wine.

Chapter 10

¹ Ask Yahweh to cause rain to fall in the springtime, because he is the one who makes the clouds from which the rain falls in storms. He causes showers to fall on us, and he causes crops to grow well in the fields. ² What people think that the idols in their houses say is only nonsense, and people who say that they can interpret

dreams tell only lies. When they tell people things to comfort them, what they say is useless, so the people who consult them are like lost sheep; they are in danger because they have no one to protect them like sheep with no shepherd. ³ Yahweh says, "I am angry with the leaders of my people, and I will punish them. I, Yahweh, the Commander of the angel armies, I will take care of my people, the people of Judah, like a shepherd takes care of his flock, and I will cause them to be like war horses in battle. ⁴ From Judah will come rulers who will be very important. From Judah will come leaders who will hold the people together, like a tent peg keeps a tent up. From Judah will come leaders who will take the soldiers into war, like a king holding his own bow for battle. From them will come every one of their own leaders. ⁵ They will be like mighty warriors who trample their enemies into the mud during battle. I, Yahweh, will be with them, so they will defeat and shame their enemies who ride on horses. ⁶ I will make the people of Judah strong, and I will rescue the people of Israel. I will bring them back from the countries to which they were exiled; I will do that because I pity them. Then it will be as though I had never abandoned them because I am Yahweh, their God, and I will answer them when they pray for help. ⁷ The people of Israel will then be like strong soldiers; they will be as happy as people who have drunk a lot of wine. Their children will see their fathers being very happy, and they also will be happy because of what I have done for them. ⁸ I will signal for my people to return from far away, and I will gather them together in their own country. I will rescue them, and they will become very numerous as they were previously. ⁹ I have caused them to be scattered among many people groups, but in those distant countries they will think about me again. They

and their children will remain alive and return to Judah. ¹⁰ I will bring them back from Egypt and from Assyria; I will bring them back to the regions of Gilead and Lebanon, but there not be enough space for them all to live there. ¹¹ I will go before them through their sufferings, as if I were walking through a sea, but I will calm those waves and end their sufferings, as if I were drying up the Nile River. I will defeat the proud soldiers of Assyria, and I will cause Egypt to no longer be powerful. ¹² I will enable my people to be strong, and they will honor me and obey me. That will surely happen because I, Yahweh, have said it."

Chapter 11

¹ You people of Lebanon must open your gates and allow the fire to burn your cedar trees! ² Your cypress trees must be like people who are wailing, because enemies have cut down the cedar trees. Those glorious trees are all gone. The oak trees in the region of Bashan should also be like people who are wailing, because enemies have cut down the oak trees in the dense forest. ³ And listen to the shepherds crying because the fertile pastures have been ruined. Listen to the lions roar; they roar because the thick forest where they live near the Jordan River has been ruined.

⁴ This is what Yahweh my God said to me: "I want you to supervise this flock of sheep until the flock perishes. ⁵ The dealers in sheep will kill the sheep, and no one will punish them. Those who sell the sheep will say, 'I praise Yahweh, because I will become rich!' And the shepherds whom the owners hire do not feel sorry for the sheep. ⁶ And similarly, I no longer feel sorry for the people of this country. I am going to allow their fellow countrymen

and their king, to oppress them. They will ruin this country, and I will not rescue any of them.”

⁷ So I became the shepherd of a flock of sheep that dealers were going to slaughter and to sell the meat. Then I took two shepherds’ staffs. I named the one staff ‘Kindness’ and the other staff ‘Union.’ This is how I began to shepherd the sheep. ⁸ But the three shepherds who had been with the flock detested me, and I became impatient with the owners who had hired us all. Within one month I had destroyed those shepherds.

⁹ So I said to the dealers, “I will no longer be a shepherd for you. I will allow the ones that are dying to die. I will allow the ones that are getting lost to perish. And I will not prevent those that remain from eating each other.”

¹⁰ Then I took the staff that I had named ‘Kindness,’ and I broke it. I did this because Yahweh had told me to cancel the covenant that he had made with all his tribes of Israel. ¹¹ So that covenant was ended on that very day. The dealers who were watching me knew by seeing what I was doing that I was giving them a message from Yahweh.

¹² I told them, “If you think it is right, pay me for my work. If you do not think it is right, do not pay me.” So they paid me only thirty pieces of silver.

¹³ Then Yahweh said to me, “That is a ridiculously small amount of money that they have for your work. So put it into the treasury.” So I took the silver to the temple of Yahweh, and I deposited it in the treasury there.

¹⁴ Then I broke my second staff, the one that I had named “Union.” That indicated that Judah and Israel would no longer be together as brothers.

¹⁵ Then Yahweh said to me, “Take again

the things that a foolish shepherd uses, ¹⁶ because I am going to appoint a new shepherd for the people, one who will not take care of my people. He will be a foolish shepherd: He will ignore the dying sheep and those that have gotten lost. As for the healthy sheep, he will not feed them; instead, he will butcher them for his own food and will tear off their hooves. ¹⁷ But terrible things will happen to that foolish shepherd who abandons the flock. May his enemies strike his arm and his right eye with their swords. May he have no more strength in his arm, and may his right eye become completely blind.”

Chapter 12

¹ This is a message from Yahweh concerning Israel—Yahweh, the one who stretched out the sky, who created the earth, and who gave life to human beings. This is what he says: ² “I will soon cause Jerusalem to be like a cup full of very strong alcoholic drink, and the people of other nations who drink it will stagger around. The people of Judah will drink it, too, for they also will suffer when the enemy besieges Jerusalem. ³ At that time, the armies of all the people groups will gather to attack Jerusalem, but I will cause Jerusalem to be like a very heavy rock, and all who try to lift it will be badly injured. This will happen when the armies of all the world’s nations attack Jerusalem. ⁴ At that time I will cause every one of their enemies’ horses to panic, and their riders to become crazy. I will protect the people of Judah, but I will cause all their enemies’ horses to become blind. ⁵ Then the leaders of Judah will say to themselves, ‘The people in Jerusalem encourage us because Yahweh, the Commander of the angel armies, is the one they worship.’

⁶ At that time I will make the leaders of Ju-

dah like a pot of fire that someone puts in piles of firewood; and like a burning torch in a field of ripe grain. The leaders of Judah and their soldiers will destroy the people groups surrounding them in all directions. But the people of Jerusalem will remain safe in their own city.”

⁷ Yahweh will protect those who live in the other places in Judah before he rescues the people of Jerusalem, in order that people will not honor the descendants of David and those in Jerusalem more than the people in all the rest of Judah. ⁸ At that time, Yahweh will protect everyone in Jerusalem. The weakest soldiers among them will be as strong as David was, and the descendants of David will be like God; they will lead the others like the angel of Yahweh himself. ⁹ “At that time, I will start to destroy all the armies that attack Jerusalem.”

¹⁰ “I, Yahweh, will cause the descendants of David to have mercy on others, and to beg me to have mercy on themselves. They will gaze at me, whom they pierced.” They will cry bitterly, as people cry for a firstborn son, an only son, who has died. ¹¹ At that time, many people in Jerusalem will be crying bitterly, as people cry at Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. ¹² Many people in Judah will cry, each clan by themselves. The male descendants of David will mourn by themselves, and their wives will mourn by themselves; the male descendants of Nathan will mourn by themselves, and their wives will mourn by themselves. ¹³ The male descendants of Levi will mourn by themselves, and their wives will mourn by themselves; the male descendants of Shimei will mourn by themselves, and their wives will mourn by themselves. ¹⁴ All the clans will mourn separately, their males by themselves, and their wives by themselves.”

Chapter 13

¹ At that time it will be as though there is a spring of water that will continuously flow to cleanse the descendants of King David and all the other people in Jerusalem from the guilt of the sins that they have committed, especially from becoming unacceptable to Yahweh by worshipping idols.

² Yahweh, the Commander of angel armies, says, “At that time, I will prevent people from even mentioning the names of the idols in their country, and no one will worship them anymore. I will also drive away from the land all the people who falsely claim that they are prophets; I will also drive away the evil spirit that leads them to tell the people false messages from me. ³ If someone continues to prophesy falsely, his own parents, even though he is their own son, will say to him, ‘You have told lies saying that Yahweh gave those messages to you, so you must die.’ Then they will stab him and kill him.

⁴ At that time, the false prophets will be ashamed to announce that he has received any vision at all. They will no longer put on cloaks made with animal hair that prophets normally wear, because they will want the people to think that they were never really prophets at all.

⁵ So each of them will say, ‘I am not really a prophet; I am a farmer, and I have been a farmer on my land ever since I was a boy!’ ⁶ But others will see scars on their bodies and think that they cut themselves in order to please idols while they were worshipping them. So they will ask, ‘Why do you have those scars?’ And they will tell a lie: ‘I was injured in a quarrel at my friend’s house.’”

⁷ Yahweh, the Commander of angel armies, says,

"Someone must attack and kill the one who is like a shepherd working for me,

the man who is my close companion.

You with the sword! When you kill my shepherd, my people will run away like sheep.

And I myself will attack my ordinary people, those who are like little sheep." ⁸ Yahweh also says, "Two-thirds of the people in Judah will die; Only one-third of the people in Judah will remain alive. ⁹ I will test the ones that remain alive by causing them to experience great difficulties, to find out if they will continue to worship me. I will purify them as someone purifies gold or silver by putting it into a very hot fire. Then my people will call to me for help, and I will answer them. I will tell them that they are my people, and they will say that I, Yahweh, am the God they worship and obey.

Chapter 14

¹ Listen! It will soon be the time when Yahweh will judge everyone. At that time, you, the people of Jerusalem, will watch your enemies divide what you owned among themselves.

² Yes, Yahweh says that he will cause the armies of many nations to attack Jerusalem. They will capture the city, take all the valuable things from your houses, and rape the women. They will take half of the people to other countries, but they will allow the other people to remain in the city.

³ But then Yahweh will attack those nations; he will fight as he fought at other times in battle. ⁴ On that day, he will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem. The Mount of Olives will split into two parts, with a large valley between the

parts. Half of the mount will move toward the north, and half will move toward the south. ⁵ You people of Jerusalem will flee through that valley which extends to the other side of the mount, all the way to the village of Azel. It will be just as when people fled when there was an earthquake when Uzziah was king. Then Yahweh my God will come, and his own angels will be with him.

⁶ At that time, there will be no light from the sun, but it will not be cold or frosty. ⁷ Only Yahweh knows when this will happen. There will be no daytime or nighttime, because it will be light all the time, even in the evening.

⁸ At that time, water will flow from Jerusalem. One stream will flow toward the east to the Dead Sea. The other stream will flow toward the west to the Mediterranean Sea. The water will flow all the time, even during the hot season as well as in the cold season.

⁹ After that time, Yahweh will be the king who rules the entire world. Everyone will know that Yahweh, and only Yahweh, is the true God.

¹⁰ At that time, all the land in Judah will be flat, like the plain along the Jordan, from the town of Geba in the north to the town of Rimmon far to the south of Jerusalem. Jerusalem will remain high up, as it has always been. The city will extend northeast from the Benjamin Gate and the Corner Gate, which was the old gate, and to the Tower of Hananel, and then extending to the king's winepresses to the southwest. ¹¹ Many people will live there, and God will never again threaten the city with destruction. It will be a completely safe city to live in.

¹² But Yahweh will bring a severe disease on the people groups that attacked Jerusalem. Their flesh will rot while they

are still standing up. Their eyes will rot in their sockets and their tongues will rot in their mouths. ¹³ At that time, Yahweh will cause them to panic. They will grab hold of each other and attack each other. ¹⁴ Even the people who live in other places in Judah will attack Jerusalem. They will collect the valuable things, the plunder, from the surrounding armies of the nations—a lot of gold and silver and clothes. ¹⁵ The same plague that will afflict the people of other nations will afflict the horses, mules, camels, donkeys, and all the other work animals in their camps.

¹⁶ The people of other nations who previously came to fight against Jerusalem, all those who are still alive, will return to Jerusalem every year to worship the King, Yahweh, the Commander of the angel armies, and to celebrate the Festival of Shelters. ¹⁷ If there are people in those nations who do not go to Jerusalem to worship there, rain will not fall on their land. ¹⁸ If the people of Egypt do not go to Jerusalem, they will not have any rain. And Yahweh will cause them to suffer the same plague that afflicted the people of other nations that do not celebrate the Festival of Shelters. ¹⁹ That is how Yahweh will punish the people of Egypt and the people of any other nation who do not go to Jerusalem to celebrate the Festival of Shelters.

²⁰ At that time, the words “Dedicated to Yahweh” will be written on the bells that are fastened to the horses. The cooking pots in the courtyard of the temple will belong to Yahweh, like the bowls that are in front of the altar. ²¹ Every pot in Jerusalem and everywhere else in Judah will be dedicated to Yahweh, the Commander of the angel armies. So everyone who offers sacrifices there in Jerusalem will be able to take some of the meat that has

been brought for sacrifices and cook it in their own pots. And at that time, people will no longer buy or sell things in the courtyard of the temple of Yahweh, the Commander of the angel armies.

MALACHI

Chapter 1

¹ This is a message that Yahweh gave to Malachi for the Israelites.

²⁻³ Yahweh says, “I have loved you.” But I, Malachi, hear you people reply, “How have you shown us that you love us?”

Yahweh replies,

“Is it not true that Esau and Jacob were brothers? Yet I have a covenant with Jacob and his descendants, but I have no covenant with Esau and his descendants. I caused Esau’s region to be abandoned, a place where wild dogs live.”

⁴ The descendants of Esau who now live in Edom may say,

“Yes, God has demolished our cities, but we will rebuild houses in the ruins.”

But Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, replies,

“They may build houses again, but I will demolish them again. Their country will be called ‘The land where wicked people live,’ and their people will be called ‘The people with whom Yahweh is angry forever.’”

⁵ When you Israelite people yourselves see what Yahweh will do to them, you will say, “It is evident that Yahweh is very powerful even in foreign lands!”

⁶ But the Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says to the people,

“Boys honor their fathers, and servants respect their masters. So, if I am like your father and your master, why do you not honor me? Why do you not obey me?”

And Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has something to say to you priests:

”You show no respect for me! But you priests ask, ‘How have shown no respect for you?’

⁷ I answer: Instead of honoring me, you have disgraced me by offering sacrifices on my altar that are unworthy of me, sacrifices that I would never accept. Then you dare to ask, ‘What sacrifices have we given that are unworthy of you?’

I answer: You think that it does not matter if you do not honor my altar.

⁸ You offer for sacrifices animals that are blind. Is that not wrong? You offer animals that are sick or lame. Do you really think I would accept such gifts? You would not dare to offer such gifts to your own governor! You know that he would not take them. You know that he would be displeased with you and would not welcome you!”

That is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says!

⁹ I, Malachi, see you continually go through the motions of asking God to help us. But Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says,

“If you bring to me sacrifices that are not acceptable to me, why should I help you?”

¹⁰ Yahweh also says,

“I wish that one of you would shut the gates of the temple courtyard, in order that no one could offer those worthless sacrifices. I am not pleased with you, and I will not accept the offerings that you bring to me.”

This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says. ¹¹ He also says,

”People of other nations from east to west will indeed honor me. They will burn incense to honor me, and they will bring right offerings, offerings that I will accept.

This will happen because people in all the nations will praise and honor me.

¹² But you priests—you priests act in a way that shows me no honor at all. You say, ‘It is all right if people disgrace the altar by bringing sacrifices that he will not accept.’

¹³ You also say, ‘We are tired of burning all these sacrifices on the altar.’ You turn up your noses at doing this. You bring sheep or goats that wild animals have attacked and torn in two. You also bring animals that are sick or that cannot walk. You cannot really think that I should accept these from you, can you?”

This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says.

¹⁴ Yahweh also says,

“I will curse anyone who tries to cheat me by swearing that he will bring to me a perfect animal from his herd, and who then brings me one that has defects. If anyone does that, I will punish him, because I am a great king, and people of the other nations honor me, but you do not!”

This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says.

Chapter 2

¹ You priests, I will say something to warn you. ² Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says this:

“Pay attention to what I am saying, and then decide to honor me. If you do not do that, I will curse you, and I will curse the things that I have done for you to help you. And I have already cursed them, because you have not honored me. ³ I will punish your descendants, and it will be as though I had splattered on your faces the

dung from the animals that you have sacrificed, and I will make others come and throw you away with that dung.

⁴ When that happens, you will know that I warned you like this, in order that you descendants of Levi will obey my covenant with the priests.”

This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, is saying to you. ⁵ He also says,

“I made my covenant with your ancestor Levi because I wanted the priests to live prosperously and peacefully. And that is what I enabled them to do. I required that they greatly respect me and honor me, and they did so. ⁶ They taught the people what was true and right; they did not tell lies. They worked for me peacefully and loyally, and they helped many people to stop sinning.

⁷ What priests say should enable people to continue to learn the truth from generation to generation. They should be certain that the priests will teach them correction, because they must be true messengers from me, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies.

⁸ But, you priests do not act in that way any more. Instead, what you have taught people has caused many of them to sin. You have rejected the covenant that I made with the descendants of Levi long ago. ⁹ Therefore I have caused all the people to despise you, and I have caused them to shame you, for you have not obeyed me. Instead, you teach people different things, depending on how important they are.”

¹⁰ Now I, Malachi, will warn you about something else. It is certain that we Israelites are a people group only because God has created us as a people group. But we lie to each other and harm each other; in this way we disgrace the covenant that Yahweh made with our ancestors.

¹¹ You people of Judah have been unfaithful toward Yahweh. You have done disgusting things in Jerusalem and elsewhere in Israel. You Israelite men have defiled the temple that Yahweh loves. You have done that by marrying foreign women, women who worship idols. ¹² I wish that Yahweh would drive away from Israel absolutely every man who has done that, along with his descendants—even if they bring offerings to Yahweh, commander of the angel armies.

¹³ This is another thing that you do: You come and weep in front of Yahweh's altar, covering it with your tears. You wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings. ¹⁴ You cry out, saying "Why does Yahweh not like our offerings?" The answer is that Yahweh heard that each of you men solemnly promised to be faithful to your wives when you were young. But you men have not done what you promised; you have sent them away, the ones with whom you made that covenant, so you could marry foreign women.

¹⁵ Indeed, Yahweh made you one with your wife, and he gave you some of his spirit. He did this because he wanted you to have children who would honor him. So you must be careful not to let other women attract you. Let none of you be faithless to the woman whom you married when you were young.

¹⁶ Yahweh, the God to whom we Israelites belong, says, "I hate divorce!" So if you men divorce your wives, you are overwhelming them by acting cruelly toward them. So be sure that you are not disloyal to your wives. That is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says.

¹⁷ You have made Yahweh lose his patience with you by saying all those disgusting things. But you dare to ask, "How have we made him impatient?"

The answer is that you have said that Yahweh is pleased with all those who do what is evil, that he actually views them as good. And you have also made him impatient by always saying, "Why does God not act justly toward us?"

Chapter 3

¹ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says this:

"Look, I will soon send a messenger to you, who will get you ready to welcome me. I, the Lord, whom you say you desire to come, will appear suddenly in my temple. A messenger will come, whom Yahweh had promised in the covenant that you say you take pleasure in. I myself am coming." This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says.

² And none of you will be able to stop Yahweh from judging you. For he will declare no one innocent when he comes. He will act like a fire that burns hot enough to refine precious metals. He will act as the strong soap that laundrymen use to clean clothing. ³ Yahweh will judge you; he will be like a silversmith who sits down and makes his silver pure, free from all impurities. Yahweh will forgive you and make all of you priests and Levite temple workers not want to sin any longer. He will make you like pure gold or silver. Then he will accept your offerings that you bring to him, because you will be righteous."

⁴ When that happens, Yahweh will again accept the offerings that the people of Jerusalem and Judah bring to him, as he did previously.

⁵ This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says:

"At that time, I will come to you to judge you. I will quickly testify

against all those who practice sorcery, against those who mistreat helpless widows and orphans, against those who do not treat the foreigners among you justly, and against those who refuse to honor me.”

⁶ I am Yahweh, and I never change. That is why I have not yet gotten rid of you, although you deceive people like your ancestor Jacob did. ⁷ Ever since the time when your ancestors were alive, you have ignored my commands and refused to obey them. Now return to me; if you do so, I will return to you. That is what I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, say. But you ask, ‘We have never gone away from you, so how can we return to you?’

⁸ I reply: People should certainly not cheat God; but you people have cheated me! You ask, ‘In what way did we cheat you?’

I reply: You have cheated me by not bringing to me each year the tithes and other offerings that I have required you to give me. ⁹ I have cursed everything that you do, because all you people in this country have been cheating me. ¹⁰ Now bring all the tithes to the storerooms of the temple, in order that there may be enough food for the people who serve me there. If you do that, I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, promise that I will open the windows of heaven and pour out from them blessings on you. If you bring your tithes to the temple, the blessings will be very great, with the result that you will not have enough space to store all of them. So test me to see if I am telling the truth. ¹¹ You will have abundant crops to harvest, because I will protect them in order that locusts do not harm them. Your grapes will not fall from the vines before they are ripe. ¹² When that happens, the people of all nations will say that I have truly helped

you, because your country will be delightful. That is what I, Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, say.”

¹³ “I, Yahweh, have something else to say to you. You have said terrible things about me.

But you reply, ‘What terrible things have we said about you?’

¹⁴ I reply: You have said that it is useless for you to worship me. You say that you have gained nothing by obeying my commands. You say that you have gained nothing by being sorry for your sins. ¹⁵ You have also decided that from now on, you will say that I like to help arrogant people. You think that it is those who do evil who become rich. You say they dare me to punish them because they think I never will.”

¹⁶ After the people heard these messages that I brought them from Yahweh, the people who honored Yahweh discussed these things with each other. And Yahweh listened to their conversations. While he was watching, they wrote on a scroll the things that would remind them about what they promised, and they wrote on that scroll the names of those who honored Yahweh.

¹⁷ Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says this about those people:

”They will be my people. On the day that I punish the wicked people among you, I will not punish them. I will be just like a father who does not punish his son who obeys him. ¹⁸ When that happens, you will again see that the manner in which I treat righteous people is different from the manner in which I treat wicked people. You will see that the manner in which I act toward those who worship me is different from the manner in which I act toward those who do not.”

Chapter 4

¹ This is also what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, says: "There will be a time when I will judge and punish all the proud people and evildoers in Israel. When that happens, it will be like a day that they burn the useless remains of crops in the fields. Those people will burn up completely—as roots and branches and everything else on a tree burns completely in a very hot fire. ² But for you who honor me, I, who always act righteously, will come to you and heal you, as the sun rises in the morning. You will be as happy as young calves when they leave their stalls to play in the fields. ³ On the day when I judge the wicked, you will celebrate. It will be as if you had walked all over them." This is what Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, promises.

⁴ Be sure to obey the laws that I commanded Moses, who served me well, to give you. Obey all the commandments and decrees that I gave him on Mount Sinai, for all you people of Israel to obey.

⁵ Listen to this: One day I will send to you the prophet Elijah. He will arrive before the great and dreadful day when I, Yahweh, will judge everyone and punish those who deserve punishment. ⁶ Because of what Elijah will preach, parents and their children join together in loving each other again. If that does not happen, I will come and destroy your country."

MATTHEW

Chapter 1

¹ This is the record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah, the descendant of King David and of Abraham. ² Abraham was the father of Isaac. Isaac was the father of Jacob. Jacob was the father of Judah and of his brothers. ³ Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah, and their mother was Tamar. Perez was the father of Hezron. Hezron was the father of Ram. ⁴ Ram was the father of Amminadab. Amminadab was the father of Nahshon. Nahshon was the father of Salmon. ⁵ Salmon and his wife Rahab, a non-Jewish woman, were the parents of Boaz. Boaz was the father of Obed. Obed's mother was Ruth, another non-Jewish woman. Obed was the father of Jesse. ⁶ Jesse was the father of King David. David became the father of Solomon; Solomon's mother was the wife of Uriah. ⁷ Solomon was the father of Rehoboam. Rehoboam was the father of Abijah. Abijah was the father of Asa. ⁸ Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat was the father of Joram. Joram was an ancestor of Uzziah. ⁹ Uzziah was the father of Jotham. Jotham was the father of Ahaz. Ahaz was the father of Hezekiah. ¹⁰ Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh. Manasseh was the father of Amon. Amon was the father of Josiah. ¹¹ Josiah was the grandfather of Jechoniah and Jechoniah's brothers. They lived at the time when the Babylonian army took the Israelites as captives to the country of Babylon.

¹² After the Babylonians exiled the Israelites to Babylon, Jechoniah became the father of Shealtiel. Shealtiel was an ancestor of Zerubbabel. ¹³ Zerubbabel was the father of Abiud. Abiud was the fa-

ther of Eliakim. Eliakim was the father of Azor. ¹⁴ Azor was the father of Zadok. Zadok was the father of Akim. Akim was the father of Eliud. ¹⁵ Eliud was the father of Eleazar. Eleazar was the father of Matthan. Matthan was the father of Jacob. ¹⁶ Jacob was the father of Joseph. Joseph was Mary's husband, and Mary was Jesus' mother. Jesus is the one who is called the Messiah.

¹⁷ The list of Jesus' ancestors is as follows: Fourteen of them from the time when Abraham lived to the time when King David lived. There were another fourteen from the time when David lived until the time when the Israelites went away to Babylon, and then yet another fourteen from then until the time when the Messiah was born.

¹⁸ This is the account of what happened just before Jesus the Messiah was born. Mary, his mother, had promised to marry Joseph, but before they lived together as husband and wife, they found out that she was expecting a child by the Holy Spirit's power. ¹⁹ Now Joseph, who was to be her husband, was a man who obeyed God's commands, so he decided not to marry her. But he did not want to shame her in front of other people. So he decided to quietly drop his plans to marry her. ²⁰ While he was seriously considering this, an angel whom the Lord sent surprised him in a dream. The angel said, "Joseph, descendant of King David, do not be afraid to marry Mary. For what has been conceived in her is there by the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son. Since it is he who will save his people from their sins, name him 'Jesus.'" ²² All this happened to make come true what the Lord told the prophet Isaiah to write long ago. Isaiah wrote, ²³ "Listen, a virgin will become pregnant and will give birth to a son.

They will call him Immanuel"—

which means, “God is with us.” ²⁴ When Joseph got up from sleep, he did what the angel had commanded him to do. He began to live with Mary as his wife. ²⁵ But he did not sleep with her until she had given birth to a son. And Joseph named him Jesus.

Chapter 2

¹ Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem in the province of Judea during the time that King Herod the Great ruled there. Some time after Jesus was born, some men from very far away to the east who studied the stars came to the city of Jerusalem. ² They asked people, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We have seen a star in the east that shows us he has been born, so we have come to worship him.”

³ When King Herod heard about what those men were asking, he became very worried. Many of the people in Jerusalem also became worried. ⁴ Then Herod called together all the ruling priests and teachers of the Jewish laws. He asked them where the prophets had predicted that the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ They said to him, “He will be born in the town of Bethlehem, here in the province of Judea, because the prophet Micah wrote long ago, ⁶ ‘You who live in Bethlehem in the land of Judah, your town is certainly very important, because a man from your town will become a ruler. He will guide my people who live in Israel.’”

⁷ Then King Herod secretly called those men who studied the stars. He asked them exactly when the star first appeared. ⁸ Then he said to them, “Go to Bethlehem and inquire thoroughly where the infant is. When you have found him, come back and report to me so that I, myself, can go

there and worship him, too.”

⁹ Then the men went toward the town of Bethlehem. To their surprise, the star that they had seen while they were in the eastern country went ahead of them again until it stood above the house where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced greatly and followed it. ¹¹ They found the house, entered it, and saw the child and his mother, Mary. They bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure boxes and they gave him gold, expensive frankincense, and myrrh. ¹² Then God warned them in a dream not to return to King Herod. So they left for their country, but instead of traveling back on the same road, they went on a different road.

¹³ After the men who studied the stars left Bethlehem, an angel from the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. He said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee into the country of Egypt. Stay there until I tell you that you should leave, because King Herod is about to send soldiers to look for the child so that they can kill him.” ¹⁴ So Joseph got up that same night; he took the child and his mother, and they fled into Egypt. ¹⁵ They stayed there until King Herod died, and then they left Egypt again. In this way, what God had told the prophet Hosea to write came true,

“I have called my son to come out of Egypt.”

¹⁶ Before King Herod died, he realized that those men had tricked him, and he became furious. Because he thought that Jesus was still near Bethlehem, Herod sent soldiers there to kill all the boy babies two years old and younger. Herod calculated how old the baby was, according to what the men who studied the stars told him about when the star first appeared. ¹⁷ When Herod did this, what the prophet Jeremiah had written long ago came true,

when he wrote about Bethlehem near the town of Ramah:

¹⁸ Women in Ramah were weeping and wailing loudly.

Rachel, the ancestor of those women, was weeping for their dead children.

People tried to comfort her, but they could not, because all the children were dead.

¹⁹ After Herod died and while Joseph and his family were still in Egypt, an angel that the Lord had sent appeared to Joseph in a dream. He said to Joseph, ²⁰ “Get up and take the child and his mother and go back to the country of Israel to live, because the people who were trying to kill the child have died.” ²¹ So Joseph took the child and his mother, and they went back to Israel.

²² When Joseph heard that Archelaus now ruled in the province of Judea instead of his father, King Herod the Great, he was afraid to go there. Then God instructed Joseph in a dream what to do, so Joseph, Mary, and the baby went to the district of Galilee. ²³ They went to the town of Nazareth to live there. The result was that what the prophets had said long ago came true: “People will say that he is from Nazareth.”

Chapter 3

¹ While Jesus was still in the town of Nazareth, John, whom the people called the Baptizer, went to a desolate place in the province of Judea. He was preaching to the people who came there. He kept saying, ² “You must stop sinning, because God’s rule from heaven is near, and he will reject you if you do not stop sinning.” ³ When John began preaching, then came true what Isaiah the prophet had said long ago. He said,

”In the wilderness people hear someone shouting to anyone who comes,

’Get ready to receive the Lord when he comes!

Get everything ready for him!”

⁴ John wore rough clothing made from camel’s hair. As the prophet Elijah had done so long ago, he wore a leather belt around his waist. His food was only grasshoppers and honey that he found in the wilderness. ⁵ People who lived in the city of Jerusalem, many people who lived in other places in the district of Judea, and many others who lived near the Jordan River came to John to hear him preach. ⁶ After they heard him, they openly confessed their sins, and then he baptized them in the Jordan River.

⁷ But John saw that many Pharisees and Sadducees were coming for him to baptize them. He said to them, “You people are the children of poisonous snakes! No one warned you that one day God will punish everyone who sins, did they? Do not think that you can escape from him! ⁸ If you truly stop sinning, then do right things to show it. ⁹ I know that God promised to be with Abraham’s descendants. But do not say to yourselves, ‘Since we are descendants of our ancestor Abraham, God will not punish us even though we have sinned.’ No! I tell you that he can change these stones here into descendants of Abraham! ¹⁰ God is ready right now to punish you, just like a man who starts to chop away the roots of a fruit tree that does not give good fruit. He will chop down every tree like that and throw it into the fire.”

¹¹ “As for me, I am not very important, because I baptize you only with water. I do it when people are sorry for having sinned. But someone else will come soon who will do very powerful things. He is so much

greater than I, that I do not even deserve to carry his sandals.

He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire. ¹² He is holding his winnowing fork, ready to separate the good grain from the bad chaff. He is ready to clear out all the bad chaff from where he has threshed the grain. He will take the righteous people home, as a farmer puts his wheat into his storehouse; but he will burn the wicked people, like one burns the chaff, in a fire that never goes out.”

¹³ During that time, Jesus went from the district of Galilee to the Jordan River, where John was. He did this so John could baptize him. ¹⁴ When Jesus asked John to baptize him, John refused; he said, “I need you to baptize me! But you are not a sinner, so why do you come to me?” ¹⁵ But Jesus said to him, “Baptize me now, because in this way we two will do everything that God requires.” Then John agreed to baptize him.

¹⁶ After that, Jesus immediately came up out of the water. Just then, it was as though the sky was opened, and Jesus saw God’s Spirit coming down and sitting on him, in the form of a dove. ¹⁷ Then God spoke from heaven and said, “This is my Son. I love him, and I am very pleased with him.”

Chapter 4

¹ Then God’s Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness for the devil to tempt him. ² After he had not eaten food day and night for forty days, he was hungry. ³ Satan, the tempter, came to him and said, “If you are really the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread for yourself!” ⁴ But Jesus said to him, “No! I will not do this, because God has said in the scriptures, ‘For people to truly live, they must have more than

food; they must listen to every word that God has spoken.’” ⁵ Then the devil took Jesus to Jerusalem, the city that was especially for God. He set him on the highest part of the temple ⁶ and said to him, “If you are truly the Son of God, jump down to the ground. You will, of course, not be hurt, because God has said in the scriptures,

‘God will command his angels to protect you.

They will lift you up in their hands when you are falling,

and they will keep you from even hitting your foot on a stone.” ⁷ But Jesus said, “No! I will not jump down, because God has also said in the scriptures, ‘Do not try to make your God prove who he is.’” ⁸ Then the devil took him on top of a very high mountain. There he showed him all the nations in the world and the magnificent things in those nations. ⁹ Then he said to him, “I will let you rule all these nations and give you the magnificent things in them if you bow down and worship me.” ¹⁰ But Jesus said to him, “No, I will not worship you, Satan, so go away! God has said in the scriptures, ‘It is to the Lord your God whom you must bow down, and you must worship only him!’” ¹¹ Then the devil went away, and at that moment, angels came to Jesus and took care of him.

¹² While Jesus was in the province of Judea, John the Baptizer’s disciples came and told him that King Herod had put John in prison. So Jesus returned to the district of Galilee, to the town of Nazareth. ¹³ Then he left Nazareth and went to the city of Capernaum in order to live there. Capernaum is located beside the Sea of Galilee in the region that formerly belonged to the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali. ¹⁴ He went there so that these words that the prophet Isaiah had written long ago might come true:

¹⁵ "The regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, regions by the road going to the Sea, on the eastern side of the Jordan River,

regions in Galilee, home of many non-Israelites!

¹⁶ Those people do not know God, as if they were in darkness,

but they will learn the truth, as if a bright light had shone on them.

Yes, they have been very afraid of dying,

But a brilliant light has shone upon them!"

¹⁷ At that time, while Jesus was in the city of Capernaum, he began to preach to the people, "The rule of God from heaven is near, and he will judge you when he rules. So stop sinning!"

¹⁸ One day while Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two men, Simon, who was later called Peter, and Andrew, his younger brother. They were casting their fishing net into the water because they caught and sold fish. ¹⁹ Jesus said to them, "Come with me and I will teach you how to gather people to become my disciples. I will make your work fishing for people." ²⁰ They immediately left the work that they were doing and went with him.

²¹ As the three of them walked on from there, Jesus saw two other men, James and John, the younger brother of James. They were in their boat with Zebedee, their father, mending their fishing nets. Jesus told them that they should leave their work and go with him. ²² Immediately they also left their boat and their father and went with Jesus.

²³ Jesus led those four men throughout all of the district of Galilee. He was teaching the people in the synagogues. He was preaching the good news about how God

is ruling. He was also healing all the people who were sick. ²⁴ When people who lived in other parts of the district of Syria heard what he was doing, they brought to him people who suffered from illnesses, people who suffered from many kinds of diseases, people who suffered from severe pains, people who were controlled by demons, people who were epileptics, and people who were paralyzed. And Jesus healed them. ²⁵ Then large crowds started to go with him. They were people from Galilee, from the Ten Towns, from the city of Jerusalem, from other parts of the province of Judea, and from areas east of the Jordan River.

Chapter 5

¹ When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mount. He sat down there and taught his followers. They came near to him to listen to him. ² Then he began to teach them by saying,

³ "God is pleased with people who admit that they need him;

he will agree to rule over them from heaven.

⁴ God is pleased with people who mourn because of this sinful world;

he will encourage them.

⁵ God is pleased with people who are humble;

they will inherit the earth that God will make new.

⁶ God is pleased with people who desire to live righteously just as someone might wish to eat and drink;

he will make them able to live righteously.

⁷ God is pleased with people who act mercifully toward others;

he will act mercifully toward them.

⁸ God is pleased with people who try to do only that which pleases him;

some day they will be where God is and will see him.

⁹ God is pleased with people who help other people to live peacefully;

he will regard them as his own children.

¹⁰ God is pleased with people who live righteously; he is honored when their righteous lives are the reason why evil people insult and treat them badly.

God rules over these righteous people from heaven.

¹¹ God is pleased with you when other people insult you, and he is honored when they do evil things to you and when they tell lies about you, saying that you are evil.

¹² When that happens, rejoice and be glad, because God will give you a great reward in heaven. Remember, that is how they persecuted the prophets who lived long ago.

¹³ What salt does for food, this is what you will do for the world. But if salt loses its power, no one can make it good again. People just throw it out and walk over it.

¹⁴ What light does for people in the dark, this is what you will do for the world. All people will see you, just as they see a city built on a hillside. ¹⁵ No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket. Instead, they put it on a lampstand so it can give light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ Similarly, you need to do what is right in such a way that other people can see what you do. When they see it, they will praise your Father who is in heaven."

¹⁷ "You should not suppose that I have come to you in order to do away with the laws that God gave Moses or what the prophets wrote. Instead, I came to cause to happen what those things said would

happen. ¹⁸ This is a true saying: God may remove the heaven and the earth, but God will not remove anything from those laws, not even the smallest details or a tiny dot used to end a sentence, until God makes everything he put in the law happen, just as he said it would. ¹⁹ Because that

is true, if you break the commands that are the least important, you will be the least important person under God's rule from heaven. But if you keep all those commands and teach others to obey God as you are obeying him, you will become very important in God's rule from heaven. ²⁰ I tell you that you must obey those laws better than the teachers of the law, and you must do what is right from your heart. And you must do better than the Pharisees or you will never come under the rule of God from heaven.

²¹ "Others have told you what God said to our ancestors, 'You must not kill anyone,' and, 'If you kill anyone, the members of a governing council might sentence you.'

²² But I tell you that if you are angry with anyone, God himself will judge you. If you say to someone, 'You are worthless,' a governing council will judge you. If you say to someone, 'You are a fool,' God will throw you into the fire in hell. ²³ So when you take your gift for God to the altar, if you remember that you have offended someone, ²⁴ leave your gift by the altar, and first go to the person you have offended. Tell that person that you are sorry for what you have done, and ask that person to forgive you. Then go back and offer your gift to God. ²⁵ If a fellow citizen takes you to court in order to accuse you of doing something wrong, come to an agreement quickly with that person, while you are still walking with that person to court. Do that while there still is time so that he will not take you to the judge, because the judge might say you are guilty and hand you over to the prison guard, and

the prison guard will put you in prison. ²⁶ Keep this in mind: If you go to prison, you will never get out because you will never be able to pay all that the judge says that you owe. So remember also to be at peace with your brothers.”

²⁷ “You have heard that God said to our ancestors, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ ²⁸ But what I say to you is this: If a man even just looks at a woman desiring to sleep with her, God considers that he has already committed adultery with her in his mind.

²⁹ If you want to sin because you have looked at certain things, then stop looking at them. Even if you have to destroy both of your eyes, do it if that would make you able to avoid sinning. It would be better to be blind and stop sinning, than for God to throw you into hell while you can still see. ³⁰ And if one of your hands causes you to sin, stop using your hand. Even if you have to cut your hand off and throw it away, do it if that would make you able to avoid sinning. It would be better to lose a part of your body than for God to throw your whole body into hell.”

³¹ “God has said in the scriptures, ‘If a man is divorcing his wife, he should write a document on which he states that he is divorcing her.’ ³² But now listen to what I say to you: A man may divorce his wife only if she has committed adultery. If a man divorces his wife for any other reason, she commits adultery if she marries someone else. And the man who marries her also commits adultery.”

³³ “You have also heard that long ago people were told, ‘You should never swear an oath by making up a lie! Instead, you should make your promises as you would if the Lord himself were standing before you.’ ³⁴ But now I will say to you something more: Do not swear an oath for any reason! Do not ask the place where God lives in heaven to guarantee what you

promised. That is where his great seat of power is and from where he rules over all things. ³⁵ And do not swear any oath on the promise that the earth would witness it. Do not do this, because the earth is where God rests his feet. Never swear an oath by the city of Jerusalem, because Jerusalem is the city that belongs to God, our great King.

³⁶ Also, do not promise that you will do something and then say that they should cut off your head if you do not do it. How could you promise something so important, when you are not even able to change the color of one hair on your head.

³⁷ If you talk about doing something, just say ‘Yes, I will do it,’ or ‘No, I will not do it.’ If you say anything more than that, it is Satan, the Evil One, who has suggested that you talk this way.”

³⁸ “You have heard that our ancestors were told, ‘If someone harms one of your eyes, then they should harm one of that person’s eyes. And if someone harms one of your teeth, then they should harm one of that person’s teeth.’ ³⁹ But now listen to what I say to you: Far from taking revenge on someone who harms you, do not even try to stop him. Instead, if someone insults you by striking you on one cheek, turn your other cheek toward that person so he can strike it also. ⁴⁰ If someone wants to sue you in a court to get your tunic, let that person have both it and your outer garment, too, which is even of more worth to you. ⁴¹ And if a Roman soldier forces you to go with him one mile and carry his gear, carry it for two miles. ⁴²

Also, if someone asks you for something, give it to him. If someone asks you to lend him something, go ahead and lend it to him.”

⁴³ “You have heard that God said to our ancestors, ‘Love your fellow Israelites and hate foreigners, for they are your ene-

mies.’ ⁴⁴ But now listen to what I say to you: Love your enemies as well as your friends, and pray for those who cause you to suffer. ⁴⁵ Do this in order to be like God, your Father who is in heaven. He acts kindly to all people. For example, he causes the sun to shine equally on wicked people and on good people, and he sends rain both on people who obey his law and on people who do not. ⁴⁶ If you love only the people who love you, do not expect God to reward you at all! Even people who do terrible things, such as tax collectors, love those who love them. You must act better than they do! ⁴⁷ Yes, and if you greet only your friends and ask God to bless them, you are not acting any better than other people. Even non-Jews, who do not obey God’s law, do the same thing! ⁴⁸ So you must be completely faithful to God your Father in heaven, just as he is completely faithful to you.”

Chapter 6

¹ “Make certain that when you do good deeds you are not doing them so people will see what you do. If that is your reason for doing what is good, God, your Father who is in heaven, will not give you any reward. ² So whenever you give something to the poor, do not make other people notice it as if playing a trumpet. That is what the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the main roads in order that people might praise them. That is the only reward the hypocrites will receive! ³ Instead of doing as they do, when you give something to the poor, do not let other people know what you are doing. ⁴ In that way, you will be giving to the poor secretly. As a result God, your Father who observes you while no one else sees you, will reward you.

⁵ “Also when you pray, do not do what the hypocrites do. They like to stand in

the synagogues and on the corners of the main streets to pray, in order that other people will see them and think highly of them. That is the only reward they will get. ⁶ But as for you, when you pray, go into your private room and close the door in order to pray to God, your Father, whom no one can see. He observes you and will reward you. ⁷ When you pray, do not repeat words many times as the people who do not know God do when they pray. They think that if they use many words, their gods will listen to them and give them what they ask for. ⁸ Do not repeat words as they do, because God your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹ So pray things like this:

‘Father, you who are in heaven,

May everyone honor you.

¹⁰ May you rule over everyone and everything completely.

May everything happen on earth just as you desire,

just as it happens in heaven.

¹¹ Give us each day the food that we need for that day.

¹² Forgive our sins in the same way that we forgive the people who have sinned against us.

¹³ Do not let us do wrong things when we are tempted,

and rescue us when Satan tries to harm us.’

¹⁴ Forgive the people who sin against you, because, if you do, God, your Father who is in heaven, will forgive your sins. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive other people, neither will God forgive your sins.

¹⁶ When you keep from eating food in order to please God, do not look sad as the hypocrites look. They make their faces appear sad in order that people will see

that they are not eating food. Keep in mind that is the only reward those people will get! ¹⁷ Instead, each of you, when you keep from eating food, should comb your hair and wash your face as usual, ¹⁸ in order that other people will not notice that you are fasting. But God, your Father, whom no one can see, will observe that you are not eating food. He sees you even though no one else sees you, and he will reward you.

¹⁹ Do not selfishly accumulate large quantities of money and material goods for yourselves on this earth, because the earth is where everything perishes—where moths ruin clothing, rust destroys metals, and thieves steal what belongs to other people. ²⁰ Instead, do deeds that will please God so that you store up treasures in heaven. Nothing perishes in heaven. In heaven no moths can ruin clothing, there is no rust, and there are no thieves who could steal. ²¹ Remember that whatever is most important to you, that is what you will be thinking about.

²² "Your eyes are like a lamp for your body, because they enable you to see things. So if you see things as God sees them, it will be as if your whole body were full of light. ²³ But if your eyes are bad, you are not able to see things well. You will be in complete darkness. How greedy you will be!

²⁴ "No one is able to serve two different masters at the same time. If he tried to do that, he would hate one of them and love the other one, or he would be loyal to one of them and despise the other one. Similarly, you cannot worship God and money at the same time."

²⁵ That is why I tell you that you should not worry about things that you need in order to live. Do not worry about whether you will have enough food to eat and things to drink, or enough clothes to wear. The way you conduct your lives is much more im-

portant than those things. ²⁶ Think about the birds. They do not plant seeds, and they do not harvest crops or gather produce into barns. They always have food to eat because God, your Father who is in heaven, provides food for them. ²⁷ None of you can, just by worrying, add years to your life. You cannot add even one minute to your life! So you should not worry about things you need.

²⁸ You should also not worry about whether you will have enough clothes to wear. Think about the way flowers grow in the fields. They do not work to earn money, and they do not make their own clothes. ²⁹ But I tell you that even though King Solomon, who lived long ago, wore very beautiful clothes, his clothes were not as beautiful as one of those flowers. ³⁰ God makes the wild plants very beautiful, but they grow in the field for only a short time. One day they grow, and the next day people will throw them into an oven to burn them. But you are more important to God than wild plants are, and you live much longer. So trust in God, you who have so little faith! ³¹ So do not worry and say, 'Will we have anything to eat?' or 'Will we have anything to drink?' or 'Will we have clothes to wear?' ³² Those who do not know God are always worrying about things like that. But God, your Father who is in heaven, knows that you need all those things. ³³ Instead, make it the most important thing that God should rule over the entire world and that everyone should do what he requires. If you do that, he will give you all the things that you need. ³⁴ So do not be worried about what will happen to you the next day, because when that day comes, you will have enough to be concerned about. So do not worry ahead of time."

Chapter 7

¹ Do not talk about how sinfully others have acted, in order that God will not say how sinfully you have acted. ² If you condemn other people, God will condemn you. To the same extent that you condemn others, you will be condemned. ³ None of you should be concerned about someone else's small faults! That would be like noticing a speck of straw in that person's eye. But you should be concerned about your own big faults because you do not notice a huge wooden plank in your own eye. ⁴ You should not say to other people about their minor faults, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye!' while you still have a wooden plank in your own eye. ⁵ If you do that, you are a hypocrite! You should first remove the plank out of your own eye before trying to get the speck out of someone else's eye."

⁶ "You do not give things that belong to God to dogs that would attack you. And you do not throw valuable pearls in front of hogs, because they would just walk on them. In the same way, do not tell wonderful things about God to people who you know will do evil things to you in return.

⁷ "Keep asking God for what you need, and keep expecting him to give it to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks God for something, and who expects him to give it to him, will receive it.

⁹ If your son asked you for bread, no one among you would give him a stone, would he? ¹⁰ If your son asked you for a fish, no one among you would give him a snake, would he? ¹¹ You know how to give good things to your children, even though you are evil. So God, your Father who is in heaven, will even more certainly give good things to those who ask him.

¹² So in whatever way you want others to

act toward you, that is the way you should act toward them, because that is the meaning of God's law and of everything that the prophets wrote long ago.

¹³⁻¹⁴ "Going to live forever with God in heaven is difficult; it is like a difficult road that you should take. There is another road, one that most people take. That road is wide; they walk on until they reach a wide gate, but when they go through it, they will die. So I am telling you to take the difficult road and enter the narrow gate to live forever with God in heaven."

¹⁵ Watch out for people who come to you and say falsely that they are telling you what God has said. They are like wolves that have covered themselves with sheepskins to appear harmless but will attack you. ¹⁶ By seeing the fruit that plants produce you know what kind of plants they are. Thornbushes cannot produce grapes and thistles cannot produce figs, so no one thinks of picking grapes from thorns or figs from thistles. ¹⁷ Here is another example: All good fruit trees produce good fruit, but all rotten trees produce worthless fruit. ¹⁸ No good fruit tree produces worthless fruit, and no rotten tree produces good fruit. ¹⁹ Workers chop down and burn up all the trees that do not produce good fruit. ²⁰ By seeing what plants produce, you know what kind of plants they are. Similarly, when you see what the people who come to you do, you will know if they truly produce good or not.

²¹ Even though many people habitually call me Lord, pretending that they have my authority, God will not agree to rule from heaven over some of them, because they do not do what he desires. My Father will agree to rule over only those who do what he wants. ²² On the day that God judges everyone, many people will say to me, 'Lord, we spoke God's message as your representatives! As your representatives

we drove out demons from people! And as your representatives, many times we performed mighty deeds!’ ²³ Then I will publicly say to them, ‘I have never admitted that you belonged to me. Go away from me, you who do what is evil!’”

²⁴ So then, anyone who hears what I say and does what I command will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. ²⁵ Even though the rain came down and the river flooded, and the winds blew and beat against that house, it did not fall down because it had been built on solid rock. ²⁶ On the other hand, anyone who hears what I say but does not obey me will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ When the rain fell, and the river flooded, and the winds blew and beat against that house, it crashed down and broke completely apart because it was built on sand. So you should obey what I have told you.”

²⁸ When Jesus finished teaching all those things, the crowds who had heard him were amazed by how he taught. ²⁹ He taught like a teacher who relies on what he himself knows. He did not teach like those who taught the Jewish laws, who repeated the different things that other men had taught.

Chapter 8

¹ When Jesus went down from the hillside, large crowds followed him. ² After Jesus left the crowds, a man who had a skin disease came and knelt before him. He said to Jesus, “Lord, please heal me, because I know you are able to heal me if you are willing to.” ³ Then Jesus stretched out his hand and touched the man. He said to him, “I am willing to heal you, and I heal you now!” Immediately the man was healed from his sickness. ⁴ Then

Jesus said to him, “Make sure that now you do not report about my healing you to anyone other than the priest. Then go to the temple in Jerusalem and give the offering that Moses commanded so people will know about it.”

⁵ When Jesus went to the city of Capernaum, a Roman officer who commanded one hundred soldiers came to him. He begged Jesus to help him. ⁶ He said to him, “Lord, my servant is lying in bed at home and is paralyzed, and he has severe pain.” ⁷ Jesus said to him, “I will go to your house and heal him.” ⁸ But the officer said to him, “I am not worthy for you to come into my house. Instead, just say that my servant is healed, and he will be healed.” ⁹ It is the same way with me. I am a soldier; I have to obey my commanders, and I also have soldiers that I command. When I say to one of them ‘Go!’ he goes. When I say to another ‘Come!’ he comes. When I say to my slave, ‘Do this!’ he does it.” ¹⁰ When Jesus heard this, he marveled. He said to the crowd that was walking with him, “Listen to this: I have never before found anyone who trusts in me as much this non-Jewish man. Not even in Israel, where I would expect people to believe in me, have I found anyone who trusts so much in me!” ¹¹ I tell you truly that many other non-Jewish people will believe in me also, and they will come from distant countries, including those far to the east and far to the west, and they will sit down to feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when God will rule from heaven over everything completely. ¹² But as for the Jews whom God intended to rule—he will throw them into hell, where there is total darkness. There they will weep because of their suffering, and they will grind their teeth because they will have severe pain.” ¹³ Then Jesus said to the officer, “Go home. What you believed will happen.” Then the officer went home and found out that his servant had

become well at the exact time that Jesus told him that he would heal him.

¹⁴ When Jesus and some of his disciples went to the home of Peter, Jesus saw Peter's mother-in-law. She was lying on a bed because she had a fever. ¹⁵ He touched her hand, and immediately she no longer had a fever. Then she got up and served them some food.

¹⁶ That evening when the Sabbath ended, the crowd brought to Jesus many people whom demons controlled, and other people who were sick. He made the demons leave just by speaking to them, and he healed all the people who were sick. ¹⁷ When he did this, he made come true what the prophet Isaiah had written, 'He freed people from being sick, and he made them well.'

¹⁸ Jesus saw the crowd around him he told his disciples to take him by boat to the other side of the lake. ¹⁹ As they were walking toward the boat, a man who taught the Jewish laws came to him and said, "Teacher, I will go with you wherever you go." ²⁰ Jesus answered him, "Foxes have holes in the ground in which to live, and birds have nests, but even though I am the Son of Man, I do not have a home where I can sleep." ²¹ Another man who was one of Jesus' disciples said to him, "Lord, permit me first to go home. After my father dies I will bury him, and then I will come with you." ²² But Jesus said to him, "Come with me now. The people who are as good as dead, let them wait for their own people to die."

²³ Then Jesus got into the boat and his disciples followed him. ²⁴ Suddenly strong winds blew on the water, and very high waves were splashing into the boat and filling it. But Jesus was sleeping. ²⁵ They went and woke him up, and said to him, "Lord, rescue us! We are about to drown!"

²⁶ He said to them, "You should not be ter-

rified! You do not believe very much that I can rescue you." Then he got up and rebuked the wind and told the waves to calm down. Immediately the wind stopped blowing and the water became calm. ²⁷ The men were amazed, and they said to each other, "This man is certainly an extraordinary person! All things are under his control! Even the winds and the waves obey him!"

²⁸ When they came to the east side of the lake, they arrived in the region where the Gadarenes lived. Then two men whom demons controlled came out of the burial caves where they were living. Because they were extremely violent and attacked people, no one dared to travel on the road there. ²⁹ Suddenly they shouted to Jesus, "You are the Son of God! Because you have nothing in common with us, leave us alone! Have you come here to torture us before the time God has appointed to punish us?" ³⁰ There was a large herd of pigs grazing not far away. ³¹ So the demons begged Jesus and said, "You are going to drive us out of these men, so send us into those pigs!" ³² Jesus said to them, "If that is what you want, go!" So the demons left the men and entered the pigs. Suddenly the whole herd of pigs rushed down the steep bank into the water and drowned. ³³ The men who were tending the pigs became afraid and ran into the town and reported everything that had happened, including what had happened to the two men whom demons had controlled. ³⁴ Then it seemed as if all the people who lived in that town went to meet Jesus. When they saw him and the two men whom demons had controlled, they pleaded with Jesus to leave their region.

Chapter 9

¹ Jesus and his disciples got into the boat.

They sailed over the lake and went to Capernaum, the city where he was staying.² Some people brought to him a man who was paralyzed and who was lying on a sleeping pad. When Jesus perceived that they believed that he could heal the paralyzed man, he said to him, "Young man, be encouraged! I forgive your sins."³ Some of the men who taught the Jewish laws said among themselves, "This man thinks he is God; he cannot forgive sins!"⁴ Jesus knew what they were thinking, so he said, "You should not think evil thoughts!⁵ What is easier, to tell him that his sins are forgiven or to tell him to get up and walk?"⁶ So I am going to do something in order that you may know that God has authorized me, the Son of Man, to forgive sins." Then he said to the paralyzed man, "Get up, pick up your sleeping pad, and go home!"⁷ Immediately the man got up, picked up his sleeping pad, and went home!⁸ When the crowds saw this, they were awestruck. They praised God for giving such authority to people.

⁹ As Jesus was going away from there, he saw a man named Matthew. He was sitting at a table where he collected taxes for the Roman government. Jesus said to him, "Come with me and be my disciple!" So Matthew got up and went with him.¹⁰ Jesus and his disciples sat down in a house for a meal. While they were eating, many tax collectors and other persons came and ate with them.¹¹ When the Pharisees saw that, they went up to the disciples and said, "It is disgusting that your teacher eats and associates with tax collectors and other people like them."¹² Jesus heard what they said, so he told them this parable: "It is people who are sick who need a doctor, not people who are well."¹³ You need to learn what these words that God said mean: 'I want you to act mercifully to people and not just to offer sacrifices.' Keep in mind that I came to you, not

to invite people who think that they are righteous to turn away from their sinful lives and come to me, but to invite people who know they are sinners."

¹⁴ Then the disciples of John the Baptizer came to Jesus and asked him, "We and the Pharisees often abstain from food because we want to please God, but your disciples do not do that. Why do they not?"¹⁵ Jesus answered, "When the bridegroom is with his friends when he gets married, those people do not mourn, do they? No, because they are not sad at that time. But when the bridegroom has to leave them, they will abstain from food, because they will be sad.

¹⁶ People do not sew a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment to mend a hole. If they did that, when they washed the garment, the patch would shrink and tear the garment, and the hole would become bigger."¹⁷ Neither does anyone pour fresh grape juice into old skin bags to store it. If anyone did that, those skin bags would tear when the juice became wine. The bags would be ruined, and the wine would be spilled on the ground. Instead, people put new wine into new skin bags, and the bags will stretch when the wine ferments. In this way, both the wine and the bags will be safe."

¹⁸ While Jesus was saying that, a leader in the city came and bowed down before him. Then he said, "My daughter has just now died! But if you come and lay your hand on her, she will live again!"¹⁹ So Jesus got up, and he and the disciples went with the man.²⁰ Then a woman who had been suffering constant bleeding for twelve years came near Jesus. She came behind him and touched the edge of his garment.²¹ She was saying to herself, "If I just touch his garment, I will be healed."²² Then Jesus turned around to see who

had touched him. And when he saw the woman, he said to her, "Be encouraged, dear woman. Because you believed that I could heal you, I have healed you." The woman was healed at that very moment.

²³ Jesus came to the man's house and saw the flute players playing funeral music; there were also many mourners who were wailing loudly because the girl had died. ²⁴ He said to them, "Go away and stop this funeral music and wailing, because the girl is not dead! She is just sleeping!" The people laughed at him, because they knew that she was dead. ²⁵ But Jesus told them to get out of the house. Then he went into the room where the girl was lying. He took hold of her hand and she became alive again and got up. ²⁶ And the people of that whole region heard about it.

²⁷ As Jesus went away from there, two blind men followed him and shouted, "Have mercy on us and heal us, you Descendant of King David!" ²⁸ Jesus went into the house, and then the blind men went in, too. Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to heal you?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord!" ²⁹ Then he touched their eyes and he said to them, "Because you believe that I can heal your eyes, I am healing them right now!" ³⁰ And they were able to see! Then Jesus told them sternly, "Be sure that you do not tell anybody what I have done for you!" ³¹ But they went out and spread the news in that whole region.

³² Just when those two men were leaving, some people brought to Jesus a man who was unable to speak because a demon controlled him. ³³ After Jesus had driven out the demon, the man began to speak! The crowds saw this and they were astonished and said, "Never before have we seen anything as marvelous as this happen in Israel!" ³⁴ But the Pharisees said, "It is Satan,

who rules the demons, who enables this man to drive out demons from people."

³⁵ Then Jesus and his disciples went through many of the cities and towns in the district of Galilee. He was teaching in the synagogues and preaching the good news about how God will rule from heaven. He also was healing the people who had various diseases and illnesses. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds of people, he pitied them because they were upset and worried. They were like sheep that do not have a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples: "The people who are ready to receive my message are like a field where the crops are ready to harvest. But there are not many people who go to gather the crops. ³⁸ So pray and ask the Lord God to send many more people to gather in his crops."

Chapter 10

¹ Jesus told his twelve disciples to come to him. Then he gave them the power to drive out evil spirits that controlled people. He also enabled them to heal people who had all kinds of diseases or who were sick in all kinds of ways. ² Here is a list of the twelve disciples, whom he called apostles. They were Simon, to whom he gave the new name Peter; Andrew, Peter's younger brother; James the son of Zebedee; John, the younger brother of James; ³ Philip; Bartholomew; Thomas; Matthew, the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus; Thaddaeus; ⁴ Simon the Zealot; and Judas Iscariot, who was disloyal to Jesus and pointed him out to the authorities so they could arrest him.

⁵ When Jesus was about to send his twelve apostles to tell the good news to people in various places, he gave them these instructions: "Do not go where the non-Jews

live or into the towns where the Samaritans live. ⁶ Instead, go to the people of Israel; they are like sheep who have strayed away from their shepherd. ⁷ When you go to them, proclaim to them that God will soon rule from heaven. ⁸ Heal sick people, cause dead people to become alive, heal people with leprosy and bring them back into society, and cause demons to leave those whom they control. Do not charge any money for helping people, because God did not charge you anything for helping you. ⁹ Do not take any money with you, ¹⁰ nor a bag for what belongs to you. Do not take an extra tunic, nor sandals in addition to what you are wearing, nor a walking stick. Every worker deserves to get pay from the people for whom he works, so you deserve to receive food from the people to whom you go. ¹¹ In any town or village that you enter, find a person who wants you to stay in his home. ¹² As you go into that house, call upon God to do good to the people who live there. Stay in that home until you leave that town or village. ¹³ If the people who live in that house receive you well, God will indeed do good to them. But if they do not receive you well, then your prayer will not help them, and God will not do them good. ¹⁴ If the people who live in any house or town do not welcome you, nor listen to your message, leave that place. As you leave, shake off the dust from your feet. By doing that, you will warn them that God will reject them as they rejected what you said. ¹⁵ Note this carefully: At the time when God judges all people, he will punish the wicked people who lived in Sodom and Gomorrah. But if the people of any city reject you, God will punish them even more severely.

¹⁶ "Take note: When I send you out, you will be as defenseless as sheep, among people who are as dangerous as wolves. So be careful like snakes are careful and

be harmless to them like pigeons are harmless. ¹⁷ Also, be on guard against such people, because they will arrest you and take you to the members of the governing councils to put you on trial. They will whip you in their synagogues. ¹⁸ And because you belong to me, they will take you before governors and kings in order that they may put you on trial and punish you. But you will testify to those rulers and to other non-Jews about me. ¹⁹ When those people arrest you, do not be worried about what you will say to them, because the words that you should say will come to you. ²⁰ It is not that you will decide what to say. Instead, you will say what the Spirit of your heavenly Father tells you to say. ²¹ They will take you to the authorities to die because you believe in me. For example, people will do that to their brothers, and fathers will do that to their children. Children will rebel against their parents and cause them to be killed. ²² Many people will hate you because you trust in me. But anyone who faithfully trusts in me until they die, those people God will save. ²³ When people in one city cause you to suffer, escape to another city. Note this: I, the Son of Man, will certainly return to earth before you have finished going from one town to another town throughout Israel and telling people about me.

²⁴ A disciple should not expect to be greater than his teacher, and servants are not superior to their master. ²⁵ You do not expect that people will treat a student better than they treat his teacher, or that they will treat a servant better than they treat his master. Similarly, because I am your teacher and master, you can expect that people will mistreat you, because they have mistreated me. I am like the ruler of a household, whom they call Satan. If they act that badly toward me, how do you think they will act toward you?"

²⁶ "Do not be afraid of those people. Everything that is covered up will be uncovered, and every secret will be made known. ²⁷ So, instead of being afraid, what I say to you secretly as people do at night, tell it publicly as people do during the daytime. What I say to you privately as people do when they whisper to you, proclaim it publicly. ²⁸ Do not be afraid of people who are able to kill your body but are not able to destroy your soul. Instead, fear God, because he is able to destroy both your body and your soul in hell. ²⁹ Think about the sparrows. They have so little value that you can buy two of them for only one small coin. But when any sparrow falls to the ground and dies, God, your heavenly Father, knows it, because he knows everything. ³⁰ He knows everything about you, too. He even knows how many hairs you have on your head! ³¹ God values you much more than he values sparrows. So, do not be afraid of people who threaten to kill you! ³² If people are willing to tell others that they belong to me, I will also acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven that they belong to me. ³³ But if they are afraid to say in front of others that they belong to me, I will tell my Father, who is in heaven, that they are not mine."

³⁴ "Do not think that I came to earth to cause people to live together in peace. Because I have come, some of those who follow me will die. ³⁵ Because I came to earth, people who do not believe in me will be against those who do believe in me. For example, some sons will oppose their fathers, some daughters will oppose their mothers, and some daughters-in-law will oppose their mothers-in-law. ³⁶ This shows that sometimes a person's enemies will be members of his own household. ³⁷ People who love their fathers or mothers more than they love me are not worthy to belong to me. And people who love their

sons or daughters more than they love me are not worthy to belong to me. ³⁸ If you are not ready to die because you belong to me, then you are not worthy to belong to me. ³⁹ People who deny that they believe in me in order to escape dying will not live with God eternally, but people who are willing to lose their lives because they trust in me will live with God eternally."

⁴⁰ "God considers that everyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and he considers that everyone who welcomes me welcomes him, the one who sent me. ⁴¹ Those who welcome someone because they know that person is a prophet—they will receive the same reward that prophets receive from God. Likewise, those who welcome a person because they know that person is righteous—they will receive the reward that righteous people receive from God. ⁴² Note this: Suppose people see that you are thirsty and give you a drink of cold water because they know that you are one of my disciples, even if you are not an important person at all. God will certainly reward people who do that."

Chapter 11

¹ When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples about what they should do, he sent them to various Israelite towns. Then he went to teach and preach in other Israelite towns in that area.

² While John the Baptizer was in prison, he heard what the Messiah was doing. So he sent some of his disciples to him ³ to ask him, "Are you the Messiah whom the prophets said would come, or is it someone else that we should expect to come?" ⁴ Jesus answered John's disciples, "Go back and report to John what you hear me telling people and what you see me

doing. ⁵ I am making blind people to see again and lame people to walk. I am healing people who have leprosy. I am making deaf people to hear again and dead people to become alive again. I am telling the poor people God's good news. ⁶ Also tell John that God is pleased with people who do not stop believing in me because they do not like what I am doing."

⁷ When John's disciples had gone away, Jesus began to talk to the crowd of people about John. He said to them, "When you went out into the wilderness to see John, what was it you expected to see? You did not go there just to look at the tall grass blowing in the wind, did you? ⁸ So what kind of person did you expect to see? Surely not a man who was wearing expensive clothes. No! You know very well that people who wear clothes like that reside in kings' palaces and not in the wilderness. ⁹ So really, what kind of person did you expect to see? A prophet? Oh, yes! But let me tell you this: John is not just any ordinary prophet. ¹⁰ He is the one to whom God was referring when someone wrote in the scriptures and said,

'Notice this! I am sending my messenger to go ahead of you to prepare the people for your coming.'

¹¹ Note this: Of all the people who have ever lived, God does not consider any of them to be greater than John the Baptizer. At the same time, God considers those that are not important in the kingdom he rules from heaven to be greater than John.

¹² From the time that John the Baptizer preached until now, some people have been trying to make God rule from heaven in their own way, and they have been using force for this purpose. ¹³ Everything that I am saying about John is just what you can read in what the prophets have written and what the law has been saying until the time of John the Baptizer. ¹⁴ Not

only that, but if you are willing to try to understand this, I will tell you that John is in fact the second Elijah, the prophet who was to come in the future. ¹⁵ If you want to understand this, you must think carefully about what I have just said.

¹⁶ But you and the other people who are alive now, you are like children who are playing games in the marketplace. Some of them call to their friends, ¹⁷ 'We played happy music on the flute for you, but you refused to dance! Then we sang sad funeral songs for you, but you refused to cry!' ¹⁸ I say this because you are dissatisfied with both John and me! When John came and preached to you, he did not eat good food and did not drink wine, like most people do. But you rejected him and said, 'A demon is controlling him!' ¹⁹ I, the Son of Man, was not like John. I eat the same food and drink wine as other people do. But you also reject me and say, 'Look! This man eats too much food and drinks too much wine, and he is friends with tax collectors and other sinners!' But anyone who is truly wise will show it by doing good deeds."

²⁰ In the towns where Jesus had performed most of his miracles, the people there still refused to turn to God. So he began to rebuke them by saying to them,

²¹ "You people who live in the city of Chorazin and you in the city of Bethsaida, how terribly you will suffer! I did great miracles in your cities, but you did not stop sinning. If I had done these things in the cities of Tyre and Sidon of long ago, those wicked people would certainly have stopped sinning; they would have put on rough clothing and sat in the cold ashes of their fires, so sorry they would have been.

²² Let me tell you this: God will punish the wicked people who lived in the cities of Tyre and Sidon, but he will punish you even more severely on the final day when

he judges all people. ²³ I also have something to say to you people who live in the city of Capernaum. Do you think that others will praise you so much that you will go right up to heaven? That will not happen! On the contrary, you will go down to where God punishes people after they die! If I had done these same miracles in Sodom of long ago, those wicked people would certainly have stopped sinning, and their city would have been here even today. But you have not stopped sinning. ²⁴ Let me tell you this: God will punish the wicked people who lived in Sodom, but he will punish you even more severely on the final day when he judges all people."

²⁵ At that time Jesus prayed, "Father, you rule over everything in heaven and on the earth. I thank you that you have prevented people who think that they are wise and well educated from knowing these things. Instead, you have revealed them to people who accept your truth just as little children believe what an adult tells them. ²⁶ Yes, Father, you have done that because it seemed good to you to do so."

²⁷ Then Jesus said to the people, "God, my Father, has revealed to me all the things that I need to know in order to do my work. Only my Father knows who I really am. Furthermore, only I and those people to whom I wish to reveal him really know him. ²⁸ Come to me, all you people who are very weary of trying to obey all the laws your leaders say you should. I will let you rest from all that. ²⁹ Submit to me, like an ox to its yoke, and learn what I have to teach you. I am gentle and humble, and you will truly rest. ³⁰ For the load I will give you is light, and you will carry it easily."

Chapter 12

¹ On a Sabbath at that time, Jesus and the disciples were walking past some grain fields. Because the disciples were hungry, they began to pick some of the heads of grain and eat them, something that the law of Moses allowed. ² Some Pharisees saw them doing that, so they said to Jesus, "Look! Your disciples are doing work on our day of rest. The law does not allow that!" ³ But Jesus answered, "It is written in the scriptures what our ancestor King David did when he and the men with him were hungry. ⁴ King David entered the sacred tent where they worshiped God and ate the bread that had been on display before God. But according to the law of Moses, only priests were permitted to eat that bread, but David and the men who were with him ate it. ⁵ Also, surely you have read what Moses wrote, when he said that even though the priests, by working in the temple on our Sabbath day, are not obeying the Jewish day of rest laws, they are not guilty. ⁶ Let me tell you what this means: I have come to you, and I am more important than the temple. ⁷ You should think about these words of God in the scriptures: 'I want you to act mercifully toward people, and not just offer sacrifices.' If you understood what that means, you would not condemn my disciples, who have done no wrong. ⁸ I am the Son of Man, and I have the authority to tell people what they can do on the Sabbath day."

⁹ After Jesus left there that day, he went into a synagogue. ¹⁰ There he saw a man with a withered hand. The Pharisees kept wanting to debate with Jesus about the Sabbath, so one of them asked him, "Does God permit us to heal people on our day of rest?" They were hoping that Jesus would commit a sin by saying something wrong.

¹¹ He replied to them, "Suppose that one of you had just one sheep, and that it fell into a deep hole on the Sabbath day. Would you just leave it there? Certainly not! You would take hold of it and lift it out right away!" ¹² But a person is much more valuable than a sheep. So it is certainly right for us to do good by healing another person any day, even on our day of rest!" ¹³ Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand!" The man stretched out his withered hand, and it became healthy like the other hand! ¹⁴ Then the Pharisees left the synagogue. They began to plan together how they could kill Jesus.

¹⁵ Because Jesus knew that the Pharisees were plotting to kill him, he took the disciples and went away from there. Large crowds, including many sick people, followed him, and he healed them all. ¹⁶ But he told them firmly that they should not tell other people about him. ¹⁷ By doing this he fulfilled what Isaiah the prophet had written long ago. He wrote,

¹⁸ "Here is my servant whom I have chosen,

the one whom I love and who pleases me.

I will put my Spirit in him,

and he will bring justice and salvation to the non-Jews."

¹⁹ He will not quarrel with people, neither will he shout.

And he will not shout in the streets.

²⁰ He will be gentle with the weak people;

If a person is barely alive, he will not kill him.

And he will judge the people with justice and declare that they are not guilty.

²¹ So the non-Jews will confidently trust in him."

²² One day some men brought to Jesus a man who was blind and unable to speak because he had a demon. Jesus drove out the demon and healed him. Then the man began to talk and was able to see. ²³ All the crowds who saw it marveled. They began asking each other, "Could this man be the Messiah, the descendant of King David, whom we have been expecting?" ²⁴ Because the Pharisees heard about this miracle, they said, "It is not God, but Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons, who enables this man to drive demons from people!" ²⁵ But Jesus knew what the Pharisees were thinking. So he said to them, "If the people in one nation fight against each other, they will destroy their nation. If people who live in the same city or house fight each other, they will certainly not remain as one group or family. ²⁶ In the same way, if Satan were driving out his own demons, he would be fighting against himself. He will not be able to continue to rule over his servants! ²⁷ Furthermore, if it is true that Satan enables me to drive out demons, is it also true that your disciples who drive them out do so by Satan's power? No! So they will judge you for saying that Satan's power was behind their work. ²⁸ But because it is God's Spirit who enables me to drive out demons, that proves that the rule of God from heaven is already here.

²⁹ I will show you why I am able to drive out demons. A person cannot go into the house of a strong man like Satan and carry off his possessions if he does not first tie up that strong man. But if he ties him up, then he will be able to take his possessions.

³⁰ No one can be neutral. Those who do not acknowledge that the Holy Spirit enables me to expel demons are opposing me, and those who do not gather people to become my disciples are causing those people to go away from me.

³¹ You are saying that it is not the Holy Spirit who is enabling me to expel demons. So I will say this to you: If those who offend and insult other people in any way are then sorry and ask God to forgive them, God will forgive them. But he will not forgive people who insult the Holy Spirit. ³² God is willing to forgive people who criticize me, the Son of Man. But I warn you that he will not forgive those who say evil things about what the Holy Spirit does. God will not forgive them now, nor in the coming world."

³³ "When you see some fruit from a tree, you decide whether the fruit is good or bad. If it is good, then you know that its tree is also good. If I am doing good things, then you should know whether or not I am good. ³⁴ You are like the children of poisonous snakes! You cannot say anything good, because you are evil. What a person says shows what is inside him. ³⁵ Good people speak good things. That is because it is like they have stored up all these good things in a safe place and can bring them out at any time. But evil people speak evil things. That is because it is like they have stored up all these evil things and bring them out at any time from the place where they store them. ³⁶ I tell you that on the day when God judges, he will make people recall every useless word they have spoken, and he will judge the people by what they have said. ³⁷ God will either declare that you are righteous based on the words that you have spoken, or else he will condemn you based on what you have said."

³⁸ Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the Jewish laws responded to Jesus, "Teacher, we want to see you perform a miracle that will convince us that God sent you." ³⁹ Then Jesus said to them, "You people have already seen me perform miracles, but you are evil, and you do not faith-

fully worship God! You want me to prove that God sent me, but God will show you only one miracle. It will be like what happened to Jonah the prophet. ⁴⁰ Jonah was in the stomach of a huge fish for three days and nights before God caused him to come out. Similarly, for three days and nights I, the Son of Man, will be deep in the earth, and then God will cause me to live again. ⁴¹ When God judges everyone, the people who lived in the city of Nineveh will stand in front of him beside you people. But they stopped sinning when Jonah warned them. Now I have come to you, and I am far more important than Jonah was, but you have not stopped sinning. So God will judge you. ⁴² The queen from Sheba, south of Israel, who lived long ago, came from a distant region in order to listen to King Solomon teach many wise things. Now I have come to you, and I am far more important than Solomon was, but you have not stopped sinning. So when God judges everyone, the queen of Sheba will stand in front of him beside you people, and she will condemn you."

⁴³ "Sometimes when an evil spirit leaves a person, it wanders around in desolate areas, seeking someone in whom he can rest. If he does not find anyone, ⁴⁴ he says to himself, 'I will return to the person in whom I used to live.' So he goes back and finds that the Spirit of God is not in control of that person's life. The person's life is like a house that has been swept clean and everything put in order, but it is empty. ⁴⁵ Then this evil spirit goes and gets seven other spirits that are even more evil, and they all enter that person and begin living there. So although that person's condition was bad before, it becomes much worse. That is what you wicked people who have heard me teach will experience."

⁴⁶ While Jesus was still speaking to the

crowd, his mother and his younger brothers arrived. They stood outside the house, and they wanted to speak with him. ⁴⁷ Someone said to him, "Your mother and your younger brothers are standing outside the house, and they want to talk to you." ⁴⁸ Then Jesus said to the person who told him that, "I will tell you who are really my mother and brothers." ⁴⁹ He then pointed toward his disciples and said, "These are ones who take the place of my mother and my brothers. ⁵⁰ Those who do what God my Father who is in heaven wants take the place of my brother, my sister, or my mother."

Chapter 13

¹ That same day Jesus, along with the disciples, left the house where he was teaching and went to the shore of the Sea of Galilee. He sat down there, ² and a very large crowd gathered around him to listen to him teach. In order to have a little room, he got into a boat and sat down to teach them. The crowd stood on the shore and listened to him. ³ He taught them using many parables. He said, "Listen! A man went out to his field to sow seeds. ⁴ As he was scattering the seeds over the soil, some of the seeds fell on the path. But some birds came and ate those seeds. ⁵ Other seeds fell on ground where there was not much soil on top of the rock. Those seeds sprouted very soon, because the sun quickly warmed the shallow soil. ⁶ But when the young plants came up, they became too hot in the sunlight, and they dried up because they did not have deep roots. ⁷ Other seeds fell on ground that had thorny weeds. The thorny weeds grew together with the young plants, and they crowded out the plants. ⁸ But other seeds fell on good soil, and the plants grew and produced a lot of grain. Some plants

produced one hundred times as many seeds as were planted. Some plants produced sixty times as much. Some plants produced thirty times as much. ⁹ If you are able to understand this, you should consider carefully what I have just said."

¹⁰ The disciples approached Jesus later and asked him, "Why do you use parables when you speak to the crowd?" ¹¹ He answered, "God is revealing to you what he did not reveal before, about how he is ruling from heaven. But he has not revealed it to these other people. ¹² Those who are able to think about what I say and understand it, God will enable them to understand more. But those who are not able to think carefully about what I say will forget even what they already know. ¹³ That is why I use parables when I speak to people, because although they see what I do, they do not understand what it means, and although they hear what I say, they do not really learn what it means. ¹⁴ What these people do completely fulfills what God told the prophet Isaiah to say long ago, You will hear what I say, but you will not understand it. You will see what I do, but you will not learn what it means."

¹⁵ God also said to Isaiah,

"These people are able to hear what I say, but they will never understanding the message.

They have eyes that can see, but they will never see clearly what it is they are looking at; they have closed their eyes so they cannot see.

They cannot see with their eyes and they cannot hear with their ears and they cannot understand.

If they could see and hear and understand then they would turn to me," God says, "and I would heal them."

¹⁶ But as for you, God has made you able because you realize what I have done and

because you understand what I say. ¹⁷ Note this: Many prophets and righteous people who lived long ago longed to see what you are seeing me do, but they did not see it. They longed to hear the things that you have been hearing me say, but they did not hear what you hear me say.”

¹⁸ Now listen to me explain the parable I told you. ¹⁹ Some people hear about how God is ruling but do not understand it. They are like the path where some of the seeds fell. Satan, the evil one, comes and causes these people to forget what they have heard. ²⁰ Some people hear God’s message and immediately accept it joyfully. They are like the rocky places where some seeds fell. ²¹ But because it does not penetrate deeply into their hearts, they believe it for only a short time. They are like the plants that did not have deep roots. When others treat them badly and make them suffer because they believe in what I have told them, they sin by refusing to believe in it any longer. ²² Some people hear God’s message, but they desire to be rich, so they worry only about money and what they can buy with money. As a result, they forget God’s message and they do not do the things that God wants them to do. These people are like the soil that had the roots of thorny weeds in it. ²³ But some people hear my message and understand it. Some of them do many things that please God, some do even more things that please God, and some do very many things that please God. They are like the good soil where some of the seeds fell.”

²⁴ Jesus also told the crowd another parable. He said, “When God rules from heaven, it will be like a landowner who sent his servants to sow good seed in his field. ²⁵ While those servants were sleeping and not guarding the field, an enemy of the landowner came and scattered weed seeds in the midst of the wheat.

Then he left. ²⁶ After the seeds sprouted and the green plants grew, the heads of grain began to form. But the weeds also grew. ²⁷ So the servants of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, you gave us good seeds and those are the ones we sowed in your field. So where did the weeds come from?’ ²⁸ The landowner said to them, ‘My enemy did this.’ His servants said to him, ‘Do you want us to pull up the weeds?’ ²⁹ He said to them, ‘No, do not do that, because you might pull up some of the wheat at the same time. ³⁰ Let the wheat and the weeds grow together until harvest time. At that time I will say to those who will reap, ‘First gather the weeds, tie them into bundles to be burned. Then gather the wheat and put it into my barns.’”

³¹ Jesus also told this parable: “When God rules from heaven, it is like mustard seeds that grow after a man plants them in his field. ³² Although mustard seeds are among the smallest of all the seeds that people plant, here in Israel they become large plants. When the plants have fully grown, they are larger than the other garden plants. They become shrubs as big as trees, and they are large enough for the birds to build nests in their branches.”

³³ Jesus also told this parable: “When God rules from heaven, it is like a woman who was making bread. She took about forty liters of flour and mixed into it a little bit of yeast, and the bread rose.”

³⁴ Jesus told the crowd parables to teach them all these things. When he spoke to them he habitually told stories like these. ³⁵ By doing that, he made come true what God told one of the prophets to write long ago.

I will speak in parables; I will tell parables to teach what I have kept secret since I created the world.

³⁶ After Jesus sent the crowd away, he went into the house. Then the disciples approached him and said, "Explain to us the parable about the weeds that grew in the wheat field." ³⁷ He answered, "The one who sows the good seed represents me, the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field represents this world, where people live. The seeds that grew well represent the people over whom God rules. The weeds represent the people who do what the devil, the Evil One, tells them to do. ³⁹ The enemy who sowed the weed seeds represents the devil. The time when the reapers will harvest the grain represents the time when the world will end. The reapers represent the angels. ⁴⁰ The weeds are gathered and burned. That represents what will happen when God judges all people, when the world will end. It will be like this: ⁴¹ I, the Son of Man, will send my angels, and they will gather from among all that I am ruling the things that cause others to sin and all those who violate God's will. ⁴² The angels will throw those people into the fires of hell. There those people will weep and grind their teeth because of the great pain that they are suffering. ⁴³ However, the people who have lived as he wants them to will shine out as brightly as the sun shines. They will shine out because God, their Father, will rule over them. If you are able to understand this, you should think carefully about what I have just said."

⁴⁴ "God's ruling from heaven is so precious it is like a man who found a great treasure that another person had buried in a field. When this man dug it up, he buried it again so no one else would find it. Then he went and sold all his possessions to obtain money to buy that field. He then went and bought the field, and so he was able to acquire that treasure.

⁴⁵ Also, God ruling from heaven is so pre-

cious it is like what a merchant did who was looking for good quality pearls to buy. ⁴⁶ When he found one very costly pearl that was for sale, he sold all his possessions to acquire enough money to buy that pearl. Then he went and bought it.

⁴⁷ When God rules from heaven, it is like what certain fishermen did with the fish they caught in a lake with a large net. They caught all kinds of fish, both useful and worthless fish. ⁴⁸ When the net was full, the fishermen pulled it up onto the shore. Then they sat there and put the good fish into buckets, but they threw the worthless ones away. ⁴⁹ This is like what will happen to people when the world ends. The angels will come to where God is judging people and will separate the wicked people from the righteous ones. ⁵⁰ They will throw the wicked people into the fire in hell. And those wicked people will weep and gnash their teeth because of the intense pain they are suffering."

⁵¹ Then Jesus asked the disciples, "Do you understand all these parables I have told you?" They said to him, "Yes, we understand them." ⁵² Then he said, "Those teachers and interpreters who understand these parables and act accordingly under the rule of God from heaven are like a house owner who shares both new things and old things out of his storage room."

⁵³ When Jesus had finished telling these parables, he took the disciples and left that area. ⁵⁴ Then they went to the town of Nazareth, the hometown of Jesus. On the Sabbath he began to teach the people in the synagogue. The result was that the people there were astonished. But some said, "This man is just an ordinary person like us! So how is it that he knows so much and understands so much? And how is it that he is able to do such miracles? ⁵⁵ He is just the son of the carpenter, is he not? His mother is Mary, and his younger

brothers are James, Joseph, Simon and Judas! ⁵⁶ And his sisters also live here in our town. So how is he able to teach and do all these things?" ⁵⁷ The people there refused to accept that Jesus had such authority. So Jesus said to them, "People honor me and other prophets everywhere else we go, but in our hometowns we are not honored, and even our own families do not honor us!" ⁵⁸ Jesus did not perform many miracles there because the people did not believe that he had such authority.

Chapter 14

¹ During that time the ruler Herod Antipas heard reports about Jesus performing miracles. ² He said to his servants, "That must be John the Baptizer. He must have risen from the dead, and that is why he has power to do these miracles." ³⁻⁴ This is what happened to make Herod think this. Herod had married Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, while Philip was still living. So John kept saying to him, "What you have done is against God's law!" Then, to please Herodias, Herod told his soldiers to arrest John. They bound him with chains and put him in prison. ⁵ Herod wanted to order his men to execute John, but he was afraid of the general public, because they believed that John was a prophet speaking for God.

⁶ One day, Herod gave a party to celebrate his birthday, and Herodias' daughter danced for his guests. Her dancing pleased Herod very much, ⁷ so he promised to give her whatever she asked, and he asked God to be a witness that he had made this promise. ⁸ So Herodias' daughter went and asked her mother what to ask for. Her mother told her what to say. So her daughter went back and

said to Herod, "I want you to cut off the head of John the Baptizer and bring it here on a platter to show that he is really dead!" ⁹ The king was now very sorry that he had promised to give Herodias' daughter whatever she wanted. But because he had called on God to hear him make that promise, and because all his guests had heard him do so, he felt that he had to do what he had said. So he ordered his servants to do what she wanted. ¹⁰ He sent soldiers to go to the prison and cut off John's head. ¹¹ They did that, and they put John's head on a platter and brought it to the girl. Then the girl took it to her mother. ¹² Later John's disciples went to the prison, took John's body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus what had happened. ¹³ After Jesus heard that news, he took just the disciples with him and went by boat on the Sea of Galilee to a place where no one lived.

After the crowds heard about where they had gone, they left their towns and followed them, walking along the shore. ¹⁴ When Jesus came to the shore, he saw a very large crowd waiting for him. He felt sorry for them, and he healed the sick people who were among them.

¹⁵ When it was nearly evening, the disciples came to Jesus and said, "This is a place where nobody lives, and it is very late. Tell the crowds to go away so they can buy food in the towns nearby." ¹⁶ But Jesus said to his disciples, "They do not need to leave to get food. Instead, you yourselves give them something to eat!" ¹⁷ The disciples said, "But we have only five loaves of bread and two cooked fish here!" ¹⁸ He said, "Bring them to me!" ¹⁹ Jesus told the crowd of people who had gathered there to sit on the grass. Then he took the five loaves and the two fish. He looked up toward heaven, thanked God for them, and broke them

into pieces. Then he gave the pieces to his disciples, and they distributed them to the crowd. ²⁰ All the people ate until they were no longer hungry. Then some people gathered the pieces that were left over and filled twelve baskets with them. ²¹ About five thousand men ate at that time, not counting the women and children!

²² Right after that happened, Jesus told the disciples to get in the boat and to go ahead of him to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. In the meantime, he was going to send the crowd home. ²³ After he sent the crowd away, he went up into the hills to pray by himself. When it was evening, he was still there alone. ²⁴ By this time the disciples were a long distance from the shore. The wind was blowing very hard opposite to how the disciples were trying to sail; the wind made very large waves that were tossing the boat back and forth in the water. ²⁵ Then Jesus came down from the hills to the water. Sometime between three and six o'clock in the morning he walked on the water toward the boat. ²⁶ When the disciples saw him walking on the water, they thought that he must be a ghost. They were terrified, and they screamed in fear. ²⁷ Immediately Jesus said to them, "Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid!" ²⁸ Peter said to him, "Lord, if it is you, tell me to walk on the water to you!" ²⁹ Jesus said, "Come!" So Peter got out of the boat. He walked on the water toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when Peter paid attention to the strong wind, he became afraid. He began to sink in the water and cried out, "Lord, rescue me!" ³¹ Right away Jesus reached out with his hand and grabbed Peter. He said to him, "You only trust a little bit in my power! Why did you doubt that I could keep you from sinking?" ³² Then Jesus and Peter got in the boat, and the wind immediately stopped blowing. ³³ All of the disciples who were in the boat bowed down to Jesus and said, "You are

really the Son of God!"

³⁴ When they had gone further around the lake in the boat, they reached the shore at the town of Gennesaret. ³⁵ The men of that area recognized Jesus, so they sent people to inform those who lived in the whole region that Jesus had come. So the people brought to Jesus everyone who was sick. ³⁶ The sick people kept begging him to allow them to touch him or even only the edge of his robe so that they would be healed. Everyone who touched him or his robe were healed.

Chapter 15

¹ Then some Pharisees and men who taught the Jewish laws came from Jerusalem to talk to Jesus. They said, ² "We see that your disciples disobey the traditions of our ancestors! They do not perform the proper ritual of washing their hands before they eat!" ³ Jesus answered them, "And I see that you refuse to obey God's commands just so that you can follow what your ancestors taught you!" ⁴ God gave these two commands: 'Honor your father and your mother,' and 'People who speak evil about their father or mother must be executed.' ⁵ But you tell the people, 'You can say to your father or mother, "What I was going to give to you to help provide for you, I have now promised to give to God."' ⁶ When you do that, you think that you do not need to give anything to your parents. In that way you ignore what God commanded, just so that you can follow what your ancestors taught you! ⁷ You only pretend to be good! Isaiah also told the truth about you when he spoke God's thoughts about your ancestors. ⁸ 'These people talk as if they honor me, but they do not care about me,' ⁹ It is useless for them to worship me, be-

cause they teach what people thought up as their authoritative teachings.”

¹⁰ Then Jesus again called the crowd to come nearer to him. He said to them, “Listen to what I am about to tell you and try to understand it. ¹¹ Nothing that a person puts into his mouth to eat makes him contaminated. Instead, it is what people say—the words that come from their mouths—that makes a person degraded.”

¹² Later the disciples went to Jesus and said, “Do you know that the Pharisees heard what you said and became angry at you?” ¹³ Then Jesus told them this parable. “My Father in heaven will get rid of all those who teach things that are against what he says, just like a farmer gets rid of plants that he did not plant by pulling them up by their roots. ¹⁴ Do not pay any attention to the Pharisees. They do not help people to understand what God commands, just like blind guides do not help blind people to see where they should walk. Instead, they all fall into the same hole.”

¹⁵ Peter said to Jesus, “Explain to us the parable about what a person eats.” ¹⁶ Jesus replied to them, “You should certainly understand what I teach, but I am disappointed that you do not. ¹⁷ You ought to understand that whatever food people eat enters their stomachs, and later what remains passes out of their bodies. ¹⁸ Instead, the evil words that the mouth speaks are what makes God reject a person, because they come from the evil things that the person thinks in his innermost being. ¹⁹ This is because it is people’s innermost beings that cause them to think things that are evil, to murder people, to commit adultery, to commit other sexual sins, to steal things, to testify falsely, and to speak evil about others. ²⁰ It is these actions that cause God to consider people to be unacceptable to him. But to eat with un-

washed hands does not cause God to reject people.”

²¹ After Jesus took the disciples and left the district of Galilee, they all went toward the region where the cities of Tyre and Sidon are located. ²² A woman from the group of people called Canaanites, who live in that region, came to Jesus. She kept shouting to him, “Lord, you are the descendant of King David, you are the Messiah! Have pity on me and my daughter! She is suffering very much because a demon controls her.” ²³ But Jesus did not answer her at all. The disciples said to him, “Tell her to leave because she keeps bothering us by shouting behind us as we go along.” ²⁴ Jesus said to her, “God has sent me only to the people of Israel, because they are like sheep who have lost their way.” ²⁵ But the woman came closer to Jesus and knelt down in front of him. She pled, “Lord, help me!” ²⁶ Then he told her, “It is not good for someone to take food that has been prepared for his children and throw it to the little dogs in the house.” ²⁷ But the woman replied, “Lord, what you say is correct, but even the little dogs eat the crumbs that fall to the floor when their masters sit at their own tables and eat!” ²⁸ Then Jesus said to her, “O woman, because you believe firmly in me, I will heal your daughter as you desire!” At that moment the demon left her daughter, and she became well.

²⁹ Then Jesus and his disciples went away from that area, back to the Sea of Galilee. Then Jesus climbed the hill near there and sat down to teach the people. ³⁰ Large crowds kept coming to him for the next two days and brought lame, crippled, and blind people, those who were unable to talk, and many others who had various sicknesses. They laid them in front of Jesus so that he would heal them. And he healed them. ³¹ The crowd saw him heal

people who could not talk, crippled people, lame people, and blind people, and they were amazed. They said, "Praise God who rules over us in Israel!"

³² Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "This crowd of people has been with me for three days and have nothing left to eat. I feel sorry for them. I do not want to send them away while they are still hungry, because if I did that, they might faint on the way home." ³³ The disciples said to him, "In this place where nobody lives, we cannot possibly obtain enough food to feed such a large crowd!"

³⁴ Jesus asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" They answered him, "Seven small loaves and a few small cooked fish."

³⁵ Then Jesus told the people to sit on the ground. ³⁶ He took the seven loaves and the cooked fish. After he had thanked God for them, he broke them into pieces and he kept giving them to the disciples. Then the disciples kept distributing them to the crowd. ³⁷ Because Jesus made the food multiply miraculously, all those people ate and had plenty to satisfy them. Then the disciples collected the pieces of food that were left over, and they filled seven large baskets with them. ³⁸ There were four thousand men who ate, but no one counted the women and the children who also ate.

³⁹ After Jesus sent the crowd away, he and the disciples got in a boat and sailed around the lake to the region of Magadan.

Chapter 16

¹ Some Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and said to him, "Show us that God has really sent you to us! Do a miracle in the sky and use his power to convince us!"

² He answered them, "In our country, if the sky is red in the evening, we say, 'It

will be good weather tomorrow.' ³ But if the sky is red in the morning we say, 'It will be stormy weather today.' By looking at the sky, you can tell what the weather will be, but when you see the things that are now happening all around you, you do not understand what God is doing. ⁴ You evil people have seen me perform miracles, but you do not faithfully worship God. So I will do no miracle for you, except the miracle that happened to Jonah the prophet, who spent three days inside a huge fish but came out again." Then Jesus left them and sailed away, along with his disciples.

⁵ They all sailed to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Then the disciples realized that they had forgotten to take anything to eat with them. ⁶ At that point, Jesus said to them, "Be careful not to accept the yeast that the Pharisees and Sadducees want to give you." ⁷ They tried to make sense out of what Jesus had told them, and they said to each other, "He must have said that because we forgot to bring anything to eat!"

⁸ But Jesus knew what they were saying and answered them, "I am disappointed that you think it was because you forgot bring bread that I talked about the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees. You believe only a little what I am able to do for you. ⁹ Do not think I am worried about having food. Have you really forgotten how I fed the five thousand with five loaves, or how many baskets of leftover food you gathered up? ¹⁰ Or what about the four thousand people who ate when I multiplied the seven small loaves? And how many baskets of scraps did you gather up then? ¹¹ You should have understood that I was not really speaking about bread. Do not accept yeast from the Pharisees and the Sadducees." ¹² Then the disciples understood that Jesus was not talking about the yeast that is in bread. Instead, he was talking about the wrong teaching of the Pharisees

and Sadducees.

¹³ When Jesus and his disciples entered into the region near the city of Caesarea Philippi, he asked them, “Who do people say that I, the Son of Man, really am?”

¹⁴ They answered, “Some people say that you are John the Baptizer, who has come back to life again. Others say that you are the prophet Elijah, who has returned from heaven as God promised. Still others say that you are the prophet Jeremiah or one of the other prophets who lived long ago, who has come back to life again.” ¹⁵ Jesus said to them, “What about you? Who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter said to him, “You are the Messiah! You are the Son of the all-powerful God.” ¹⁷ Then Jesus said to him, “Simon, son of Jonah, God is pleased with you. What you just said—no human has revealed this to you. Instead, it was my Father who lives in heaven who has revealed this to you. ¹⁸ I will also tell you this: You are Peter, which means ‘rock.’ You will be the support for the group of those who believe in me, like a large rock supports a great building. And even the powers of death will not be strong enough to stand up against it.” ¹⁹ Then he said, “I will enable you to open or close the way for people to come under the rule of God from heaven. Whatever you permit on earth, God will permit in heaven. Whatever you prohibit on earth, God will prohibit in heaven.” ²⁰ Then Jesus warned the disciples strongly not to tell anyone at that time that he was the Messiah.

²¹ From that time Jesus began to teach the disciples that it was necessary for him to go to the city of Jerusalem. There the ruling elders, the chief priests, and the men who taught the Jewish laws would cause him to suffer and die. Then on the third day after that, he would come alive again.

²² But Peter took Jesus aside and began to

scold him for saying these things. He said, “Lord, may God never permit that to happen to you! That must certainly not happen!” ²³ Then Jesus turned to look at Peter, and he said to him, “Get out of my sight, because Satan is speaking through you. You are trying to get me to sin. You are not thinking what God thinks, but only what people think!”

²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone wants to trust me and go where I am going, he must put away his own desires and purposes, and he must take up his own cross, and go where I go. ²⁵ Whoever tries to save his own life, will find that instead of saving his life, he will lose it. But whoever loses his life for me, he will find his life. ²⁶ What good would it be for a person to get everything he wants in this world, but then for him to lose his life? What will a man gain in his possessions that would be as valuable as his own life? ²⁷ Listen carefully. I, the Son of Man, will leave this earth, but I will return, and the angels of heaven will accompany me. At that time I will have the glorious light that my Father has, and I will reward everyone according to what they did when they were alive in this world. ²⁸ Listen carefully! Some of you who are here now will see me, the one who came from heaven, when I return as king. You will see this before you die!”

Chapter 17

¹ A week after Jesus said that, he took Peter, James, and John, the younger brother of James, and led them up a high mountain where they were away from other people. ² While they were there, the three disciples saw Jesus’ appearance change. His face shone like the sun, and his clothing shone and became as brilliant as light.

³ Suddenly Moses and Elijah, who were important prophets many years ago, appeared and started talking with him. ⁴ Peter saw them and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is excellent for us to be here! If you want me to, I will set up three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." ⁵ While Peter was speaking, a bright cloud came over them. They heard God speaking about Jesus from inside the cloud. He said to them, "This is my Son. I love him. He pleases me very much. So you must listen to him!" ⁶ When the three disciples heard God speaking, they were exceedingly afraid. As a result, they fell face-down on the ground. ⁷ But Jesus went to them and touched them and said to them, "Stand up! Do not be afraid anymore!" ⁸ And when they looked up, they saw that Jesus was the only one who was still there.

⁹ While they were walking down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Do not tell anyone what you saw on the mountain top until God has caused me, the Son of Man, to become alive again after I die." ¹⁰ Those three disciples asked Jesus, "If what you say is true, why do the men who teach the Jewish laws say that it is necessary for Elijah to come back to earth before the Messiah comes?" ¹¹ Jesus answered them, "It is true that God promised that Elijah would come to prepare many people for the Messiah's coming. ¹² But note this: Elijah has already come and our leaders have seen him, but they did not recognize him as the one who would come before the Messiah. Instead, they treated him badly, just as they desired. And those same rulers will soon treat me, the one who came from heaven, in the same manner." ¹³ Then the three disciples understood that when he was talking about Elijah, he was referring to John the Baptizer.

¹⁴ When Jesus and the three disciples returned to the rest of the disciples and to

the crowd that had gathered, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. ¹⁵ He said to him, "Sir, have mercy on my son and heal him! He has epilepsy and suffers very much. Because of this illness, he has fallen in the fire and in the water many times. ¹⁶ I brought him to your disciples in order that they might heal him, but they were not able to heal him." ¹⁷ Jesus responded, "You people of this time do not believe at all in God's power. How confused you are! How long do I have to be with you before you are able to do what I do? Bring the boy here to me!" ¹⁸ When they brought the boy to Jesus, Jesus spoke severely to the demon that was causing the epilepsy. As a result, the demon came out of the boy, and the boy was healed from that time onward. ¹⁹ Later, some of the disciples approached Jesus when he was by himself and asked him, "Why were we not able to drive out the demon?" ²⁰⁻²¹ He answered them, "It is because you did not believe very much in God's power. Think about this: Mustard seeds are very small, but they grow and produce large plants. Similarly, if you believe even a little bit that God will do what you ask him to, you will be able to do anything! You could even say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there!' and it would go where you told it to go."

²² When the disciples had gathered together in the district of Galilee, Jesus said to them, "Someone will soon hand me, the Son of Man, over to the authorities. ²³ They will kill me, but God will cause me to become alive again on the third day after I am killed." When the disciples heard that, they became very sad.

²⁴ When Jesus and the disciples came to the city of Capernaum, the men who collected taxes for the temple approached Peter and said to him, "Your teacher pays the temple tax, does he not?" ²⁵ He answered

them, "Yes, he does pay it." When the disciples came into Jesus' house, before Peter began to speak, Jesus said to him, "Simon, from whom do you think rulers collect revenue or taxes? Do they collect taxes from the citizens of their own country, or from citizens of countries they have conquered?" ²⁶ Peter answered him, "From citizens of other countries." Then Jesus said to him, "So citizens of their own country do not need to pay taxes. ²⁷ But go ahead and pay the tax for us so that the temple tax collectors will not become angry with us. In order to get the money to pay it, go to the Sea of Galilee, cast your fish line and hook, and take the first fish that you catch. When you open its mouth, you will find a silver coin that is worth enough to pay the tax for you and me. Take that coin and give it to the temple tax collectors."

Chapter 18

¹ At that precise time the disciples approached Jesus and asked him, "Who among us will be the most important when God makes you king from heaven?"

² Jesus called a child to come, and he placed that child in their midst. ³ He said, "I tell you the truth: If you do not change and become as humble as little children, surely you will not come under the rule of God from heaven. ⁴ The people who become as humble as this child will be the most important people among those over whom God will rule from heaven. ⁵ Also, whenever people welcome a child like this one because they love me, God considers that they are welcoming me."

⁶ "If a person causes someone who believes in me to sin, even if it is someone who people think is as unimportant as this little child, God will severely punish that

person. He will punish that person worse than if someone had thrown him into the sea's deep waters with a heavy stone tied to his neck! ⁷ How terrible it will be for those who cause others to sin. There will always be temptations to sin, but how terrible it will be for anyone to cause another person to sin. ⁸ So if you are wanting to use one of your hands or feet to sin, stop using that hand or foot! Even if you have to cut it off so you will not sin! Suppose you had only one hand or one foot and still lived forever with God, how much better is that than if you had both hands and both feet and God threw you into the eternal fire in hell because of your sin. ⁹ Yes, and if what you see makes you want to sin, stop looking at those things! Even if you have to gouge out one of your eyes and throw it away to keep from sinning! Suppose you had only one eye and still lived forever with God, how much better is that than if you had both eyes and God threw you into the eternal fire in hell."

¹⁰ "Be sure not to look down on even one of these children. I tell you truly that the angels who protect them can always go to my Father and report to him if you mistreat the children. ¹¹^[1] ¹² What do you think you would do in the following situation?

If you had one hundred sheep and one of them got lost, you would surely leave the ninety-nine sheep that were on the hillside and go and search for the lost one, would you not? ¹³ If you found it, I affirm to you that you would rejoice very much. You would be happy that ninety-nine sheep did not stray away, but you would rejoice even more because you had found the sheep that had strayed away. ¹⁴

In the same way that the shepherd does not want one of his sheep to stray away, so God, your Father in heaven, does not want even one of these children to go to hell."

¹⁵ "If a fellow believer sins against you, go to him when you can be alone with him, and reprove him for sinning against you. If that person listens to you and feels sorry that he has sinned against you, you and he will be good brothers once more. ¹⁶ If, however, that person does not listen to you, go get one or two other fellow believers. Have them go with you so that, as the law says, 'there must be two or three witnesses to confirm every accusation.' ¹⁷ If the one who has sinned against you does not listen to them, tell the matter to the entire congregation so that they can correct him. And if the person does not listen to the congregation, exclude him from among you, just as you would exclude pagans and tax collectors as hopeless sinners. ¹⁸ Keep this in mind: Whatever you decide on earth about punishing or not punishing a member of your congregation is what has also been decided by God in heaven. ¹⁹ Also note this: If at least two of you who live here on earth agree together about whatever you ask for, my Father who is in heaven, will give you what you ask for. ²⁰ This is true, because wherever at least two or three of you assemble because you believe in me, I am with you."

²¹ Then Peter approached Jesus and said to him, "How many times must I forgive a fellow believer who keeps on sinning against me? If he keeps asking me to forgive him, must I forgive him as many as seven times?" ²² Jesus said to him, "I tell you that the number of times you must forgive someone is not just up to seven, but you must forgive him seventy-seven times. ²³ God's rule from heaven is like a king and his officials. He wanted his officials to pay what they owed him. ²⁴ So those officials came to the king to settle their accounts with him. One of the officials brought to the king owed him a debt that was worth the value of more than three

metric tons of gold. ²⁵ But because he did not have enough money to pay what he owed, the king demanded that he, his wife, his children and all he possessed be sold to someone else and that the king be repaid with the money that was paid for them. ²⁶ Then that official, knowing that he did not have the money to pay that huge debt, fell on his knees in front of the king and he begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you all of it, eventually.' ²⁷ The king, knowing that the official could never pay all that huge debt, felt sorry for him. So he canceled his debt and released him. ²⁸ Then this same official went to another one of the king's officials who owed him a bit less than a year's wages. He grabbed him by the throat, started choking him, and said to him, 'Pay back what you owe me!' ²⁹ That official fell on his knees and begged him saying, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you all of it, eventually.' ³⁰ But the first official kept refusing to cancel that small debt that the man owed him. Instead, he put that official into prison and to stay there until he could pay back all the money that he owed him. ³¹ When the other officials of the king learned that this had happened, they were very distressed. So they went to the king and reported in detail what had happened. ³² Then the king summoned the official who had owed him a debt worth more than three metric tons of gold. He said to him, 'You wicked servant! I canceled that huge debt that you owed me because you begged me to do so! ³³ You should have been merciful and canceled your fellow official's debt, just like I was merciful to you and canceled your debt!' ³⁴ The king was very angry. He handed this official over to some jailers who would torture him severely until he paid all of the debt that he owed." ³⁵ Then Jesus continued by saying, "That is what my Father in heaven will do to you if you

do not feel merciful and sincerely forgive a fellow believer who sins against you.”

18:11 ^[1]The best ancient copies omit the phrase that appears as v. 11. *For the Son of Man came to save that which was lost.*

Chapter 19

¹ After Jesus had said that, he took his disciples and left the district of Galilee. They went to the part of the district of Judea that is east of the Jordan River. ² Large crowds followed him there, and he healed the sick among them.

³ Some Pharisees approached him and said to him, “Does our Jewish law permit a man to divorce his wife for any reason whatever?” They asked that in order to be able to debate with him. ⁴ Jesus said to them, “You have read the scriptures, so you should know that at the time when God first created people, ‘He made one man, and he made one woman.’” ⁵ That explains why God said, ‘That is why a man leaves his father and mother and marries his wife. The two of them will live together as though they were one person.’” ⁶ Consequently, although they functioned as two separate people before, they now become as if they were one person. Since that is true, a man must not separate from his wife whom God has joined to him.”

⁷ The Pharisees then said to him, “If that is true, why did Moses command that a man who wanted to divorce his wife should give her a paper stating his reason for divorcing her, and then send her away?” ⁸ Jesus said to them, “It was because your ancestors stubbornly wanted their own ways that Moses allowed them to divorce their wives, and you are no different from

them. But when God first created a man and a woman, he did not intend for them to separate from each other. ⁹ I am telling you emphatically that God considers that any man who divorces his wife and marries another woman is committing adultery, unless his first wife has committed adultery.” ¹⁰ The disciples said to him, “If that is true, it is better for men never to marry!” ¹¹ He answered, “Not every man is able to accept this teaching, but only the men whom God enables to accept it. ¹² There are men who do not marry because their private parts have been defective ever since they were born. There are other men who do not marry because they have been castrated. Then there are still other men who decide not to marry in order to serve God better as he rules from heaven. You who are able to understand what I have said about marriage should accept it and obey it.”

¹³ Then some little children were brought to Jesus in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples scolded the people for doing that. ¹⁴ But Jesus said, “Let the children come to me, and do not stop them! It is people who are humble and trusting like they are who belong to the rule of God from heaven.” ¹⁵ Jesus then laid his hands on the children to bless them. Then he left that place.

¹⁶ As Jesus was walking along, a young man approached him and said to him, “Teacher, what good deeds must I do in order to live with God forever?” ¹⁷ Jesus said to him, “Why are you asking me about what is good? Only one being is good and really knows what is good. That being is God. But in order to answer your question about desiring to live with God forever, I will tell you to keep the commandments that God gave Moses.” ¹⁸ The man asked Jesus, “Which commandments must I keep?” Jesus answered him,

"Do not murder anyone, do not commit adultery, do not steal things, do not testify falsely,¹⁹ honor your father and your mother, and love every other person as much as you love yourself."²⁰ The young man said to Jesus, "I have always obeyed all those commandments. What else must I do in order to live with God forever?"²¹ Jesus said to him, "If you desire to be exactly how God wants you to be, go home, sell everything that you have, and give the money to poor people. The result will be that you will be wealthy in heaven. Then come, follow me, and be my disciple!"²² When the young man heard those words, he went away feeling sad, because he was very rich and did not want to give away everything he owned.

²³ Then Jesus said to the disciples, "Keep this in mind: It is very difficult for rich people to agree to let God rule their lives."²⁴ Note this also: It is impossible for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. It is even more difficult for rich people to come under the rule of God."²⁵ When the disciples heard this, they were very astounded. They thought that rich people were the ones whom God blesses the most. So they said to Jesus, "If that is so, it does not seem likely that anyone will be saved!"²⁶ Then Jesus looked intently at them and said, "Yes, it is impossible for people to save themselves. But God can save them, because God is able to do anything!"²⁷ Then Peter said to him, "You know that we have left everything behind and we have become your disciples in order to follow you. So what benefit will we get for doing that?"²⁸ Jesus said to them, "Keep this in mind: You will get many benefits. When God makes the new earth and when I, the Son of Man, sit on my throne in my glory, those of you who have accompanied me will each sit on a throne, and you will judge the people of the twelve tribes of Israel."²⁹ God will reward those

who, because they were my disciples, left behind a house or a plot of ground, their brothers, their sisters, their father, their mother, their children, or any other family members. God will give them a hundred times as many benefits as they have given up. And they will live with God forever."³⁰ But many people who are important in this life now will be unimportant at that future time, and many people who are unimportant now will be important at that future time."

Chapter 20

¹ "The way God rules from heaven compares to what the owner of an estate did. Early in the morning the owner of the estate went to the marketplace, where people who wanted work gathered. He went there to hire laborers to work in his vineyard."² He promised the men whom he hired that he would pay them the standard wage for working one day. Then he sent them to his vineyards."³ At nine o'clock that same morning he went back to the marketplace. There he saw more men who did not have work."⁴ He said to them, 'Go to my vineyard as other men have done, and work there. I will pay you whatever wage is right.' So they also went to his vineyard and began to work."⁵ At noon and at three o'clock he again went to the marketplace and found other laborers whom he promised to pay a fair wage."⁶ At five o'clock he went to the marketplace once again and saw other men standing there who were not working. He said to them, 'Why are you standing here all day and not working?'⁷ They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'I will hire you. Go to my vineyard as other men have done, and work there.' So they went.

⁸ When evening came, the owner of the

vineyard said to his manager, 'Tell the men to come so that you can give them their wages. First, pay the men who started working last, and pay the men last who started working first.' ⁹ The manager paid a standard day's wage to each of the men who did not start working until five o'clock in the afternoon. ¹⁰ When the men who had begun working early in the morning went to get their wages, they thought that they would receive more than the standard wage. But they also received only the standard wage. ¹¹ So they complained to the owner of the vineyard because they thought their payment was unfair. ¹² They said to him, 'You are not being fair! The men who started working after all of the rest of us worked for only one hour! You have paid them the same wage as you paid us! But we worked hard all day. We even worked through the hottest part!' ¹³ The owner of the vineyard said to one of those who complained, 'Friend, I did not treat you unfairly. You agreed with me to work the whole day for a standard day's wage. ¹⁴ Stop complaining to me! Take your wages and go! I desire to give the same wage that I gave you to the men who began working after all of you had begun working. ¹⁵ I certainly have a right to spend my money as I desire, do I not? You should not be envious about my being generous! '" ¹⁶ "Similarly, God will reward well some people who seem to be less important now, and he will not reward some people who seem to be more important now."

¹⁷ When Jesus was walking on the road up to Jerusalem along with the twelve disciples, he took them to a place by themselves in order that he could talk to them privately. Then he said to them, ¹⁸ "Listen carefully! We are now going up to Jerusalem. While we are there, someone will enable the chief priests and the men who teach the Jewish laws to seize me,

the Son of Man, and they will put me on trial. They will condemn me and say that I should die. ¹⁹ Then they will put me in the hands of non-Jews so that they can make fun of me, whip me, and kill me by nailing me to a cross. But on the third day after that, God will cause me to live again."

²⁰ Then the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, brought her two sons to Jesus. She bowed down before Jesus and asked him to do her a favor. ²¹ Jesus said to her, "What do you want me to do for you?" She said to him, "Permit these two sons of mine to sit in the places of most honor when you become king, one on your right hand and the other on your left." ²² Jesus said to her and her sons, "You do not understand what you are asking for. Can you suffer like I am about to suffer?" James and John answered him, "Yes, we are able to do that." ²³ Then Jesus said to them, "Yes, you will suffer as I will suffer. But I am not the one who chooses the ones who will sit next to me and rule with me. God, my Father, will give those places to the ones whom he appoints."

²⁴ When the ten other disciples heard what James and John had requested, they became angry with them because they also wanted to rule with Jesus in the positions of most honor. ²⁵ So Jesus called all of them together and said to them, "You know that those who rule the non-Jews enjoy showing them that they are powerful. Their chief rulers enjoy commanding the people under them. ²⁶ You should not be like them. On the contrary, everyone among you who wants God to consider him great must become a servant for the rest of you. ²⁷ Yes, and everyone among you who wants God to consider him to be the most important must become a servant for the rest of you. ²⁸ You should imitate me. Even though I am the Son of Man, I did not come for others to serve me.

On the contrary, I came in order to serve them and to allow them to kill me, so that my dying would be like a payment to rescue many people from being punished for their sins.”

²⁹ As they were leaving the city of Jericho, a large crowd of people followed them. ³⁰ As they walked along, they saw two blind men sitting alongside the road. When they heard that Jesus was passing by, they yelled to him, “Lord, Descendant of King David, you are the Messiah! Take pity on us!” ³¹ People in the crowd scolded them and told them to be quiet. But the blind men yelled even louder, “Lord, Descendant of King David, you are the Messiah! Have pity on us!” ³² Jesus stopped and called them to come to him. Then he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” ³³ They said to him, “Lord, heal our eyes so that we can see!” ³⁴ Jesus felt sorry for them and touched their eyes. Immediately they were able to see, and they went after Jesus.

Chapter 21

¹⁻² As Jesus and his disciples approached Jerusalem, they came to the village of Bethphage, near the Mount of Olives. Jesus said to two of his disciples, “Go to the village just ahead of you. As soon as you enter it, you will see a donkey and her colt that are tied up. Untie them and bring them here to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you about your doing that, tell him, ‘The Lord needs them.’ He will then allow you to lead them away.” ⁴⁻⁵ When all this happened, what one of the prophets had written came true. That prophet had written, “Tell the people who live in Jerusalem, ‘Look! Your king is coming to you! He will come humbly. He will show that he is humble, because he will

be riding on a colt, the offspring of a donkey.’”

⁶ So the two disciples went and did what Jesus told them to do. ⁷ They brought the donkey and its colt to Jesus. They placed their cloaks on them to make something for him to sit on. Then Jesus mounted and sat on the cloaks. ⁸ Then a large crowd spread some of their outer clothing on the road, and other people cut off branches from palm trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ The crowds that walked in front of him and those who walked behind him were shouting,

“Praise the Messiah, the descendant of King David!”

“May the Lord God bless this one who comes as God’s representative and with God’s authority.”

“Praise God, who is in the highest heaven!”

¹⁰ As Jesus entered Jerusalem, many people from all over the city became excited and were saying, “Why are they honoring this man like that?” ¹¹ The crowd that was already following him answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee!”

¹² Then Jesus went into the temple courtyard and chased out all of those who were buying and selling things there. He also overturned the tables of those who were changing Roman coins for temple tax money, and he overturned the seats of those who were selling pigeons for sacrifices. ¹³ Then he said to them, “A prophet wrote in the scriptures that God said, ‘I want my house to be a place where people pray to me,’ but you people have made it into a place where robbers gather!”

¹⁴ After that, many blind people and lame people came to Jesus in the temple in order that he would heal them, and he did so. ¹⁵ The high priests and the men who

taught the people the Jewish laws saw the marvelous deeds that Jesus did. They also saw the children shouting in the temple, "We praise the Messiah, the descendant of King David!" They were indignant. ¹⁶ They asked him, "How can you tolerate this? Do you hear what these people are shouting?" Then Jesus said to them, "Yes, I hear them, but if you remembered what you have read in the scriptures about children praising me, you would know that God is pleased with them. The psalmist wrote, saying to God, 'You have taught infants and other children to praise you perfectly.'"

¹⁷ Then Jesus left the city. The disciples went with him to the village of Bethany, and they stayed there that night.

¹⁸ Early the next morning when they were returning to the city, Jesus was hungry. ¹⁹ He saw a fig tree near the road, so he went over to it to pick some figs to eat. But when he got close, he saw that there were no figs on the tree, but only leaves. So he said to the fig tree, "May you never again produce figs!" As a result, the fig tree immediately dried up. ²⁰ The next day the disciples saw that the fig tree was completely dead. They were astonished and said to Jesus, "How did the fig tree dry up so quickly?"

²¹ Jesus said to them, "Think about this: If you believe that God has power to do what you ask him to and you do not doubt that, you will be able to do things like what I have done to this fig tree. You will even be able to do marvelous deeds like saying to that hill over there, 'Uproot yourself and throw yourself into the sea,' and it will happen! ²² In addition to that, whenever you ask God for something when you pray to him, if you believe that he will give it to you, you will receive it from him."

²³ After that, Jesus went into the temple courtyard. While he was teaching the people, the chief priests and the elders of

the people approached him. They asked, "By what authority are you doing these things? Who authorized you to do what you did here yesterday?" ²⁴ Jesus said to them, "I also will ask you a question, and if you answer me, I will tell you who authorized me to do these things. ²⁵ Where did John the Baptizer get his authority to baptize those who came to him? Did he get it from God or from people?" The chief priests and elders debated among themselves about what they should answer. They said to each other, "If we say, 'It was from God,' he will say to us, 'Then you should have believed his message!' ²⁶ But if we say, 'It was from people,' the crowd might react violently against us, because all the people believe that John was a prophet whom God had sent." ²⁷ So they answered Jesus, "We do not know where John got his authority from." Then Jesus said to them, "Because you did not answer my question, I will not tell you who gave me the right to do the things I did here yesterday."

²⁸ "Tell me what you think about what I am about to tell you. There was a man who had two sons. He went to his older son and said, 'My son, go and work in my vineyard today!' ²⁹ But the son said to his father, 'I will not go!' But later he changed his mind, and he went to the vineyard and worked. ³⁰ Then the father approached his younger son and said what he had said to his older son. That son said, 'Sir, I will go and work in the vineyard today.' But he did not go there. ³¹ So which of the man's two sons did what their father desired?" They answered, "The older son." Then Jesus said to them, "So think about this: God will be kind to the tax collectors and prostitutes by agreeing to rule over them much sooner than he will agree to rule over you. This is true, even though you condemn those people because they ignore the law of Moses. ³² I say this to you

because, even though John the Baptizer explained to you how to live in the right way, you did not believe his message. But tax collectors and prostitutes believed his message, and they turned away from their sinful behavior. In contrast, even though you saw that they changed, you refused to stop sinning, and you did not believe John's message."

³³ "Listen to another parable that I will tell you. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He built a fence around it. He made a place to collect the juice that would come out of the grapes. He also built a tower in which someone could sit to guard that vineyard. He rented the vineyard to some men who would care for it and give him some of the grapes in return. Then he went away to another country. ³⁴ When it was time to harvest the grapes, the landowner sent some of his servants to the men who were caring for the vineyard to get his share of the grapes that the vineyard had produced. ³⁵ But the renters seized the servants. They beat one of them, they killed another one, and killed a third one of them by throwing stones at him. ³⁶ So the landowner sent more servants than he had sent the first time. The renters treated those servants the same way that they had treated the other servants. ³⁷ After he heard about this, the landowner sent his own son to the renters to get his share of the grapes. When he sent him, he said to himself, 'They will certainly respect my son and give him my share of the grapes.' ³⁸ But when the renters saw his son arriving, they said to each other, 'This is the man who will inherit this vineyard! Let us join together and kill him and divide the property among ourselves.' ³⁹ So they grabbed him, dragged him outside the vineyard, and killed him. ⁴⁰ Now I ask you, when the landowner returns to his vineyard, what do you think he will

do to those renters?" ⁴¹ The people replied, "He will thoroughly destroy those wicked men! Then he will rent the vineyard to others. They will give him his share of the grapes when they are ripe." ⁴² Jesus said to them, "You need to think carefully about these words that you have read in the scriptures:

'The men who were building a large building rejected a certain stone. But others put that same stone in its proper place, and it has become the most important stone of the building. The Lord has done this, and we marvel as we look at it.'

⁴³ I am telling you this: God will no longer let you Jews be the people over whom he rules from heaven. Instead, he will agree to rule over non-Jews, and they will do what he asks them to do. ⁴⁴ Anyone who falls on this stone will break into pieces, and the stone will crush anyone on whom it falls."

⁴⁵ When the chief priests and the elders who were Pharisees heard this parable, they realized that he was accusing them because they did not believe that he was the Messiah. ⁴⁶ They wanted to seize him, but they did not do so because they were afraid of what the crowds would do if they did that, because the crowds considered that Jesus was a prophet.

Chapter 22

¹ Then Jesus told the Jewish leaders other parables. This is one of those parables. ² "God ruling from heaven is like a king who told his servants that they should make a wedding feast for his son. ³ When the feast was ready, the king sent his servants to tell the people whom he had invited that it was time for them to come to the wedding feast. The servants went out and told the people. But the people who had

been invited did not want to come.⁴ So the king sent other servants to again tell those people to come to the feast. He said to those servants, 'Say to the people whom I invited to come to the feast, "This is what the king says to you, 'I have prepared the meal. The oxen and the fattened calves have been butchered and cooked. Everything is ready. It is time now for you to come to the wedding feast!'"'⁵ But when the servants told them that, they disregarded what the servants said. Some of them went to their own fields. Others went to their places of business.⁶ The rest of them seized the king's servants, mistreated them, and killed them.⁷ When the king heard what had happened, he became furious. He commanded his soldiers to go and kill those murderers and burn their city.⁸ After his soldiers had done that, the king said to his other servants, 'I have prepared the wedding feast, but the people who were invited do not deserve to come to it.⁹ So go to the intersections of the main roads. Tell whomever you find that they should come to the wedding feast.'¹⁰ So the servants went there, and they gathered everyone they could find. They gathered both bad people and good people. They brought them into the hall where the wedding feast was about to take place. The hall was filled with people.¹¹ But when the king went into the hall to see the guests, he saw someone who was not wearing clothes that had been provided for the guests to wear at a wedding feast.¹² The king said to him, 'Friend, you should never have entered this hall, because you are not wearing the clothes that guests wear at wedding feasts!' The man did not say anything, because he did not know what to say.¹³ Then the king said to his servants, 'Tie this person's feet and hands and throw him outside where there is total darkness, where people cry out and gnash their teeth because of the

pain they are in.'" ¹⁴ Then Jesus said, "The point of this parable is that God has invited many to come to him, but only a few people are the ones whom he has chosen to be there."

¹⁵ After Jesus said that, the Pharisees met together in order to plan how they could cause him to say something that would enable them to accuse him. ¹⁶ They sent to him some of their disciples along with those of the Herodian party. Those said to Jesus, "Teacher, we know that you are truthful and that you teach the truth about what God wants us to do. We also know that you do not change what you teach because of what someone says about you, no matter what kind of person they are." ¹⁷ So tell us what you think about this matter: Is it right that we pay taxes to the Roman government, or not?" ¹⁸ But Jesus knew that what they really wanted to do was evil. They were wanting him to say something that would get him in trouble with either the Jewish authorities or the Roman authorities. So he said to them, "You are hypocrites; you want me to say something for which you can accuse me." ¹⁹ Show me one of the coins with which people pay the Roman tax." So they showed him a coin called a denarius. ²⁰ He said to them, "Whose picture is on this coin? And whose name is on it?" ²¹ They answered, "It has the picture and name of Caesar, the head of the Roman government." Then he said to them, "So give to the government what they require, and give to God what he requires." ²² When those men heard Jesus say that, they marveled that his answer did not enable anyone to accuse him. Then they left Jesus.

²³ During that same day, some Sadducees came to Jesus. They are a Jewish group who do not believe that people will become alive again after they die. They asked Jesus, ²⁴ "Teacher, Moses wrote in

the scriptures, 'If a man dies who did not have any children, his brother must marry the dead man's widow in order that she can have a child by him. The child will be considered the descendant of the man who died, and in that way the dead man will have descendants.'²⁵ There were seven boys in a family. The oldest one married someone. He and his wife did not have any children, and he died. So the second brother married the widow. But he also died without having a child.²⁶ The same thing happened to the third brother, and also to the other four brothers, who one by one married this same woman.²⁷ Last of all, the woman also died.²⁸ So, at the time when God will raise people from the dead, which of the seven brothers do you think will be her husband? Keep in mind that they had all been married to her."²⁹ Jesus replied to them, "You are certainly wrong in what you are thinking. You do not know what is written in the scriptures. You also do not know that God has the power to make people alive again.³⁰ The fact is that the woman will not be the wife of any of them, because after God causes all dead people to live again, no one will be married. Instead, people will be like the angels in heaven. They do not marry.³¹ But about dead people becoming alive again, God said something about that. I am sure you have read it. Long after Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had died, God said to Moses,³² 'I am the God whom Abraham worships, the God whom Isaac worships, and the God whom Jacob worships.' It is not dead people who worship God. It is living people who worship him. So we are sure that their spirits are still alive!"

³³ When the crowds of people heard Jesus teach that, they were amazed.

³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had answered the Sadducees in such

a way that the Sadducees could not think of anything that they might say to respond to him, the Pharisees gathered together to plan what they would say to him. Then they approached him.³⁵ One of them was a man who was a lawyer, who had studied well the laws that God gave Moses. He wanted to debate Jesus. He asked him,³⁶ "Teacher, which commandment in the laws that God gave Moses is the most important?"³⁷ Jesus quoted the scriptures as he replied, "'You must love the Lord your God with all your inner being. Show that you love him in all that you desire, in all that you feel, and in all that you think.'³⁸ That is the most important commandment in the laws that God gave Moses.³⁹ The next most important commandment that everyone must surely obey is: 'You must love the people you come in contact with as much as you love yourself.'⁴⁰ These two commandments are the basis of every law that Moses wrote in the scriptures and also of all that the prophets wrote."

⁴¹ While the Pharisees were still gathered together near Jesus, he asked them,⁴² "What do you think about the Messiah? Whose descendant is he?" They said to him, "He is the descendant of King David."⁴³ Jesus said to them, "If the Messiah is King David's descendant, then David should not have called him 'Lord' when David was saying what the Holy Spirit told him to say.⁴⁴ David wrote this in the scriptures about the Messiah: 'God said to my Lord, "Sit here beside me on my right, where I will greatly honor you, while I put your enemies under your feet."' "⁴⁵ So, since King David called the Messiah 'my Lord,' the Messiah cannot be just someone descended from David! He must be much greater than David!"⁴⁶ No one who heard what Jesus said was able to think of even one word to say to him in response. After that, no one else ever dared to ask him an-

other question to try to trap him.

Chapter 23

¹ Then Jesus said to the crowd and to his disciples, ² "The Pharisees and the men who teach our Jewish laws have made themselves the ones who interpret the laws that God had given Moses for the people of Israel. ³ Consequently, you should do whatever they tell you that you must do. But do not do what they do, because they themselves do not do those things. ⁴ They require you to obey many rules that are difficult to obey. But they themselves do not help anyone obey those rules. It is as if they were tying up very heavy loads and putting them on your shoulders for you to carry. But they will not even move one finger to help you carry them. ⁵ Whatever they do, they do those things so that other people will see them and admire them. For example, they make extra wide the tiny boxes containing portions of scripture that they wear on their arms. They enlarge the tassels on their robes to make others think that they honor God. ⁶ They want other people to honor them. For example, at dinners they sit in the seats where the most important people sit. In the synagogues they want to sit in the same kind of places. ⁷ They love for people to greet them with great honor in the markets, and for people to call them 'Teacher.' ⁸ But you, my disciples, should not allow people to call you 'Teacher,' as they do other Jewish teachers. I am the only one who is really your teacher. This means that you are all equal to each other, like brothers and sisters. ⁹ Do not honor anyone on earth by addressing him as 'Father,' because God, your Father in heaven, is your only true father. ¹⁰ Do not allow people to call you 'teacher,' because the Messiah is your only teacher. ¹¹ Instead,

everyone among you who wants God to consider them as important must serve others as servants do. ¹² God will humble those who try to make themselves important. Those who humble themselves, God will make them truly important."

¹³⁻¹⁴ "You teachers of the law and you Pharisees, you are hypocrites! How terribly God will punish you, because you refuse to come under the rule of heaven and also keep others out. You yourselves do not want to go in, and you keep others from entering, too."

¹⁵ "You are hypocrites, you teachers of the law and you Pharisees! How terribly God will punish you! You work hard to get even one person to believe what you teach. You even travel across seas and lands to distant places in order to do that. And as a result, when one person believes what you teach, you make that person deserve to go to hell much more than you yourselves do."

¹⁶ "You Jewish leaders, how terribly God will punish you! You are like blind people who try to lead others. You say, 'If someone asks the temple to confirm that he will do something as if the temple were a person, then if he does not do what he promised, it means nothing. But if he asks the gold in the temple to confirm that he will do something, then he must do it.' ¹⁷ You are fools, and you are like people who are blind! The gold that is in the temple is important, but the temple is even more important, because it is the temple that makes the gold to be only for God. ¹⁸ Also you say, 'If someone asks the altar to confirm that he will do something as if the altar were a person, then if he does not do what he promised, it means nothing. But if he asks the gift that he has placed on the altar to confirm that he will do something, then he must do it.' ¹⁹ You are like people who are blind. The gift that you put

on the altar is important, but the altar is even more important because it is the altar that makes the gift only for God. ²⁰ So those who promise to do something and then ask the altar to confirm that they will do it, they are also asking everything on the altar to do the same thing. ²¹ Yes, and those who promise to do something and then ask the temple to confirm that they will do it, they are also asking that God, to whom the temple belongs, will confirm the same thing. ²² And those who promise to do something and then ask heaven to confirm that they will do it, they are asking the throne of God to confirm that they will do it, and they are also asking God, who sits on that throne, to confirm the same thing."

²³ "You teachers of the law and you Pharisees, how terribly God will punish you! You are hypocrites because, even though you give to God a tenth of the herbs you produce, such as mint, dill, and cummin, you do not obey God's laws that are more important. For example, you do not act justly toward others, you do not act mercifully toward people, and you take things away from others using force. It is good to give a tenth of your herbs to God, but you should also obey these other more important laws. ²⁴ You leaders are like blind people who are trying to lead others. You are careful not to offend God by swallowing even the smallest insect when you drink water, but you act as badly as if you were swallowing a camel!

²⁵ "You hypocrites, you teachers of the law and you Pharisees, how terribly God will punish you! You make yourselves appear like good people to others. You try to make people think you are righteous, but in fact you sin against them by your greed and taking what belongs to others to delight your own pleasures. You are like dishes that are clean on the outside but are still

dirty on the inside. ²⁶ You blind Pharisees! First you must stop doing evil things like stealing from others. Then you will be able to do what is righteous and will be like a dish that is clean both outside and inside."

²⁷ "You hypocrites, you men who teach the laws and you Pharisees, how terribly God will punish you! You are like buildings over people's graves, buildings that are painted white so that people can see them and avoid touching them. The outside of those tombs are beautiful, but inside they are full of dead people's bones and filth. ²⁸ You are like those tombs. When people look at you, they think that you are righteous, but in your inner beings you are hypocrites, because you disobey God's commands."

²⁹ "You men who teach the Jewish laws and you Pharisees are hypocrites! How terribly God will punish you! You rebuild the tombs of the prophets whom others killed long ago. You decorate the monuments that honor righteous people. ³⁰ You say, 'If we had lived when our ancestors lived, we would not have helped those who killed the prophets.' ³¹ In this way you admit that you are the descendants of those murderers; so, you are like them! ³² You also, go ahead and finish committing all the sins that your ancestors began committing. ³³ You people are so wicked! You are as dangerous as poisonous snakes! You foolishly think that you will escape from God punishing you in hell! ³⁴ Take note that this is why I will send prophets, wise men, and teachers. You will kill some of them by nailing them to crosses, and you will kill some in other ways. You will whip some of them in the places where you worship and you will chase them from city to city. ³⁵ So God will consider that you and your ancestors are guilty for killing all the righteous people

who ever lived on earth, including Adam's son Abel, who was a righteous man, and Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, whom your ancestors killed in the holy place between the temple and the altar. You also killed all the prophets who lived between the times that those two men lived. ³⁶ Think about this: You people who have observed my ministry, it is you whom God will punish for killing all those prophets!"

³⁷ "O people of Jerusalem, you who killed the prophets who lived long ago, and you who killed with stones others whom God had sent to you. Many, many times I wanted to gather you together to protect you, like a hen gathers her young chicks under her wings. But you did not want me to do that. ³⁸ So listen to this: Your city will become an uninhabited place. ³⁹ Keep this in mind: You will see me again only when I return, when you say about me, 'God is truly pleased with this man who comes with God's authority.'"

Chapter 24

¹ Jesus left the temple courtyard. As he was walking along, his disciples came to him and began talking about how beautiful the temple buildings were. ² He said to them, "I tell you the truth about these buildings that you are seeing: an army will completely destroy them. They will throw down every stone in these buildings. Not one stone will remain on top of another stone."

³ Later, as Jesus was sitting alone on the slope of the Mount of Olives, the disciples went to him and asked him, "When will this happen to the buildings of the temple? And what will happen to show that you are about to come again, and to show that this world is about to end?"

⁴ Jesus replied, "All that I will say is, be

sure that no one deceives you about what will happen! ⁵ Many people will come and say that they are me. Yes, they will actually say, 'I am the Messiah,' and they will deceive many people. ⁶ You will hear about wars that are close and wars that are far away, but do not let that trouble you. Keep in mind that God has said that those things must happen. But when they happen, it will not mean that the end of the world has come! ⁷ People groups will attack each other, and kings will lead armies against each other. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ These things will happen first, but they will be like when a woman starts to suffer pain before she gives birth to a child.

⁹ More bad things will happen. People who oppose you will take you away to suffer and die. People who live in all the people groups will hate you because you believe in me. ¹⁰ Also, many people will stop believing because of the way they will suffer. They will betray their own fellow believers and will hate each other. ¹¹ Many will come saying that they are prophets, but they will be lying, and they will deceive many people. ¹² Because more and more people will disobey God's laws, many believers will no longer love each other. ¹³ But all those who keep on believing to the end of their lives, God will save them. ¹⁴ Furthermore, believers will preach the good news about how God is ruling in every part of the world, in order to announce it to all people groups. Then the end of the world will come."

¹⁵ "But before the world ends, the disgusting person who will defile the holy temple and cause people to abandon it will stand in the temple. Daniel the prophet spoke and wrote about that long ago. May everyone who reads this pay attention, because I am warning you. ¹⁶ When you see

that happen in the temple, those of you who are in the region of Judea must flee to the higher hills! ¹⁷ Those who are outside their houses must not go back into their houses to get things before they run away. ¹⁸ Those who are working in a field should not turn back to get their outer clothing before they flee. ¹⁹ How terrible it will be for pregnant women at that time, and for women who will be nursing their babies, because it will be very difficult for them to run away! ²⁰ Pray that you will not have to flee in the winter when it will be hard to travel, or on the Sabbath, the day of rest; ²¹ because people will suffer very severely when those things happen. People have never suffered that severely since God created the world until now, and no one will ever suffer like that again. ²² If God had not decided to shorten that time when people will suffer so much, everyone would die. But he has decided to shorten it because he is concerned about the people whom he has chosen.”

²³ “At that time, if someone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or if someone says, ‘There is the Messiah!’ do not believe it! ²⁴ They will perform many kinds of miracles and amazing things, in order to deceive people. They will even try to deceive you people whom God has chosen. ²⁵ Do not forget that I have warned you about all this before it happens. ²⁶ So if someone says to you, ‘Look, the Messiah is in the wilderness!’ do not go there. Likewise, if someone says to you, ‘Look, he is in a secret room!’ do not believe that person, ²⁷ because just like lightning flashes from the east to the west and people see it, in the same way, when the Son of Man returns again, everyone will see. ²⁸ It will be clear to everyone just as when you see vultures gathering you know that an animal carcass is there.”

²⁹ “Immediately after people have suf-

fered during that time, the sun will become dark. The moon will not shine. The stars will fall from the sky. And God will shake all things in the sky loose from their place. ³⁰ After that, everyone will see the Son of Man appear in the sky. Then unbelieving people from all people groups on earth will wail because they will be afraid. They will see me, the Son of Man, coming on the clouds with power and great glory. ³¹ He will send his angels to the earth from everywhere in the heavens. When they hear the trumpet’s loud blast, they will gather together God’s people—the ones he has chosen—from across the whole earth.”

³² “Now be sure to learn something from how fig trees grow. When the branches of a fig tree become tender and its leaves begin to sprout, you know that summer is near. ³³ Similarly, when you see all these things happening, you will know that the time for him to return is very close. ³⁴ Keep this in mind: All of these events will happen before all the people have died who have observed these things. ³⁵ You can be certain that these things that I have told you about will happen. The earth and sky will disappear one day, but what I say will always be true.”

³⁶ “But no other person, nor even any angel in heaven, nor even the Son, knows the day or the hour when these things will happen. Only God the Father knows. ³⁷⁻³⁹ It will be like what happened when Noah lived. Until the flood came, the people did not know that anything bad would happen to them. They were eating and drinking as usual. Men were getting married, and parents were giving their daughters to men to marry them. They were doing all this until the day that Noah and his family entered the big boat. And then the flood came and drowned all those who were not in the boat. Similarly, the un-

Chapter 25

believing people will not know when the Son of Man will return. ⁴⁰ When that happens not all people will be taken up to heaven. For example, two people will be in the fields. One of them will be taken up to heaven and the other person will be left here to be punished. ⁴¹ Similarly, two women will be grinding grain with a handmill. One of them will be taken up to heaven and the other will be left. ⁴² So, because you do not know what day your Lord will return to the earth, you need to be ready all the time. ⁴³ You know that if the owner of a house knew at what time in the night thieves would come, he would be awake and prevent the thieves from breaking in. Similarly, the Son of Man will come as unexpectedly as a thief. ⁴⁴ So you need to be ready because the Son of Man will return to the earth at a time when you do not expect him to come.”

⁴⁵ ”Think about what every faithful and wise servant is like. The house owner appoints one servant to supervise the other servants. He tells him to give them food at the proper times. Then he leaves on a long trip. ⁴⁶ If the servant is doing that work when the house owner returns, the house owner will be very pleased with him. ⁴⁷ Think about this: The house owner will appoint that one servant to be the supervisor of all his possessions. ⁴⁸ But a wicked servant might say to himself, ‘The owner has been away for a long time, so he probably will not return soon and find out what I am doing.’ ⁴⁹ So he will begin to beat the other servants and eat and drink with those who are drunk. ⁵⁰ Then the house owner will come back at a time when the servant does not expect him. ⁵¹ He will punish that servant severely and he will put him where the hypocrites are put. In that place the people cry and grind their teeth because they suffer very much.”

¹ ”God’s rule from heaven will be like what happened to ten unmarried girls who got ready to go to a wedding feast. They were to take their lamps and go wait for the bridegroom to come. ² Now five of these girls were foolish, and five were wise. ³ The foolish girls took their lamps, but they did not take any extra olive oil for them. ⁴ But the wise girls took oil in their flasks as well as in their lamps. ⁵ The bridegroom was taking a long time to come, and it became late at night. So all the girls became sleepy and fell asleep. ⁶ In the middle of the night someone woke them up by shouting, ‘Here he is! The bridegroom is arriving! Go outside and meet him!’ ⁷ So all the girls got up and adjusted their lamps for burning. ⁸ The foolish girls said to the wise ones, ‘Give us some of your oil, because our lamps are about to go out!’ ⁹ The wise girls replied, ‘No, because there might not be enough oil for our lamps and yours. Go to the sellers and buy some for yourselves!’ ¹⁰ But while the foolish girls were on their way to buy oil, the bridegroom arrived. Then the wise girls, who were ready, went with him into the wedding hall, where the bride was waiting. Then the door was closed. ¹¹ Later, the rest of the girls came to the wedding hall, and they called to the bridegroom, ‘Sir, open the door for us!’ ¹² But he said to them, ‘The truth is that I do not know you, so I will not open the door for you!’” ¹³ Then Jesus continued by saying, “So, in order that this does not happen to you, stay prepared because you do not know when it will be.”

¹⁴ ”When the Son of Man returns from heaven as king, it will be like a man who was about to go on a long journey. He called his servants together and gave them each some of his wealth to invest

and gain more money for him. ¹⁵ He gave them money according to their ability to use it. For example, he gave one servant five bags of gold weighing about 165 kilograms, he gave another servant two bags weighing about sixty-six kilograms, and he gave another servant one bag weighing about thirty-three kilograms. Then he left on his journey. ¹⁶ The servant who had received five bags of gold went immediately and used that money to gain five more bags. ¹⁷ Similarly, the servant who had received two bags of gold gained two bags more. ¹⁸ But the servant who had received one bag of gold went and dug a hole in the ground, and he hid it there to keep it safe.

¹⁹ After a long time the servants' master returned. He called them together to find out what they had done with his money. ²⁰ The servant who had received five bags of gold brought him ten bags. He said, 'Master, you gave me five bags of gold to take care of. Look, I have gained five more!' ²¹ His master replied, 'You are a very good servant! You have been very faithful to me. You have managed a small amount of money very well, so I will put you in charge of a lot of things. Come and be happy with me!'

²² The servant who had received two bags of gold also came, and he said, 'Master, you gave me two bags of gold to take care of. Look, I have gained two more!' ²³ His master replied, 'You are a very good servant! You have been very faithful to me. You have managed a small amount of money very well, so I will put you in charge of a lot of things. Come and be happy with me!'

²⁴ Then the servant who had received one bag of gold came. He said, 'Master, I was afraid of you. I knew that you are a man who expects to make a lot of money even if you invest nothing, like a farmer who tries

to harvest a field he did not plant. ²⁵ I was afraid of what you might do if I lost the money you lent me to invest, so I hid it in the ground. Here it is now; please take it back!' ²⁶ His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! You knew that I expect to make money even when I have invested nothing. ²⁷ So then, you should have at least put my money on deposit in a bank, so that when I returned I would get it back with the interest it earned!' ²⁸ Then the master said to his other servants, 'Take the bag of gold from him and give it to the servant who has the ten bags!' ²⁹ To those who use well what they have received, God will give more, and they will have plenty. But from those who do not use well what they have received, even what they already have will be taken away. ³⁰ Furthermore, throw that worthless servant outside into the darkness, where he will be with those who are wailing and grinding their teeth in pain.'"

³¹ "When the Son of Man comes again in his brilliant light and brings all his angels, he will sit as king on his throne to judge everyone. ³² Everyone from all the people groups will be gathered in front of him. Then he will separate the people one from another, as a shepherd separates his sheep from his goats. ³³ He will put the righteous people on his right and the unrighteous ones on his left, just like sheep and goats."

³⁴ Then he will say to those on his right, 'You people who have been blessed by my Father, come! Come receive all the good things he will give you, for he is now giving you the blessings of his rule—things he has been preparing since the time he created the world. ³⁵ These things belong to you, because you gave me something to eat when I was hungry. You gave me something to drink when I was thirsty. When I was a stranger in your town, you

invited me to stay in your houses. ³⁶ When I needed clothes, you gave me some. When I was sick, you took care of me. When I was in prison, you came to visit me.'

³⁷ Then the people whom God has declared to be good will reply, 'Lord, when were you hungry and we saw you and gave you something to eat? When were you thirsty and we gave you something to drink? ³⁸ When were you a stranger in our town and we invited you to stay in our houses? When did you need clothes and we gave you some? ³⁹ When were you sick or in prison and we went to visit you? We do not remember doing any of these things for you.'

⁴⁰ The King will reply, 'The truth is that whatever you did for any one of your fellow believers, even the most unimportant one, you certainly did it for me.'

⁴¹ But then he will say to those on his left, 'You people whom God has cursed, leave me! Go into the eternal fire that God has prepared for the devil and his angels! ⁴² It is right for you to go there, because you did not give me anything to eat when I was hungry. You did not give me anything to drink when I was thirsty. ⁴³ You did not invite me into your homes when I was a stranger in your town. You did not give me any clothes when I needed them. You did not take care of me when I was sick or in prison.'

⁴⁴ They will answer, 'Lord, when were you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and we did not help you?'

⁴⁵ He will reply, 'The truth is that whenever you did not do anything to help any one of my people, even the most unimportant person, it was I for whom you did not do it.'

⁴⁶ Then those people on my left will go

away to the place where God will punish them forever, but the people good in God's sight will go to where they will live forever with God."

Chapter 26

¹ When Jesus had finished saying all those things, he said to the disciples, ² "You know that two days from now we will celebrate the Passover festival. At that time someone will hand the Son of Man over to those who will nail him to a cross."

³ At the same time the chief priests and the Jewish elders gathered in the home of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas. ⁴ There they planned how they could arrest Jesus in some tricky way so that they could have him executed. ⁵ But they said, "We must not do it during the Passover festival, because if we do it then, the people might riot."

⁶ While Jesus and his disciples were in the village of Bethany, they ate in the home of Simon, whom Jesus had healed of leprosy. ⁷ During the meal, a woman came into the house. She was carrying a beautiful stone jar containing very expensive perfume. She went up to Jesus as he was eating and poured all the perfume on his head. ⁸ When the disciples saw that, they were very angry. One of them said, "It is terrible that this perfume was wasted! ⁹ We could have sold it and gotten a lot of money for it! Then we could have given the money to poor people." ¹⁰ Jesus knew what they were saying, so he said to them, "You should not be bothering this woman! She has done a beautiful thing to me. ¹¹ Keep in mind that you will always have poor people among you, so you can help them whenever you want to. But I will not always be with you! ¹² When she poured this perfume on my body, it was as if she

knew that I am going to die soon. And it is as if she had anointed my body for being buried. ¹³ I will tell you this: Wherever in the entire world people preach the good news about me, they will tell what this woman has done, and as a result, people will always remember her."

¹⁴ Then Judas Iscariot, even though he was one of the twelve disciples, went to the chief priests. ¹⁵ He asked them, "If I enable you to arrest Jesus, how much money are you willing to give me?" They agreed to give him thirty silver coins. So they counted out the coins and gave them to him. ¹⁶ From that time Judas watched for an opportunity when they could arrest Jesus.

¹⁷ On the first day of the week-long Festival of Bread with No Yeast, the disciples went to Jesus and asked, "Where do you want us to prepare the meal for the Passover Celebration so that we can eat it with you?" ¹⁸ Jesus instructed two of the disciples about what they should do. He said to them, "Go into the city to a man with whom I have previously arranged this. Tell him that I, the Teacher, say this: 'The time that I told you about is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover meal with my disciples at your house, and I have sent these two to prepare the meal.'" ¹⁹ So the two disciples did as Jesus told them. They went and prepared the Passover meal in that man's house.

²⁰ When that evening had come, Jesus was eating the meal with the twelve disciples.

²¹ He said to them, "Listen carefully to this: One of you is going to enable my enemies to arrest me." ²² The disciples were very sad. They began to say to him, one after the other, "Lord, it is surely not I!" ²³ He replied, "The one who will enable my enemies to arrest me is the one of you who is dipping bread into the sauce in the dish along with me. ²⁴ It is certain that

I, the Son of Man, will die, because that is what the scriptures say about me. But there will be terrible punishment for the man who enables my enemies to arrest me! It would be better for that man if he had never been born!" ²⁵ Then Judas, the one who was going to betray him, said, "Teacher, surely it is not I!" Jesus replied, "Yes, you are admitting it."

²⁶ While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread and thanked God for it. He broke it into pieces, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take this bread and eat it. It is my body." ²⁷ Later he took a cup of wine and thanked God for it. Then he gave it to them and said, "Drink from this cup, all of you. ²⁸ The wine in this cup is my blood, which will soon flow from my body. This blood will mark the new covenant that God is making to forgive the sins of many people. ²⁹ Note this carefully: I will not drink wine in this way anymore until the time when I drink it with you with a new meaning. That will happen when my Father rules completely."

³⁰ After they sang a hymn, they started out toward the Mount of Olives.

³¹ On the way, Jesus told them, "This night all of you will desert me because of what will happen to me! This is certain to happen because these words that God said are written in the scriptures:

'I will cause men to kill the shepherd,

and they will scatter all the sheep.'

³² But after I have died and become alive again, I will go ahead of you to Galilee and meet you there." ³³ Peter replied, "Perhaps all the other disciples will desert you when they see what happens to you, but I certainly will never leave you!" ³⁴ Jesus replied to him, "The truth is that this very night, before the rooster crows, you will say three times that you do not know me!"

³⁵ Peter said to him, "Even if they kill me

while I am defending you, I will never say that I do not know you!" All the rest of the disciples also said the same thing.

³⁶ Then Jesus went with the disciples to a place that is called Gethsemane. There he said, "Stay here while I go over there and pray." ³⁷ He took Peter, James, and John with him. He became extremely distressed. ³⁸ Then he said to them, "I am very sorrowful, so much so that I feel as if I were about to die! Remain here and stay awake with me!" ³⁹ After going a little farther, he threw himself facedown on the ground. He prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, do not make me suffer in the way I know I will have to. But do not do as I want. Instead, do as you want!" ⁴⁰ Then he returned to the three disciples and saw that they were sleeping. He woke Peter and said to him, "I am disappointed that you men fell asleep and were not able to stay awake with me for just a short time! ⁴¹ You must keep alert and pray so that you can resist when anyone tempts you to sin. You want to do what I tell you, but you are not strong enough to actually do it."

⁴² He went away a second time. He prayed, "My Father, if it is necessary for me to suffer, may what you want happen!"

⁴³ When he returned to the three disciples, he saw that they were asleep again. They could not keep their eyes open. ⁴⁴ So he left them and went away again. He prayed a third time, saying the same thing that he had prayed before. ⁴⁵ Then he returned to all the disciples. He woke them up and said to them, "I am disappointed that you are still sleeping and resting! Look! Someone is about to enable sinful men to arrest me, the Son of Man! ⁴⁶ Get up! Let us go to meet them! Here comes the one who is enabling them to arrest me!"

⁴⁷ While Jesus was still speaking, Judas arrived. Even though he was one of the twelve disciples, he came to enable Jesus'

enemies to arrest him. A large crowd carrying swords and clubs was coming with him. The chief priests and elders had sent them. ⁴⁸ Judas had previously arranged to give them a signal. He had told them, "The man whom I will kiss is the one you want. Arrest him!" ⁴⁹ He immediately went to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Teacher!" Then he kissed Jesus. ⁵⁰ Jesus replied, "Friend, what you are about to do, do it quickly." Then the men who came with Judas stepped forward and seized Jesus. ⁵¹ Suddenly, one of the men who was with Jesus pulled his sword out of its sheath. He struck the servant of the high priest to kill him, but only cut off his ear. ⁵² Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back in its sheath! All those who try to kill others with a sword—someone else will kill them with a sword! ⁵³ Do you think that if I asked my Father, he would not immediately send more than twelve armies of angels to help me? ⁵⁴ But if I did that, what the prophets have written in the scriptures about what will happen to the Messiah would not be fulfilled."

⁵⁵ At that time Jesus said to the crowd that was seizing him, "You have come here to seize me with swords and clubs, as if I were a bandit! Day after day I sat in the temple courtyard, teaching the people. Why did you not arrest me then? ⁵⁶ But all this is happening to fulfill what the prophets have written in the scriptures about me." Then all of the disciples deserted Jesus and ran away.

⁵⁷ The men who had arrested Jesus took him to the house where Caiaphas, the high priest, lived. The men who taught the Jewish laws and the Jewish elders had already gathered there. ⁵⁸ Peter followed Jesus at a distance. He came to the high priest's courtyard. He entered the courtyard and sat down with the guards to see what would happen.

⁵⁹ The chief priests and the rest of the Jewish council were trying to find persons who would tell lies about Jesus so that they could condemn him to death. ⁶⁰ But even though many people spoke lies about him, they did not find anyone who said anything that was useful. Finally two men came forward ⁶¹ and said, "This man said, 'I am able to destroy God's temple and to rebuild it within three days.'" ⁶² Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, "Are you not going to reply? What do you say about these things that they are saying to accuse you?" ⁶³ But Jesus remained silent. Then the high priest said to him, "I command you to tell us the truth; you know that the all-powerful God is listening to you: Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?" ⁶⁴ Jesus replied, "Yes, it is as you say. But I will also say this to all of you: Some day you will see the Son of Man sitting beside Almighty God and ruling. You will also see him coming on the clouds from heaven!"

⁶⁵ The the high priest was so upset that he tore his outer garment. Then he said, "This man has insulted God! He claims to be equal with God! We certainly do not need anyone else to testify against this man! You heard what he said!" ⁶⁶ What do you think?" The Jewish leaders replied, "According to our laws, he is guilty and deserves to be executed!" ⁶⁷ Then some of them spat in his face. Others struck him with their fists. Others slapped him ⁶⁸ and said, "Since you claim that you are the Messiah, tell us who hit you!"

⁶⁹ Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant girl came up to him and looked at him. She said, "You also were with Jesus, that man from the district of Galilee!" ⁷⁰ But while everyone there was listening, he denied it. He said, "I do not know what you are talking about!" ⁷¹ Then he went out to the gateway of the courtyard. Another servant girl saw him

and said to the people who were standing nearby, "This man was with Jesus, the man from Nazareth." ⁷² But Peter again denied it. He said, "May God punish me if I am lying! I tell you, I do not even know that man!" ⁷³ After a little while, the people who were standing there approached Peter and said to him, "It is certain that you are one of those who were with that man. We can tell from your accent that you are from Galilee." ⁷⁴ Then Peter began to proclaim loudly that God should curse him if he was lying. He asked God in heaven to witness that he was telling the truth and said, "I do not know that man!" Immediately a rooster crowed. ⁷⁵ Then Peter remembered the words that Jesus had spoken to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will say three times that you do not know me." And Peter went out of the courtyard, crying hard because he was so sad about what he had done.

Chapter 27

¹ Very early the next morning all the chief priests and Jewish elders decided how to persuade the Romans to execute Jesus. ² Then they tied his hands and took him to Pilate, the Roman governor.

³ Then Judas, the one who had betrayed Jesus, realized that they had decided that Jesus must die. So was overcome with regret about what he had done. He took the thirty coins back to the chief priests and elders. ⁴ He said, "I have sinned. I have betrayed a man who is innocent." They replied, "That means nothing to us! That is your problem!" ⁵ So Judas took the money and threw it into the temple courtyard. Then he went away and hanged himself.

⁶ The high priests picked up the coins and said, "This is money that we paid for a

man to die, and our law does not allow us to put money like this into the temple treasury.” ⁷ So they decided to use that money to buy a field that was called the Potter’s Field. They made that field a place where they buried strangers who died in Jerusalem. ⁸ That is why that place is still called “The Field of Blood.” ⁹ By buying that field, they made come true these words that the prophet Jeremiah had written long ago: “They took the thirty silver coins—that was what the leaders of Israel decided that he was worth— ¹⁰ and with that money they bought the field of the potter. They did that as the Lord had commanded me.”

¹¹ Then Jesus stood in front of the governor. The governor asked him, “Do you say you are the king of the Jews?” Jesus replied, “Yes, it is as you have just said.”

¹² But when the chief priests and elders accused Jesus of doing various wrong things, he did not answer. ¹³ So Pilate said to him, “You hear how many things they are accusing you of; are you not going to reply?” ¹⁴ But Jesus did not say anything. He did not reply to any of the things about which they were accusing him. As a result, the governor was very surprised.

¹⁵ Now it was the governor’s custom each year during the Passover Celebration to release one person who was in prison. He released whatever prisoner the people wanted. ¹⁶ At that time there was in Jerusalem a well-known prisoner whose name was Barabbas. ¹⁷ So when the crowd gathered, Pilate asked them, “Which prisoner would you like me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus, whom they call the Messiah?” ¹⁸ He asked that question because he realized that the chief priests had brought Jesus to him only because they were jealous of Jesus. And Pilate thought that the crowd would prefer that he release Jesus.

¹⁹ While Pilate was sitting in the judge’s seat, his wife sent him this message: “Early this morning I had a bad dream because of that man. So do not condemn that righteous man!”

²⁰ But the chief priests and elders persuaded the crowd to ask Pilate to release Barabbas, and to order that Jesus be executed. ²¹ So when the governor asked them, “Which of the two men do you want me to release for you?” They replied, “Barabbas!” ²² Pilate asked them, “So what should I do with Jesus who some of you say is the Messiah?” They all answered, “Command that your soldiers crucify him!” ²³ Pilate replied, “Why? What crime has he committed?” But they shouted even louder, “Have him crucified!”

²⁴ Pilate realized that he was accomplishing nothing. He saw that instead, the people were starting to riot. So he took a basin of water and washed his hands as the crowd was watching. He said, “By washing my hands I am showing you that if this man dies, it is your fault, not mine!” ²⁵ And all the people answered, “May we be guilty for causing him to die, and may our children be guilty, too!” ²⁶ Then he ordered the soldiers to release Barabbas for them. But he ordered that his soldiers whip Jesus. And then he turned Jesus over to the soldiers for them to nail Jesus to a cross.

²⁷ Then the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into the soldiers’ barracks. The whole cohort gathered around him. ²⁸ They pulled off his clothes and put a bright red robe on him, pretending he was a king. ²⁹ They took some branches with thorns and wove them to make a crown and put it on his head. They put in his right hand a reed like a staff that a king would hold. Then they knelt in front of him and made fun of him, saying, “Greetings to the king of the

Jews!" ³⁰ They kept spitting on him. They took the staff and kept striking him on the head with it. ³¹ When they had finished ridiculing him, they pulled off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to the place where they would nail him to a cross.

³² After Jesus carried his cross a short distance, the soldiers saw a man named Simon, who was from the city of Cyrene. They forced him to carry the cross for Jesus. ³³ They came to a place called Golgotha. That name means "the place like a skull." ³⁴ When they got there, they mixed with wine something that tasted very bitter. They gave it to Jesus to drink so that he would not feel so much pain when they nailed him on the cross. But when he tasted it, he refused to drink it. Some soldiers took his clothes. ³⁵ Then they nailed him to the cross. Afterwards, they divided his clothes among themselves by gambling with something like dice to decide which piece of clothing each one would get. ³⁶ Then the soldiers sat down there to guard him, to prevent anyone from trying to rescue him. ³⁷ They fastened to the cross above Jesus' head a sign on which had been written why they were nailing him to the cross. But all it said was, 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.' ³⁸ They also nailed two bandits to crosses. They placed one cross on the right side of Jesus and the other on the left side. ³⁹ The people who were passing by insulted him by shaking their heads as if he were an evil man. ⁴⁰ They said, "You said you would destroy the temple and then build it again within three days! So if you can do that, you should be able to save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross!"

⁴¹ Similarly, the chief priests, the men who taught the Jewish laws, and the elders made fun of him. They said things like,

⁴² "He saved others from their sicknesses, but he cannot help himself!" "He says that he is the King of Israel. So he should come down from the cross. Then we would believe him!" ⁴³ "He says that he trusts in God, and that he is the man who is also God. So if God is pleased with him, God should rescue him now!" ⁴⁴ And the two bandits who on crosses with him also insulted him, saying similar things.

⁴⁵ At noon it became dark over the whole land. It stayed dark until three o'clock in the afternoon. ⁴⁶ At about three o'clock Jesus shouted loudly, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" That means, "My God, my God, why have you deserted me?" ⁴⁷ When some of the people standing there heard the word "Eli," they thought that he was calling for the prophet Elijah. ⁴⁸ Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with sour wine. Then he put the sponge on the tip of a reed and held it up in order that Jesus could suck out the wine that was in it. ⁴⁹ But the other people there said, "Wait! Let us see if Elijah comes to save him!" ⁵⁰ Then after Jesus shouted out loudly again, he died, giving his spirit over to God. ⁵¹ At that moment the heavy thick curtain that closed off the Most Holy Place in the temple split into two pieces from top to bottom. The earth shook, and some large rocks split open. ⁵² Tombs opened up, and the bodies of many people who had honored God became alive again. ⁵³ They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus became alive again, they went into Jerusalem and appeared to many people there.

⁵⁴ The officer who supervised the soldiers who nailed Jesus to the cross was standing nearby. His soldiers who were guarding the crosses were also there. When they felt the earthquake and saw all the other things that happened, they were terrified. They exclaimed, "Truly he was the Son of

God!”

⁵⁵ Many women were there, watching from a distance. They were women who had accompanied Jesus from Galilee in order to provide the things he needed.

⁵⁶ Among these women were Mary from Magdala, another Mary who was the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of James and John.

⁵⁷ When it was almost evening, a rich man named Joseph came there. He was from the town of Arimathea. He also was a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸ He went to Pilate and asked Pilate to allow him to take the body of Jesus and bury it. Pilate ordered his soldiers to allow him to take the body. ⁵⁹ So Joseph and others took the body and wrapped it in a clean white cloth. ⁶⁰ Then they placed it in Joseph’s own new tomb that workers had dug out of a rock cliff. They rolled a huge circular flat stone in front of the entrance to the tomb. Then they left. ⁶¹ Mary from Magdala and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb, watching.

⁶² The next day was Saturday, the Jewish day of rest. The chief priests and some of the Pharisees went to Pilate. ⁶³ They said, “Sir, we remember that while that deceiver was still alive, he said, ‘Three days after I die I will become alive again.’ ⁶⁴ So we ask you to order soldiers to guard the tomb for three days. If you do not do that, his disciples may come and steal the body. Then they will tell people that he has risen from the dead. If they deceive people by saying that, it will be worse than the way he deceived people before.” ⁶⁵ Pilate replied, “You can take some soldiers. Go to the tomb and make it as secure as you know how.” ⁶⁶ So they went and made the tomb secure by fastening a cord from the stone that was in front of the entrance to the rock cliff on each side and sealing it. They also left some soldiers there to guard

the tomb.

Chapter 28

¹ After the Sabbath ended, on Sunday morning at dawn, Mary from the town of Magdala and the other Mary went to look at the tomb of Jesus. ² There was a strong earthquake because an angel from God came down from heaven. He went to the tomb and rolled the stone away from the entrance. Then he sat on the stone. ³ His body was as bright as lightning, and his clothes were as white as snow. ⁴ The guards trembled because they were very afraid, and then they fell down like dead men.

⁵ The angel said to the two women, “You should not be afraid! I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was nailed to a cross. ⁶ He is not here! God has made him alive again, just as Jesus told you he would! Come and see the place where his body lay! ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has risen from the dead! He will go ahead of you to the district of Galilee. You will see him there.’ Pay attention to what I have told you!”

⁸ So the women left the tomb quickly. They were afraid, but they were also very joyful. They ran to tell the disciples what had happened. ⁹ Suddenly, as they were running, Jesus appeared to them. He said, “Greetings to you!” The women came close to him. They knelt down and clasped his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid! Go and tell all my disciples that they should go to Galilee. They will see me there.”

¹¹ While the women were going, some of the soldiers who had been guarding the tomb went into the city. They reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. ¹² So the chief priests and Jewish

elders met together. They thought of a way to explain why the tomb was empty. They gave the soldiers a lot of money as a bribe. ¹³ They said, "Tell people, 'His disciples came during the night and stole his body while we were sleeping.'" ¹⁴ If the governor hears about this, we ourselves will make sure that he does not get angry and punish you. So you will not have to worry." ¹⁵ So the soldiers took the money and did as they were told. And this story has been told among the Jews to this very day.

¹⁶ Later the eleven disciples went to the district of Galilee. They went to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ They saw him there and worshiped him. But some doubted that it was really Jesus and that he had become alive again. ¹⁸ Then Jesus came close to them and said, "My Father has given me all authority over everything and everyone in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ So go, and use my authority to teach my message to people of all people groups so that they may become my disciples. Baptize them to be under the authority of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. ²⁰ Teach them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember that I will be with you always, until the end of this age."

MARK

Chapter 1

¹⁻² This is the good news concerning Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. Isaiah the prophet mentioned this good news when he wrote:

“Listen! I am sending my messenger ahead of you.

He will prepare the people to welcome you.

³ He will call out to anyone who hears him in the wilderness,

‘Make yourselves ready to welcome the Lord.’”

⁴ The messenger that Isaiah wrote about was John. People called him “The Baptizer.” John was in the wilderness; he was baptizing people and telling them, “Be sorry that you have sinned, and decide to stop it, so that God may forgive you. Then I will baptize you.” ⁵ A great number of people from the district of Judea and the city of Jerusalem went out to the wilderness to hear John speak. Many of those who heard him agreed that they had sinned. Then John baptized them in the Jordan River. ⁶ John wore rough clothes made of camel’s hair and a leather belt around his waist. He ate grasshoppers and honey that he found in that wilderness area. ⁷ He was preaching, “Very shortly one will come who is very great. I am nothing compared to him. I am not even worthy to stoop down and untie his sandals. ⁸ I baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

⁹ During the time when John was preaching, Jesus came from Nazareth, a town in the district of Galilee. He went to where John was preaching, and John baptized

him in the Jordan River. ¹⁰ Immediately after Jesus came up out of the water, he saw heaven open up and the Spirit of God descending on himself. The Spirit of God came down like a dove. ¹¹ God spoke from heaven and said, “You are my Son, the one whom I love dearly. I am very pleased with you.” ¹² Then the Spirit of God sent Jesus out into the wilderness. ¹³ He was there for forty days. During that time, Satan was tempting him. There were wild animals in that place, and angels were taking care of him.

¹⁴ Later, after John was put in prison, Jesus went to Galilee. In Galilee, he was preaching God’s good news. ¹⁵ He was saying, “The time has come at last. God will soon show that he is king. Be sorry that you have sinned, and decide to stop it, so that God may forgive you. Believe the good news.”

¹⁶ One day, while Jesus was walking along by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two men, Simon and Simon’s brother, Andrew. They were casting their fishing net into the sea. They earned money by catching and selling fish. ¹⁷ Then Jesus said to them, “Just like you have been gathering fish, come with me and I will teach you how to gather people.” ¹⁸ Immediately they left their nets, and they went with him. ¹⁹ After they had gone on a little further, Jesus saw two other men, James and James’ brother, John. They were the sons of a man named Zebedee. They were both in a boat mending fishing nets. ²⁰ As soon as Jesus saw them, he told them to come with him. So they left their father, who remained in the boat with the hired servants, and they went away with Jesus.

²¹ Jesus and the disciples went into a nearby town called Capernaum. On the next Sabbath, he went into the synagogue and began teaching the people who had gathered there. ²² They were amazed

at the way he taught. He taught like a teacher who relies on what he himself knows. He did not teach like those who taught the Jewish laws, who repeated the different things that other men had taught. ²³ In the synagogue where Jesus taught, there was a man that an evil spirit controlled. The man with the evil spirit began shouting, ²⁴ "Hey! Jesus, from Nazareth! We evil spirits have nothing to do with you! Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are. You are the Holy One from God!" ²⁵ Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, saying, "Be quiet and come out of him!" ²⁶ The evil spirit shook the man violently. He screamed loudly, and then he came out of the man and left. ²⁷ All the people who were there were amazed. As a result, they discussed this among themselves, saying, "This is amazing! Not only does he teach in a new and authoritative way, but he also commands the evil spirits and they obey him!" ²⁸ The people very soon told many others throughout the whole district of Galilee what Jesus had done.

²⁹ After they left the synagogue, Jesus, Simon and Andrew, along with James and John, went directly to the house of Simon and Andrew. ³⁰ Simon's mother-in-law was lying in bed because she had a high fever. Right away someone told Jesus about her being sick. ³¹ Jesus went to her, took her by the hand, and helped her up. She immediately recovered from the fever and began serving them.

³² That evening, after the sun had gone down, some people brought to Jesus many others who were sick and those that evil spirits controlled. ³³ It seemed as though everyone who lived in the town was gathered at the doorway of Simon's house. ³⁴ Jesus healed many people who were sick with various diseases. He also forced many evil spirits to come out from people.

He did not allow the demons to tell people about him, because they knew that he was the Holy One from God.

³⁵ Jesus got up very early the next morning while it was still dark. He left the house and went away from the town to a place where there were no people. Then he prayed. ³⁶ Simon and his companions searched for him. ³⁷ When they found him they said, "Everyone in town is looking for you." ³⁸ He said to them, "We need to go to the neighboring towns so that I can preach there as well. This is the reason I came here." ³⁹ So they went throughout Galilee. As they went, Jesus would preach in the synagogues and forced evil spirits to come out from people.

⁴⁰ One day a man who had a bad skin disease called leprosy came to Jesus. He knelt down in front of Jesus and pleaded with him, saying, "Please heal me, because you are able to heal me if you are willing!" ⁴¹ Jesus felt compassion for him. He reached out his hand and touched the man. Then he said to him, "Since I am willing to heal you, be healed!" ⁴² Immediately the man was healed! He was no longer a leper! ⁴³ Jesus gave the man a warning as he was sending him away. ⁴⁴ He said, "Do not tell anyone what just happened. Instead, go to a priest and show yourself to him in order that he may examine you. Then make the offering that Moses commanded for people who have been healed from leprosy. This will be the testimony to the community that you have been healed." ⁴⁵ The man did not follow Jesus' instruction. He began telling many people about how Jesus had healed him. As a result, Jesus was no longer able to enter towns publicly because the crowds of people would surround him. Instead, he remained outside the towns in places where no one lived. But people kept coming to him from all over that region.

Chapter 2

¹ After some days had passed, Jesus returned to Capernaum. People spread the news quickly to others that Jesus had returned and was in the house. ² Soon a great number of people gathered where Jesus was staying. The number was so great that the house was full. There was no longer space to stand, not even around the doorway. Jesus spoke God's message to them. ³ Some people came to the house bringing to Jesus a man who was paralyzed. Four men carried him on a sleeping pad. ⁴ They were not able to bring the man to Jesus because of the crowd that had gathered. So, they went up on the roof of the house and made a big hole in the roof above Jesus. They lowered the paralyzed man on his sleeping pad through the hole in front of Jesus. ⁵ After Jesus perceived that the men believed that he could heal this man, he said to the paralyzed man, "My child, I have forgiven your sins!" ⁶ Some men who taught the Jewish laws were sitting there. They started thinking to themselves, ⁷ "Who does this man think he is? He is proud and insults God by saying that! Only God can forgive sins!" ⁸ Jesus knew right away within himself what they were thinking. He said to them, "Why are you thinking these things?" ⁹ Which would be easier for me to say, 'I have forgiven your sins' or 'Get up! Take your sleeping pad and walk'? ¹⁰ I will show you that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." Then he said to the paralyzed man, ¹¹ "Get up! Pick up your sleeping pad! And go home!" ¹² The man stood up immediately! He picked up the sleeping pad, and then he went away, while all the people there were watching. They were all amazed, and they praised God and said, "We have never before seen anything like what happened just now!"

¹³ Jesus left Capernaum and walked along the shore of the Sea of Galilee. A large crowd came to him and he taught them. ¹⁴ As he walked, he saw a man named Levi whose father's name was Alpheus. He was sitting in his office where he collected taxes. Jesus said to him, "Come with me." He got up and went with Jesus. ¹⁵ Later, Jesus was eating a meal in Levi's house. Many sinners and men who collected taxes were eating with Jesus and his disciples. ¹⁶ Men who taught the Jewish laws and who were members of the Pharisee sect saw that Jesus was eating with sinners and men who collected taxes. They asked Jesus' disciples, "Why does he eat and drink with sinners and men who collect taxes?" ¹⁷ After Jesus heard what they were asking, he said to the men who taught the Jewish laws, "Healthy people do not need a doctor. On the contrary, it is those who are sick who need a doctor. I did not come to invite those who think they are righteous to come me, but those who know that they have sinned."

¹⁸ Now at this time, the disciples of John the Baptizer and some men who belonged to the Pharisee sect were abstaining from food, as they often did. Some men came to Jesus and asked him, "The disciples of John and the Pharisees often abstain from food. Why do your disciples not abstain from food?" ¹⁹ Jesus said to them, "When a man is marrying a woman, his friends will certainly not abstain from food while he is still with them. The wedding is a time of feasting and celebrating with the groom. It is not a time for abstaining from food, especially while the groom is with them. ²⁰ But some day, the groom will be taken away from them. Then in those days, they will abstain from food."

²¹ Jesus went on to say to them, "People do not sew a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment in order to mend a hole. If

they did, when they washed the garment, the patch would shrink and the new piece of cloth would tear off more of the old cloth. As a result, the hole would become even bigger! ²² Similarly, people do not put new wine into old skin bags to store it. If they did, the new wine will burst the skin bags because they would not stretch when the wine ferments and expands. As a result both the wine and the skin bags would be ruined! On the contrary, people must put new wine into new skin bags!”

²³ On one Sabbath, Jesus was walking through some grain fields with his disciples. As they were walking along through the grain fields, the disciples were plucking some of the heads of grain. ²⁴ Some of the Pharisees saw what they were doing and said to Jesus, “Look! They are breaking the Jewish law concerning the Sabbath. Why are they doing that?” ²⁵ Jesus said to them, “Have you never read the scriptures concerning King David and the men who were with him when they were hungry? ²⁶ During the time Abiathar was high priest, King David entered the house of God and asked for some bread. The high priest gave him some of the bread that had been on display before God. According to our laws, only the priests could eat that bread! But David ate some of it. Then he also gave some of it to the men who were with him.” ²⁷ Jesus said to them further, “The Sabbath was established for the needs of people. People were not made in order to meet the requirements of the Sabbath! ²⁸ So, to be clear, the Son of Man is Lord, even of the Sabbath!”

Chapter 3

¹ On another Sabbath Jesus again went into a synagogue. There was a man there

whose hand was withered. ² Some men of the Pharisee sect watched him carefully in order to see whether he would heal the man on the Sabbath; they wanted to be able to accuse him of doing something wrong. ³ Jesus said to the man whose hand was withered, “Stand up here in front of everyone!” So the man stood up. ⁴ Then Jesus said to the people, “Do the laws that God gave Moses permit people to do good on the Sabbath, or do evil? Do the laws permit us to save a person’s life on the Sabbath, or permit us to refuse to help a person and let them die?” But they did not reply. ⁵ He looked around at them angrily. He was very disappointed that they were stubborn and not willing to help the man. So he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand!” When the man stretched out his withered hand, it became all right again! ⁶ The Pharisees left the synogogue. They immediately met with some of the Jews who supported Herod Antipas, who ruled the district of Galilee. Together they planned how they could kill Jesus.

⁷ Jesus and his disciples left that town and went to an area further along the Sea of Galilee. A great crowd of people followed him. The people that followed him came from Galilee and Judea, ⁸ from Jerusalem, from towns in the district of Judea, from the district of Idumea, from the region on the east side of the Jordan River, and from the region around the cities of Tyre and Sidon. They all came to him because they had heard about what he was doing. ⁹⁻¹⁰ Because he had healed many people, many other people who had various illnesses pushed forward in order to touch him. They believed that if only they touched him, it would make them well. So he told his disciples that they should get a small boat ready for him in order that the crowd would not crush him when they pushed forward to touch him. ¹¹ Whenever the evil spirits saw Jesus, they caused

the people whom they controlled to fall down in front of Jesus and call out to him, "You are the Son of God!" ¹² Jesus commanded the evil spirits strongly that they must not tell anyone who he was.

¹³ Jesus went up into the hills. As he went, he called out to those that he wanted to go with him and they went with him. ¹⁴ He appointed twelve men to be with him and for him to send them out to preach. He called them apostles. ¹⁵ He also gave them power in order that they might force evil spirits to come out from people. ¹⁶ These were the twelve men he appointed: Simon (and Jesus gave him the new name Peter). ¹⁷ And along with Peter, Jesus also appointed James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James, to both of whom he added the new name, 'Men who are like Thunder' because of their fiery zeal; ¹⁸ and he appointed Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, and James who was the son of Alphaeus; and he appointed Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, ¹⁹ and Judas Iscariot (who later betrayed him).

²⁰ Jesus and his disciples went to a house. Again a crowd gathered where he was staying. Many people crowded around him. He and his disciples did not even have time to eat. ²¹ When his relatives heard about this, they went to take him home with them because some people were saying that he was insane.

²² Some men who taught the Jewish laws came down from Jerusalem. They heard that Jesus was forcing evil spirits to come out of people. So they were telling people, "Beelzebul, who rules the evil spirits, controls Jesus. He is the one who gives Jesus the power to force evil spirits out from people!" ²³ So Jesus called those men over to himself. Jesus spoke to them in parables and said, "How can Satan cast out Satan?"

²⁴ If people who live in the same coun-

try are fighting against one another, their country will cease to be a united country. ²⁵ And if people who live in the same house fight each other, they will certainly not remain united as one family. ²⁶ Similarly, if Satan and his evil spirits were fighting one another, instead of remaining strong, he would become powerless. ²⁷ No one can go into the house of a strong man and take his possessions away from him unless he first ties up the strong man. Only then will he be able to steal the things in that man's house." ²⁸ Jesus also said, "Consider this carefully! People may sin in many ways and they may speak evil about God. God can still forgive them, ²⁹ but if anyone speaks evil words about the Holy Spirit, God will never forgive them. That person is eternally guilty of sin."

³⁰ Jesus told them this because they were saying, "An evil spirit is controlling him!"

³¹ Jesus' mother and younger siblings arrived. While they stood outside, they sent someone inside in order to call him outside. ³² A crowd was sitting around Jesus. One of them said to him, "Your mother and younger siblings are outside. They want to see you." ³³ Jesus asked them, "Who is my mother? Who are my siblings?" ³⁴ After he looked around at those who sat with him, he said, "Look here! You are my mother and my siblings. ³⁵ Those who do what God wants are my brother, my sister, or my mother!"

Chapter 4

¹ Another time Jesus began to teach people alongside the Sea of Galilee. As he was teaching, a very large crowd gathered around him. He got into a boat and pushed out onto the water. Then he sat down in the boat so that he could speak to the crowd better. At the same time, the

crowd was on the shore close to the water. ² Then he taught them many parables. While he was teaching them, he told them this: ³ "Listen to this: A man went out to his field to sow some seeds. ⁴ As he was scattering them over the soil, some of the seeds fell on the path. Then some birds came and ate those seeds. ⁵ Other seeds fell on ground where there was not much soil on top of the rock. Very soon the seeds sprouted because the sun warmed the moist soil quickly where it was not deep. ⁶ But after the sun shone on those young plants, they became scorched. Then they withered because they did not have deep roots. ⁷ As he sowed, other seeds fell on ground that contained roots of thorny plants. The seeds grew, but the thorny plants also grew up and crowded out the good plants. So the plants produced no grain. ⁸ But as he sowed, other seeds fell on good soil. As a result, they sprouted, they grew well, and then they produced plenty of grain. Some plants bore thirty times as much as the seed that the man had planted. Some bore sixty times as much. Some bore one hundred times as much." ⁹ Then Jesus said, "If you want to understand this, you should consider carefully what I have just said."

¹⁰ Later, when only the twelve disciples and other close followers were with him, they asked him about the parables. ¹¹ He said to them, "To you I will explain the message about how God reveals himself as king, but to the others I will speak in parables."

¹² When they see what I am doing, they will not learn.

When they hear what I say, they will not understand.

If they learned or understood,

they would be sorry that they had sinned and decide to stop sinning,

and God would forgive them."

¹³ He also said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand when I teach you other parables? ¹⁴ In the parable that I told you, the man who sows seeds represents someone who teaches God's message to others. ¹⁵ Some people are like the path where some of the seeds fell. When they hear God's message, Satan comes at once and causes them to forget what they have heard. ¹⁶ Some people are like the ground where the soil was not very deep over the rock. When they hear God's message, they immediately accept it with joy. ¹⁷ But, because the message does not grow deep, they believe it for only a short time. They are like the plants that did not have deep roots. When others treat them badly or cause them to suffer because they believed God's message, those people who are suffering soon stop believing God's message. ¹⁸ Some people are like the soil that has thorny weeds in it. Those people hear God's message, ¹⁹ but they desire to be rich and they want to own many other things. So they only worry about what they have and they forget God's message and they do not do the things that God wants them to do. ²⁰ But some people are like the good soil. They hear God's message and they accept it and they believe it, and they do the things that God wants them to do. They are like the good plants that produced thirty, sixty, or one hundred grains."

²¹ He told them another parable: "People certainly do not light an oil lamp and then bring it in the house in order to put something over it to cover its light. Instead, they put it on a lampstand so that the light will shine. ²² Similarly, things that were hidden—one day everyone will know them, and the things that have happened in secret—one day everyone will

see them in full light. ²³ If you want to understand this, you should consider carefully what you have just heard.”

²⁴ “Consider carefully what you hear me say to you. For whatever size container you use, it will be filled for you. ²⁵ For if person has some understanding, he will receive even more. But if a person does not have understanding, even what little he has, he will lose.”

²⁶ Jesus also said, “When God begins to show himself as king, it is like a man who has scattered seed on the ground. ²⁷ Afterwards he slept each night and rose up each day without worrying about the seeds. During that time the seeds sprouted and grew in a way that he did not understand. ²⁸ The ground produced the crop on its own. First the stalks appeared. Then the heads appeared. Then the full kernels in the heads appeared. ²⁹ As soon as the grain was ripe he sent people to harvest it because it was time to harvest the grain.”

³⁰ Jesus told them another parable. He said, “When God begins to show himself as king, what is it like? What parable can I use to describe it? ³¹ It is like mustard seeds. You know what happens to mustard seeds when we plant them. Though mustard seeds are among the smallest of seeds, they become large plants. ³² After they are planted, they grow up and become larger than the other garden plants. They put out big branches so that birds are able to make nests in their shade.”

³³ Jesus used many parables when he talked to the people about God message. If they were able to understand some, he kept telling them more. ³⁴ He always used parables when he spoke to them. But he explained all the parables to his own disciples when he was alone with them.

³⁵ On that same day, when the sun was

setting, Jesus said to his disciples, “Let us cross over to the other side of the lake.”

³⁶ Jesus was already in the boat, so they left the crowd of people and sailed away. Other people also went along with them in their boats. ³⁷ A strong wind came up and the waves started coming into the boat! The boat was soon nearly full of water! ³⁸ Jesus was in the back part of the boat. He was sleeping with his head on a cushion. So they woke him up and said to him, “Teacher! Are you not concerned that we are about to die?” ³⁹ So Jesus got up and rebuked the wind and he spoke to the sea, “Be quiet! Be still!” The wind stopped blowing and then the sea became very calm. ⁴⁰ He said to the disciples, “Why are you afraid? Do you not yet have faith?” ⁴¹ They were terrified. They said to one another, “Who is this man? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

Chapter 5

¹ Jesus and his disciples arrived on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. People called the Gerasenes lived near the place where they landed. ² When Jesus stepped out of the boat, a man came out from the tombs in a cemetery. Evil spirits controlled the man. ³ The man was coming out of the cemetery because he lived in tombs. The people knew him and at times they tried to restrain him. They could not restrain him, not even with chains. ⁴ Whenever they used chains and shackles, the man would break them apart. He was so strong that no one was able to subdue him. ⁵ Day and night the man would spend his time in the cemetery. He would scream out loud and cut himself with sharp stones. ⁶ When he saw Jesus in the distance getting out of the boat, he ran over to him and knelt before him. ⁷⁻⁸ Jesus had been saying to the evil spirit, “You

evil spirit, come out of this man!" But the demon did not leave quickly. It shouted very loudly, "Jesus, I know that you are the Son of God, so we have nothing in common. Leave me alone! In God's name, I beg you. Do not torture me!" ⁹ Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion because there are many of us evil spirits in this man." ¹⁰ Then the evil spirits kept asking Jesus fervently that he not send them out of the region. ¹¹ At the same time, a large herd of pigs was grazing nearby on the hillside. ¹² So the evil spirits pleaded with Jesus, "Allow us to go to the pigs in order that we might enter them!" ¹³ Jesus permitted them to do that. So the evil spirits left the man and entered the pigs. The herd, which numbered about two thousand, rushed down the steep hill into the lake, where they drowned.

¹⁴ The men who were tending the pigs ran and reported in the town and the countryside what had happened. Many people went to see for themselves what had happened. ¹⁵ They came to the place where Jesus was. Then they saw the man whom evil spirits had previously controlled. He was sitting there with clothes on and mentally sound. They were afraid when they saw all this. ¹⁶ The people who had seen the events told those who had come from the town and from the countryside about what had happened to the man whom the evil spirits previously controlled. They also described what had happened to the pigs. ¹⁷ Then the people pleaded with Jesus to leave their region.

¹⁸ As Jesus got in the boat to leave, the man whom the evil spirits previously controlled begged Jesus, "Please let me go with you!" ¹⁹ But Jesus did not let him go with him. Instead, he said to him, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and tell

them how he has been so kind to you." ²⁰ So the man went and traveled around the Ten Towns in that district. He told people how much Jesus had done for him. All the people who heard what the man said were amazed.

²¹ Once more Jesus crossed over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee in a boat. When he arrived, a large crowd gathered around Jesus while he was standing on the shore. ²² One of the men who presided over a synagogue, whose name was Jairus, came there. When he saw Jesus, he knelt at his feet. ²³ Then he pleaded with Jesus earnestly, "My daughter is sick and nearly dead! Please come to my house and place your hands on her. Heal her and make her live!" ²⁴ So Jesus and the disciples went with him. A large crowd followed and many pushed in close to Jesus. ²⁵ There was a woman in the crowd who had a bleeding disorder. She had been bleeding every day for twelve years. ²⁶ She had suffered much over the years while doctors treated her. She had spent all her money to pay the doctors and after all they did to her, she got worse instead of better. ²⁷ When she heard that Jesus healed people, she came to where he was and pushed in the crowd close behind Jesus. ²⁸ She was thinking, "If I touch him or even if I touch his clothes, it will heal me." So she touched Jesus' clothes. ²⁹ At once her bleeding stopped. At the same time, she sensed within herself that she had been cured of her illness. ³⁰ Jesus also immediately sensed within himself that his power had healed someone. So he turned around in the crowd and then he asked, "Who touched my clothes?" ³¹ His disciples replied, "You can see that many people are crowding close to you! Probably many people touched you! So why do you ask, 'Who touched me?'" ³² But Jesus kept looking around in order to see the one who had done it. ³³ The woman was

very afraid and trembling. She knelt before him and told him what she had done.

³⁴ He said to her, "Daughter, because you have believed that I could heal you, I have now healed you. You may go home with peace in your heart, because I promise that you will not be sick with this disease anymore."

³⁵ While Jesus was still speaking to that woman, some people arrived who had come from Jairus' house. They said to Jairus, "Your daughter has now died. So there is no need to bother the teacher any longer, to bring him to your house!" ³⁶ But when Jesus heard what these men said, he said to Jairus, "Do not think that the situation is hopeless! Just keep believing that she will live!" ³⁷⁻³⁸ Then he allowed only his three closest disciples, Peter, James, and John, to go with him to Jairus' house. He did not allow any other people to go with him. After they arrived near the house, Jesus saw that the people there were grieving. Some were weeping and others were wailing. ³⁹ He entered the house and then he said to them, "Why are you so upset and crying? The child is not dead, but only sleeping." ⁴⁰ The people laughed at him, because they knew that she was dead. He sent all the other people outside the house. Then he took the child's father and mother and the three disciples who were with him. He went into the room where the child was lying. ⁴¹ He took hold of the child's hand and said to her in her own language, "Talitha koum!" That means, "Little girl, get up!" ⁴² At once the girl got up and walked around. (It was not surprising that she could walk, because she was twelve years old.) When this happened, all who were present were greatly amazed. ⁴³ Jesus ordered them strictly, "Do not tell anyone about what I have done!" Then he told them to give the girl something to eat.

Chapter 6

¹ Jesus left Capernaum and went to his hometown, Nazareth. His disciples went with him. ² On the Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and taught the people. Many who were listening to him were amazed. They wondered where he gained all his wisdom and the power to perform miracles. ³ They said, "He is just an ordinary carpenter! We know him and his family! We know Mary his mother! We know his younger brothers James, Joses, Judas and Simon! And his younger sisters also live here with us!" So they resented him. ⁴ Jesus said to them, "It is certainly true that people honor me and other prophets in other places, but not in our hometowns! Even our relatives and the people who live in our own houses do not honor us!"

⁵ So, although he healed a few sick people there, he was not able to perform any other miracle. ⁶ He was amazed by their unbelief, but he went through their villages and taught them.

⁷ One day he called the twelve disciples together, and then he told them that he was going to send them out two by two to teach people in various towns. He gave them power to force evil spirits out from people. ⁸⁻⁹ He also instructed them to wear sandals and to take along a walking stick when they were traveling. He told them not to take food, nor a bag in which to put supplies, nor any money for their journey. He also did not allow them to take an extra tunic. ¹⁰ He also instructed them, "After you enter a town, if someone invites you to stay in his house, go into his house. Eat and sleep in that same home until you leave that town. ¹¹ Wherever the people do not welcome you and wherever the people do not listen to you, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that place. By doing that, you will be testifying

that they did not welcome you.”¹² So after the disciples went out to various towns, they were preaching that people should be sorry that they have sinned, and decide to stop it, so that God may forgive them.¹³ They were also forcing many evil spirits out from people, and they were anointing many sick people with olive oil and healing them.

¹⁴ Now King Herod Antipas heard about what Jesus was doing, because many people were talking about it. Some people were saying about Jesus, “He must be John the Baptizer! He has risen from the dead! That is why he has God’s power to perform these miracles!”¹⁵ Others were saying about Jesus, “He is the ancient prophet Elijah, whom God promised to send back again.” Others were saying about Jesus, “No, he is a different prophet, like one of the other prophets who lived long ago.”

¹⁶ Having heard what the people were saying, King Herod Antipas himself said, “The man performing those miracles must be John! I commanded my soldiers to cut off his head, but he has become alive again!”¹⁷ What happened was this—some time before, Herod had taken and married Herodias, although she was the wife of his brother, Philip.¹⁸ After that,

John kept telling Herod, “God’s law does not permit you to marry the wife of your brother while he is still alive.” Then, because Herodias urged him to put John in prison, Herod himself sent soldiers to John. They arrested John and put him in prison.¹⁹ But because Herodias wanted to get further revenge on John, she wanted someone to execute him. But she could not do that because while John was in prison, Herod kept John safe from her.²⁰ Herod did this because he respected John, because he knew that he was a righteous man who devoted himself to God. Whenever Herod listened to him, he became very disturbed and did not know what he

should do with him, but he liked to listen to him.²¹ But Herodias was able to eventually have someone execute John. One day when they honored Herod on his birthday, he invited the most important government officials, the most important army leaders, and the most important men in the district of Galilee to eat and celebrate with him.²² While they were eating, Herodias’ daughter came into the room and danced for the king and his guests. She pleased King Herod and his guests so much that he said to her, “Ask me for whatever you wish and I will give it to you!”²³ He also said to her, “Whatever you ask, I will give it to you! I will give you up to half of what I own and rule, if you ask for it.”²⁴ The girl left the room and went to her mother. She told her what the king had said, and asked her, “What should I ask for?” Her mother replied, “Ask the king to give you the head of John the Baptizer!”²⁵ The girl quickly entered the room again. She went to the king and she said, “I want you to command someone to cut off the head of John the Baptizer and bring it to me at once on a platter!”²⁶ The king became very distressed when he heard what she asked for because he knew John was a very righteous man. But he could not refuse what she requested because he had promised that he would give her anything she asked for, and his guests had heard him promise.²⁷ So the king at once ordered someone to go and cut off John’s head and bring it to the girl. That man went to the prison and cut off John’s head.²⁸ He put it on a platter, brought it back, and gave it to the girl. The girl took it to her mother.²⁹ After John’s disciples heard what happened, they went to the prison and took John’s body; then they buried it.

³⁰ The twelve apostles returned to Jesus from the places to which they had gone. They reported to him what they had done

and what they had taught to people. ³¹ He said to them, "Come with me to a place where no people are living, in order that we can be alone and rest a little while!" He said this because many people were continually coming to them and going away again, with the result that Jesus and his disciples did not have time to eat or do anything else. ³² So they went away by themselves in a boat to a place where no people were living. ³³ But many people saw them leaving. They also recognized that they were Jesus and the disciples, and they saw where they were going. So they ran ahead on land from all the nearby towns to the place where Jesus and his disciples were going. They actually arrived there before Jesus and the disciples. ³⁴ As Jesus and his disciples got out of the boat, Jesus saw this great crowd. He felt compassion for them because they were confused, like sheep that do not have a shepherd. So he taught them many things.

³⁵ Late in the afternoon the disciples came to him and said, "This is a place where no one lives, and it is very late. ³⁶ So send the people away in order that they may go to the surrounding places where people live and to villages in order that they can buy for themselves something to eat!" ³⁷ But he replied to them, "No, you yourselves give them something to eat!" They replied to him, "We could not buy enough bread to feed this crowd, even if we had as much money as a man earns by working 200 days! ³⁸ But he replied to them, "How many loaves of bread do you have? Go and find out!" They went and found out and then they told him, "We have only five flat loaves and two cooked fish!" ³⁹ He instructed the disciples to tell all the people to sit down on the green grass. ⁴⁰ So the people sat in groups. There were fifty people in some groups and one hundred people in other groups. ⁴¹ Jesus took the five flat loaves and the two fish. He looked

up toward heaven and thanked God for them. Then he broke the loaves and fish into pieces and kept giving them to the disciples in order that they would distribute them to the people. ⁴² Everyone ate this food until they all had enough to eat! ⁴³ The disciples then collected twelve baskets full of pieces of bread and of the fish that were left over. ⁴⁴ There were about five thousand men who ate the bread and fish. They did not even count the women and children.

⁴⁵ Right away Jesus told his disciples to get into the boat and then go ahead of him to Bethsaida, which was further around the Sea of Galilee. He stayed and dismissed the many people who were there. ⁴⁶ After he said goodbye to the people, he went up into the hills in order to pray. ⁴⁷ When it was evening, the disciples' boat was in the middle of the lake, and Jesus was by himself on the land. ⁴⁸ He saw that the wind was blowing against them as they rowed. As a result, they were having great difficulty. He approached them early in the morning, when it was still dark, by walking on the water. He intended to walk by them. ⁴⁹ They saw him walking on the water, but they thought that he was a ghost. They screamed ⁵⁰ because they all were terrified when they saw him. But he spoke to them. He said to them, "Be calm! Do not be afraid, because it is I!" ⁵¹ He got into the boat and sat down with them and the wind stopped blowing. They were completely amazed about what he had done. ⁵² Although they had seen Jesus multiply the bread and the fish, they did not understand how powerful he was, as they should have.

⁵³ After they went further around the Sea of Galilee in a boat, they came to shore at Gennesaret. Then they fastened the boat there. ⁵⁴ As soon as they got out of the boat, the people there recognized Je-

sus. ⁵⁵ So they ran throughout the whole district in order to tell others that Jesus was there. Then the people placed those who were sick on stretchers and carried them to any place where they heard people say that Jesus was. ⁵⁶ In whatever village, town or place in the countryside where he went, they would bring to the marketplaces those who were sick. Then the sick people would beg Jesus to let them touch him or even the edge of his clothes in order that Jesus might heal them. All those who touched him or his robe were healed.

Chapter 7

¹ One day some Pharisees and some men who teach the Jewish laws who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus. ² The Pharisees saw that the disciples often ate without washing their hands first. ³⁻⁴ They and all of the other Jews strictly observe their traditions that their ancestors taught. Specifically, they wash in a special way their cups, pots, kettles, containers, and beds in order that using these things will not make God reject them. For example, they refuse to eat until they first wash their hands with a special ritual, especially after they return from buying things in the marketplace. There are many other such traditions that they accept and try to obey.

⁵ That day, those Pharisees and men who taught the Jewish laws saw that some of his disciples were eating food with hands that they had not washed using the special ritual. So they questioned Jesus and said, "Your disciples disobey the traditions of our elders! Why do they eat food if they have not washed their hands using our ritual!" ⁶ Jesus said to them, "Isaiah rebuked your ancestors, and his words de-

scribe very well you people who only pretend to be good! He wrote these words that God said:

'These people speak as if they honor me, but they really do not think about honoring me at all.

⁷ It is useless for them to worship me, because they teach only what people say as if I myself had commanded them.'

⁸ You, like your ancestors, refuse to do what God has commanded. Instead, you follow only the traditions that others have taught." ⁹ Jesus also said to them, "You think that you are clever in refusing to do what God commanded just so that you can obey your own traditions! ¹⁰ For example, our ancestor Moses wrote God's command, 'Honor your fathers and your mothers'. He also wrote, 'The authorities must execute a person who speaks evil about his father or mother.' ¹¹⁻¹² But you teach people that it is all right if people no longer help their parents. You teach people that it is all right if they say they will give what they own to God instead of to their parents. You allow them to say to their parents, 'What I was going to give to you to provide for you, I have now promised to give to God. So I cannot any longer help you!' As a result, you are actually telling people that they no longer have to help their parents! ¹³ In this way you disregard what God commanded! You teach your own things to others and tell them that they should obey them! And you do many other things like that."

¹⁴ Then Jesus again called the crowd to come closer. Then he said to them, "All of you people listen to me! Try to understand what I am about to tell you. ¹⁵ Nothing that people eat causes God to consider them to be defiled. On the contrary, it is

that which comes from people's inner beings that causes God to consider them to be defiled." ¹⁶[1]

¹⁷ After Jesus had left the crowd, he entered a house with the disciples. They questioned him about the parable that he had just spoken. ¹⁸ He replied to them, "Did you not understand what it means? You ought to understand that nothing that enters us from outside can cause God to consider us defiled. ¹⁹ Instead of entering and ruining our minds, it goes into our stomachs, and afterwards the refuse passes out of our bodies." By saying this, Jesus was declaring that people can eat any food without causing God to consider them defiled. ²⁰ He also said, "It is the thoughts and actions that come from within people that cause God to consider them defiled. ²¹ Specifically, it is people's innermost being that causes them to think things that are evil; they act immorally, they steal things, they commit murder. ²² They commit adultery, they are greedy, they act maliciously, they deceive people. They act indecently, they envy people, they speak evil about others, they are proud, and they act foolishly. ²³ People think these thoughts and then they do these evil actions, and that is what causes God to consider them defiled."

²⁴ After Jesus and his disciples left Galilee, they went to the region around the cities of Tyre and Sidon. While he stayed at a certain house, he did not want anyone to know it, but people soon found out that he was there. ²⁵ A certain woman, whose daughter had an evil spirit within her, heard about Jesus. At once she came to him and knelt at his feet. ²⁶ Now this woman was not a Jew. Her ancestors were not Jews. She herself had been born in the area around the region of Phoenicia, in the district of Syria. She pled with Jesus that he force the evil spirit out from her

daughter. ²⁷ He said to the woman, "First let the children eat all they want, because it is not good for someone to take the food the mother has prepared for the children and then throw it to the little dogs." ²⁸ She replied to him, "Sir, what you say is correct, but even the house dogs, who lie under the table, eat the crumbs that the children drop." ²⁹ Jesus said to her, "Because of what you have said, go home. I have caused the evil spirit to leave your daughter." ³⁰ The woman returned to her house and saw that her child was lying quietly on the bed and that the evil spirit had left.

³¹ Jesus and his disciples left the region around Tyre and went north through Sidon, then toward the east through the area of the Ten Towns, and then south to the towns near the Sea of Galilee. ³² There, people brought to him a man who was deaf and could not talk. They begged Jesus to lay his hands on him in order to heal him. ³³ So Jesus took him away from the crowd in order that the two of them could be alone. Then he put one of his fingers into each of the man's ears. After he spat on his fingers, he touched the man's tongue with his fingers. ³⁴ Then he looked up toward heaven, he sighed and then in his own language he said to the man's ears, "Ephphatha," which means, "Be opened!" ³⁵ At once the man could hear plainly. He also began to speak clearly because what was causing him to be unable to speak was healed. ³⁶ Jesus told the people not to tell anyone what he had done. But, although he ordered them and others repeatedly not to tell anyone about it, they kept talking about it all the more. ³⁷ People who heard about it were utterly amazed and were saying, "Everything he has done is wonderful! Besides doing other amazing things, he enables deaf people to hear! And he enables those who cannot speak to speak!"

7:16 ^[1]The best ancient copies omit the phrase that appears as v. 16. *If any man has ears to hear, let him hear.*

Chapter 8

¹ During those days, a large crowd of people gathered again. After they had been there for two days, they had no food to eat. So Jesus called the disciples to come close to him, and then he said to them, ² "This is the third day that these people have been with me, and they have nothing left to eat, so now I am very concerned for them. ³ If I send them home while they are still hungry, some of them will faint on the way home. Some of them have come from far away." ⁴ The disciples knew that he was suggesting that they give the people something to eat, so one of them replied, "We cannot possibly find food to satisfy this crowd. No one lives in this place!" ⁵ Jesus asked them, "How many loaves of bread do you have?" They replied, "We have seven flat loaves." ⁶ Jesus commanded the crowd, "Sit down on the ground!" After they sat down, he took the seven loaves, thanked God for them, broke them into pieces, and gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. ⁷ They had also found that they had a few small fish. So after he thanked God for these, he told the disciples, "Distribute these also." After they distributed the fish to the crowd, ⁸ the people ate this food, and they had plenty to satisfy themselves. The disciples collected the pieces of food that were left over and filled seven large baskets. ⁹ The disciples estimated that there were about four thousand people who ate on that day. Then Jesus dismissed the crowd. ¹⁰ Immediately after that, he got into the boat along with his disciples, and they went

around the Sea of Galilee to the district of Dalmanutha.

¹¹ Then some Pharisees came to Jesus. They began arguing with him and insisting that he perform a miracle to show that God had sent him. ¹² Jesus sighed deeply within himself, and then he said, "Why are you asking me to perform a miracle? I will not do a miracle for you!" ¹³ Then he left them. He got into the boat again, along with his disciples, and they went further around the Sea of Galilee. ¹⁴ The disciples had forgotten to bring along enough food. Specifically, they had only one flat loaf of bread with them in the boat. ¹⁵ As they were going, Jesus warned them and said, "Be careful! Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod!" ¹⁶ The disciples misunderstood him. So they said to one another, "He must have said that because we have no bread." ¹⁷ Jesus knew what they were discussing among themselves. So he said to them, "Why are you talking about not having enough bread? You should understand what I have said by now! You are not thinking!" ¹⁸ You have eyes, but you do not understand what you see! You have ears, but you do not understand what I say!" Then he asked, "Do you not remember what happened ¹⁹ when I broke only five loaves and fed the five thousand people? Not only was everyone satisfied, but there was food left over! How many baskets of pieces of bread that were left over did you collect?" They replied, "We collected twelve baskets full." ²⁰ Then he asked, "When I broke the seven loaves in order to feed the four thousand people, again when everyone had plenty to eat, how many large baskets of pieces of bread that were left over did you collect?" They replied, "We collected seven large baskets full." ²¹ Then he said to them, "Do you not understand?"

²² They arrived in the boat at Bethsaida.

People brought to Jesus a blind man and begged him touch the man in order to heal him. ²³ Jesus took the hand of the blind man and led him outside the town. Then he spat into the man's eyes, he put his hands on the man and then asked him, "Do you see anything?" ²⁴ The man looked up and then he said, "Yes, I see people! They are walking around, but I cannot see them clearly. They look like trees!" ²⁵ Then Jesus again touched the eyes of the blind man. The man looked intently, and at that moment he was completely healed! He could see everything clearly. ²⁶ Jesus said to him, "Do not go into the town!" Then he sent the man to his home.

²⁷ Jesus and the disciples left Bethsaida and went to the villages near Caesarea Philippi. On the way he questioned them, "Who do people say that I am?" ²⁸ They replied, "Some people say that you are John the Baptizer. Others say that you are the prophet Elijah. And others say that you are one of the other former prophets." ²⁹ He asked them, "What about you? Who do you say that I am?" Peter replied to him, "You are the Messiah!" ³⁰ Then Jesus warned them strongly that they should not tell anyone yet that he was the Messiah.

³¹ Then Jesus began to teach them that he, the Son of Man, would certainly suffer very much. He would be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the men who teach the Jewish laws. He would even be killed. But on the third day after he died, he would become alive again. ³² He said this to them clearly. But Peter took Jesus aside and started to scold him for talking this way. ³³ Jesus turned around and looked at his disciples. Then he rebuked Peter, saying, "Stop thinking like that! Satan is causing you to talk like that! Instead of wanting what God wants me to do, you are wanting me to do only what people

would want me to do."

³⁴ Then he called the crowd together along with his disciples so that they might listen to him. He told them, "If any one of you wants to be my disciple, you must not do only what makes you live easily. You must be willing to suffer pain like criminals who are forced to carry crosses to the places where they will be crucified. That is what anyone who wants to be my disciple must do. ³⁵ You must do that, because those who try to save their lives by denying that they belong to me will lose their lives. Those who are killed because they are my disciples and because they tell others the good news will live forever with me. ³⁶ People might get everything they want in this world, but they are really gaining nothing if they do not gain eternal life! ³⁷ Think carefully about the fact that there is absolutely nothing that people can give to God that would enable them to gain eternal life! ³⁸ And think about this: Those who refuse to say that they belong to me, and who reject what I say in these days when many people have turned away from God and are very sinful, I, the Son of Man, will also refuse to say that they belong to me when I come back with the holy angels and have the glory that my Father has!"

Chapter 9

¹ He also said to his disciples, "Listen carefully! Some of you who are here now will see God show himself with great power as king. You will see him do this before you die!"

² Six days later Jesus took Peter, James and James' brother John and led them up a high mountain. While they were alone up there, he appeared very different to them.

³ His clothes became dazzling white. They

were whiter than anyone on earth could make them by bleaching them. ⁴ Two prophets who had lived long ago, Moses and Elijah, appeared to them. Then the two of them began talking with Jesus. ⁵ After a short time, Peter said, "Teacher, it is wonderful to be here! So allow us to make three shelters. One will be for you, one will be for Moses, and one will be for Elijah!" ⁶ He said this because he wanted to say something, but he did not know what to say. He and the other two disciples were terrified. ⁷ Then a shining cloud appeared that covered them. God spoke to them from the cloud saying, "This is my Son. He is the one whom I love. Therefore, listen to him!" ⁸ When the three disciples looked around, they saw that suddenly Jesus was alone with them, and that there was no longer anyone else there.

⁹ While they were coming down the mountain, Jesus told them that they should not tell anyone yet what had just happened to him. He said, "You may tell them after I, the Son of Man, rise from the dead after I die." ¹⁰ So they did not tell others about it for a long time. But they discussed among themselves what it meant when he said that he would rise from the dead.

¹¹ They asked Jesus, "Why do the men who teach the our laws say that Elijah must come back to the earth before the Messiah comes to earth?" ¹²⁻¹³ Jesus answered them, "It is true that God promised to send Elijah to come first to put everything as it should be. But Elijah has already come, and our leaders treated him very badly, just like they wanted to do, as prophets long ago had said they would. But there is much written in the scriptures about me, the Son of Man. The scriptures say that I will suffer much and that people will reject me."

¹⁴ Then Jesus and those three disciples arrived where the other disciples were.

They saw a large crowd around the other disciples and some men who taught the Jewish laws arguing with them. ¹⁵ The crowd was very surprised to see him come. So they ran to him and greeted him. ¹⁶ He asked them, "What are you arguing about?" ¹⁷ A man in the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son here in order that you would heal him. There is an evil spirit in him that makes him unable to talk. ¹⁸ Whenever the spirit begins to control him, it throws him down. He foams at the mouth, he grinds his teeth together, and he becomes stiff. I asked your disciples to expel the spirit, but they were not able to do it." ¹⁹ Jesus replied by saying to those people, "You faithless people! You test my patience! Bring the boy to me." ²⁰ So they brought the boy to Jesus. As soon as the evil spirit saw Jesus, it shook the boy severely, and the boy fell on the ground. He rolled around and foamed at the mouth. ²¹ Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" He replied, "This started to happen when he was a child. ²² The spirit does not only do this, but he also often throws him into the fire or into the water in order to kill him. Pity us and help us, if you can!" ²³ Jesus exclaimed to him, "Of course I can! God can do anything for people who believe in him!" ²⁴ Immediately the child's father shouted, "I believe that you can help me, but I do not believe strongly. Help me to believe more strongly!" ²⁵ Jesus saw that the crowd was growing. He rebuked the evil spirit: "You evil spirit, you who are causing this boy to be deaf and unable to talk! I command you to come out of him and never enter him again!" ²⁶ The evil spirit shouted and shook the boy violently; then it left the boy. The boy did not move. He seemed like a dead body. So most of the people there said, "He is dead!" ²⁷ However, Jesus took him by the hand and helped him get up. Then the boy stood up.

²⁸ Later, when Jesus and his disciples were alone in a house, they asked him, "Why were we not able to force the evil spirit out?" ²⁹ He said to them, "You can force this kind of evil spirit out only by prayer. There is no other way."

³⁰ After Jesus and his disciples left that region, they traveled through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone else to know where he was. ³¹ He wanted to have time to teach his disciples. He was telling them, "Some day my enemies will arrest me, the Son of Man, and I will be put into the hands of other men. Those men will kill me. But on the third day after I die, I will become alive again!" ³² They did not understand what he was telling them, and they were afraid to ask him what he meant.

³³ Then Jesus and his disciples returned to Capernaum. When they were in the house, he asked them, "What were you talking about while we were traveling on the road?" ³⁴ But they did not reply. They had been arguing with each other about which one of them was the most important. ³⁵ He sat down, he called the twelve disciples to come close to him and then said to them, "If anyone wants God to consider him to be the most important person of all, he must consider himself to be the least important person of all, and he must serve everyone else." ³⁶ Then he took a child and placed him among them. He took the child in his arms and then he said to them, ³⁷ "Those who welcome a child like this one because they love me, God considers that they are welcoming me. It is also true that they are also welcoming God, who sent me."

³⁸ John said to Jesus, "Teacher, we saw someone who was forcing evil spirits out of people. He claimed that he had authority from you to do that. So we told him to stop doing it because he was not one of the disciples." ³⁹ Jesus said, "Do not tell

him to stop doing that. For no one will say bad things about me soon after performing a mighty deed with my authority. ⁴⁰ Those who are not opposing us are trying to achieve the same goals that we are. ⁴¹ God will certainly reward those who help you in any way, even if they simply give you a cup of water to drink because you follow me, the Messiah!"

⁴² Jesus also said, "But if you cause someone who believes in me to sin, God will severely punish you, even if that person is socially unimportant like this little child. If someone tied a heavy stone around your neck and threw you into the sea, it would be better for you than if God punished you for causing a person who believes in me to sin. ⁴³ So if you are wanting to use one of your hands to sin, do not use it! Even if you have to cut your hand off and throw it away to avoid sinning, do it! It is good that you live eternally, even though you lack one of your hands while you are here on earth. But it is not good that you sin and as a result God throws your whole body into hell. ⁴⁴[1] ⁴⁵ If you are wanting to use one of your feet to sin, do not use it! Even if you have to cut off your foot to avoid sinning, do it! It is good that you live eternally, even though you lack one of your feet while you are here on earth. But it is not good that you sin and as a result for God to throw your whole body into hell. ⁴⁶[2] ⁴⁷ If because of what you see you are tempted to sin, stop looking at those things! Even if you have to gouge out your eye and throw it away to avoid sinning, do it! It is better to have only one eye and for God to agree to rule over you, than him to throw you with two eyes into hell. ⁴⁸ In that place worms feed on the people there forever and the fires are never put out."

⁴⁹ "For God will put fire on everyone, just like people put salt on their food. ⁵⁰ Salt is

useful to put on food, but you cannot make it taste salty again if it becomes flavorless. We are to be like salt that adds flavor to food. And live in peace with one another.”

9:44 ^[1]The best ancient copies omit this phrase from verses 44 and 46, *where worms never stop feeding on them, and the fire that burns them never goes out*

9:46 ^[2]The best ancient copies do not have verse 46

Chapter 10

¹ Jesus left that place with his disciples, and they went through the district of Judea and on across to the east side of the Jordan River. When crowds of people gathered around him again, he taught them again, as he customarily did. ² While he was teaching them, some Pharisees approached him and asked him, “Does our law permit a man to divorce his wife?” They asked that in order to be able to criticize him whether he answered “yes” or “no.” ³ He answered them, “What did Moses command your ancestors about this?” ⁴ One of them replied, “Moses permitted that a man may write out divorce papers so that he may send her away.” ⁵ Jesus said to them, “Your ancestors stubbornly wanted to be able to send their wives away. That is why Moses wrote that law. ⁶ But when God first created people, it says, ‘God made them male and female.’ ⁷ That explains why God said, ‘When a man marries, he must leave his parents and join with his wife. ⁸ They will become like one person. They will no longer be like two people, but like one.’ ⁹ Because that is true, a man must not separate from his wife. God has joined them together and he wishes them to stay together!”

¹⁰ When Jesus and his disciples were alone in a house, they asked him again about this. ¹¹ He said to them, “God considers that any man who divorces his wife and marries another woman is committing adultery. ¹² God also considers a woman who divorces her husband and marries another man to be committing adultery.”

¹³ Now people were bringing children to Jesus so that he would touch and bless them. But the disciples scolded those people. ¹⁴ When Jesus saw that, he became angry. He said to the disciples, “Allow the children to come to me! Do not forbid them! It is people who have qualities like children over whom God will agree to rule. ¹⁵ Note this: Those who do not welcome God as their king in the same manner as children would, God will certainly not agree to rule over them.” ¹⁶ Then he embraced the children. He also put his hands on them and called on God to do good to them.

¹⁷ As Jesus was starting to travel again with his disciples, a man ran up to him. He knelt before Jesus and asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to have eternal life?” ¹⁸ Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? Only God is good! ¹⁹ But to answer your question, you know the commandments of Moses: ‘Do not murder anyone, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not testify falsely, do not cheat anyone, and honor your father and mother.’” ²⁰ The man said to him, “Teacher, I have obeyed all those commandments ever since I was young.” ²¹ Jesus looked at him and loved him. He said to him, “There is one thing that you have not yet done. You must go home, sell all that you possess, and then give the money to poor people. As a result, you will have riches in heaven. After you have done what I have told you, come and

follow me!" ²² The man became disappointed when he heard Jesus' instructions. He went away sad, because he was very rich. ²³ Jesus looked around at the people. Then he exclaimed to his disciples, "It is very difficult for people who are wealthy to agree for God to rule over them." ²⁴ The disciples were confused by what he said. Jesus said again, "My dear friends, it is very difficult for anyone to agree for God to rule over them. ²⁵ In fact, it would be easier for a very large animal like a camel to enter through the eye of a needle than for rich people to accept God to rule over them." ²⁶ The disciples were very astonished. So they said to each other, "If that is so, then no one will be saved!" ²⁷ Jesus looked at them and then he said, "Yes, it is impossible for people to save themselves! But God certainly can save them, because God can do anything!" ²⁸ Peter said, "Look, we have left behind everything and followed you." ²⁹ Jesus replied, "I want you to know this: Those who have left their houses, their brothers, their sisters, their father, their mother, their children, or their plots of ground for me and for the good news, ³⁰ they will receive in this life a hundred times as much as they left behind. That will include houses and people as dear as brothers and sisters and mothers and children, and plots of ground. Furthermore, although people will persecute them here on earth because they believe in me, in the future age they will have eternal life. ³¹ But I warn you all: Many who now consider themselves to be very important will be unimportant at that future time, and many who now consider themselves to be unimportant will be very important at that future time!"

³² Some days later as they continued to travel, Jesus and his disciples were walking on the road that leads up to Jerusalem. Jesus was walking ahead of them. The disciples were astonished and the other

people who were with them were afraid. Along the way he took the twelve disciples to a place by themselves. Then he began to tell them again about what was going to happen to him; he said, ³³ "Listen carefully! We are going up to Jerusalem. There the chief priests and the men who teach the laws will arrest me, the Son of Man. They will declare that I must die. Then they will take me to the Roman authorities. ³⁴ Their men will ridicule me and spit on me. They will whip me, and then they will kill me. But on the third day after that, I will become alive again!"

³⁵ Along the way, James and John, who were the two sons of Zebedee, approached Jesus and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do something for us!" ³⁶ He said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" ³⁷ They said to him, "When you rule in your kingdom, let one of us sit at your right side and one sit at your left side." ³⁸ But Jesus said to them, "You do not understand what you are asking for." Then he asked them, "Can you endure suffering like I am about to suffer? Can you die the kind of death I am about to die?" ³⁹ They said to him, "Yes, we are able to do that!" Then Jesus said to them, "It is true that you will endure suffering like I will suffer, and you will endure others to kill you as they will kill me. ⁴⁰ But I am not the one who chooses who will sit next to me. God will give those places to the ones whom he chooses in advance."

⁴¹ The other ten disciples later heard about what James and John had requested. So they said they were unhappy with the two disciples. ⁴² Then Jesus called them all together and said, "You know that kings and others who rule over people enjoy showing that they are powerful. You also know that their officials enjoy commanding others. ⁴³ But do not be like them! On the contrary, all those among you who

want God to consider them great must become like servants to the rest of you. ⁴⁴ Furthermore, if anyone among you wants God to consider him to be the most important, he must act like a slave for the rest of you. ⁴⁵ I, the Son of Man, did not come to be served. On the contrary, I came to serve others and to free many people by giving my life for them.”

⁴⁶ On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus and the disciples came to Jericho. Then, while they were leaving Jericho along with a great crowd, a blind man who habitually begged for money was sitting beside the road. His name was Bartimaeus, and his father’s name was Timaeus. ⁴⁷ When he heard people say that Jesus from Nazareth was passing by, he shouted, “Jesus! You who are the Messiah descended from King David, be merciful to me!” ⁴⁸ Many people scolded him and told him that he should be quiet. But he shouted even more, “You who are the Messiah descended from King David, be merciful to me!” ⁴⁹ Jesus stopped and said, “Call him to come over here!” They called the blind man, saying, “Jesus is calling you! So cheer up and get up and come!” ⁵⁰ He threw aside his cloak as he jumped up, and he came to Jesus. ⁵¹ Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man said to him, “Teacher, I want to be able to see again!” ⁵² Jesus said to him, “I am healing you because you believed in me. So you may go!” He could see immediately. And he went with Jesus along the road.

Chapter 11

¹ When Jesus and his disciples came near to Jerusalem, they came to Bethphage and Bethany near the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus called two of his disciples ² and said to them, “Go to that village just ahead of

us. As soon as you enter it, you will see a young donkey tied up that no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it to me. ³ If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing that?’ say, ‘The Lord needs to use it. He will send it back here with someone as soon as he no longer needs it.’” ⁴ So the two disciples went and found a young donkey. It was tied close to the door of a house, which was beside the street. Then they untied it. ⁵ Some of the people who were there said to them, “Why are you untying that donkey?” ⁶ They told them what Jesus had said. So the people permitted them to take the donkey. ⁷ The two disciples brought the donkey to Jesus and put their cloaks on it to make something for him to sit on. ⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road in front of him. Others cut branches from palm trees in nearby fields and spread them along the road. ⁹ The people who were going in front of him and behind him were all shouting, “Praise God!” and “May God bless this one who comes with his authority.” ¹⁰ They also shouted, “May you be blessed when you rule like our ancestor King David ruled!” and “Praise God who is in the highest heaven!”

¹¹ Jesus entered Jerusalem with them, and then he went into the temple courtyard. After he looked around at everything there, he left the city because it was already late in the afternoon. He returned to Bethany with the twelve disciples.

¹² The next day, as Jesus and his disciples were leaving Bethany, he felt hungry. ¹³ He saw in the distance a fig tree with all its leaves, so he went to it to see if he could find any figs on it. But when he came to it, he found no fruit on it, because it was not yet the season for figs to appear. ¹⁴ He said to the tree, “No one will ever eat from you again.” And the disciples heard this.

¹⁵ Jesus and his disciples went back into

Jerusalem and entered the temple courtyard. He saw people who were selling and buying animals for sacrifices. He chased those people from the temple courtyard. He also overturned the tables of those who were selling temple tax money in exchange for Roman coins. And he overturned the seats of the men who were selling pigeons for sacrifice. ¹⁶ He would not allow anyone who was carrying anything to sell to go through the temple area. ¹⁷ Then as he taught those people, he said to them, "It is written in the scriptures that God said, 'I want my house to be a house where people from all nations can pray,' but you bandits have made it like a cave where robbers hide." ¹⁸ The chief priests and the men who taught the Jewish laws later heard about what he had done. They were planning how they might kill him, but they feared him because they realized that the crowd was amazed at what he was teaching. ¹⁹ Every evening Jesus and his disciples would leave the city.

²⁰ The next morning while they were going along the road toward Jerusalem, they saw that the fig tree that Jesus had cursed had withered completely. ²¹ Peter remembered what Jesus had said to the fig tree and he said to Jesus, "Teacher, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered!" ²² Jesus replied, "Trust in God! ²³ Also note this: If anyone says to this mountain, 'Be raised up and thrown into the sea!' and if he does not doubt that it will happen, that is, if he believes that it will happen, God will do it for him. ²⁴ So I tell you, whenever you ask God for something when you pray, believe that you will receive it, and, if you do, God will do it for you. ²⁵ Now, I tell you this also: Whenever you are praying, if you have a grudge against people because they have harmed you, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven will likewise forgive your sins." ²⁶^[1]

²⁷ Jesus and his disciples arrived in the temple courtyard in Jerusalem again. While Jesus was walking there, a group consisting of chief priests, some men who taught the Jewish laws, and elders came to him. ²⁸ They said to him, "By what authority are you doing these things? Who authorized you to do things like those you did here yesterday?" ²⁹ Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you who authorized me to do those things. ³⁰ Was it God who authorized John to baptize those who came to him? Or was it people who authorized him?" ³¹ They debated among themselves as to what they should answer. They said to each other, "If we say that it was God who authorized him, he will say to us, 'Then you should have believed what John said!' ³² On the other hand, if we say that it was people who authorized John, then what will happen to us?" They were afraid to say that about John, because they knew that the people would be very angry with them. They knew that all the people truly believed that John was a prophet whom God had sent. ³³ So they answered Jesus, "We do not know from whom John received his authority." Then Jesus said to them, "Because you did not answer my question, I will not tell you who authorized me to do those things here yesterday."

11:26 ^[1]Some ancient authorities include:*But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your sins.*

Chapter 12

¹ Then Jesus began to tell them a parable. He said, "A certain man planted a

vineyard. He built a fence around it. He made a stone tank to collect the grape juice. He also built a tower for someone to sit in to guard his vineyard. He leased the vineyard to some farmers to cultivate it, and then he went away to another country. ² When the time came to harvest the grapes, the owner of the vineyard sent a servant to the men who had taken a lease on his vineyard because he wanted to receive from them his share of the grapes that the vineyard had produced. ³ But when the servant arrived, they grabbed him and beat the servant, and they did not give him any fruit. Then they sent him away. ⁴ Later the owner sent another servant to them. But they beat that one on the head and they hurt him terribly, for which they should be ashamed. ⁵ Later the owner sent still another servant. That man the farmers killed. They also mistreated many other servants whom he sent. Some they beat and some they killed. ⁶ The owner still had one other person with him, his son, whom he loved very much. So he sent his son to them because he thought that they would respect him. ⁷ But when the farmers saw his son coming, they said to each other, 'Look! Here comes the owner's son, who will some day inherit the vineyard! So let us kill him in order that this vineyard will be ours!' ⁸ They seized the owner's son and killed him. Then they threw his body outside the vineyard. ⁹ So do you know what the owner of the vineyard will do? He will come and kill those evil men who had taken a lease on his vineyard. Then he will arrange for other people to take care of it. ¹⁰ Now think carefully about these words, which you have read in the scriptures:

"The men who were building the building refused to use a certain stone. But the Lord has put that same stone in its proper place, and it has become the most important stone in the building! ¹¹ The Lord has

done this, and we marvel as we look at it."

¹² Then the Jewish leaders realized that Jesus was accusing them when he told this story about what those wicked people did. So they wanted to arrest him. But they were afraid of what the crowds of people would do if they did that. So they left him and went away.

¹³ The Jewish leaders sent to Jesus some Pharisees and some members of the party that supported Herod Antipas. They wanted to trick Jesus; they wanted to make him say something wrong so they could show people that he taught wrong things so they could bring charges against him. ¹⁴ After they arrived, they said to him, "Teacher, we know that you teach the truth. We also know that you are not concerned about what people say about you, even if an important person does not like what you say. Instead, you teach truthfully what God wants us to do. So tell us what you think about this matter: Is it right that we pay taxes to the Roman government, or not? Should we pay the taxes, or should we not pay them?" ¹⁵ Jesus knew that they did not really want to know what God wanted them to do. So he said to them, "I know that you are just trying to make me say something wrong for which you can accuse me. But I will answer your question anyway. Bring me a coin so that I might look at it." ¹⁶ After they had brought him a coin, he asked them, "Whose picture is on this coin? And whose name is on it?" They replied, "It is a picture and the name of Caesar." ¹⁷ Jesus said to them, "That is correct, so give to Caesar what belongs to him, and give to God what belongs to him." They were completely amazed by what he said.

¹⁸ Men who belong to the group of Sadducees deny what other Jews believe, that people become alive again after they die. Some Sadducees came to Jesus and asked

him,¹⁹ "Teacher, Moses wrote for us Jews that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, his brother should marry the widow and raise up a descendant for his brother."²⁰ So here is an example. There were seven brothers in one family. The oldest one married a woman, but he and his wife did not bear any children. Then he later died.²¹ The second brother also married that woman, but he, too, did not bear any children. Then he later died. The third brother did like his other brothers did. But he also did not bear any children, and later died.²² Eventually all seven brothers married that woman one by one, but no one had any children, and one by one they died. Afterwards the woman died, too.²³ Now on the day when people will become alive again after they die, whose wife will that woman be? Keep in mind that she had been married to all seven brothers!"²⁴ Jesus replied to them, "You are certainly wrong. You do not know what the scriptures teach about this. You also do not understand God's power to make people alive again.²⁵ That woman will not be the wife of any of those brothers, because when people become alive again, instead of men having wives and women having husbands, they will be like the angels in heaven. Angels do not marry."²⁶ But let me talk about people becoming alive again after they die. In the book that Moses wrote, he wrote about people who have died; I am sure that you have read it. When Moses was looking at the bush that was burning, God said to him, 'I am the God whom Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob worship.'²⁷ Now it is not dead people who worship God. It is living people who worship him. So when you say that dead people do not become alive again, you are very wrong."

²⁸ A man who taught the Jewish laws heard their discussion. He knew that Je-

sus had answered the Sadducees' question very well. So he stepped forward and asked Jesus, "Which commandment is the most important?"²⁹ Jesus answered, "The most important commandment is this: 'Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord.'³⁰ You must love the Lord your God in all that you want and feel, in all that you think, and in all that you do!' "³¹ The next most important commandment is: 'You must love the people around you as much as you love yourself.' No other commandment is more important than these two!"³² The man said to Jesus, "Teacher, you have answered well. You correctly said that God is the only God and that there is no other God."³³ You have also said correctly that we should love God in all that we want and feel, in all that we think, and in all that we do. And you have said correctly that we must love people with whom we come in contact as much as we love ourselves. And you have also correctly said that doing these things pleases God more than offering animals to him or burning other sacrifices."³⁴ Jesus realized that this man had answered wisely. So he said to him, "You are close to the point where God will agree to rule over you." After that, the Jewish leaders were afraid to ask him any more questions like that to try to trick him.

³⁵ Later, while Jesus was teaching in the temple area, he said to the people, "How is it that those who teach the law say—and they are correct in saying—that the Messiah is the son of David?"³⁶ The Holy Spirit caused David to say about the Messiah, 'God said to my Lord, "Sit here beside me at my right hand, in the place where I will highly honor you above everyone else! Sit here while I completely defeat your enemies!"'³⁷ In this Psalm of David he refers to the Messiah as 'Lord.' But how—as the teachers of the law correctly say—can the Messiah also be the son of David?" Many

people listened to him gladly as he taught these things.

³⁸ While Jesus was teaching the people, he said to them, "Beware that you do not act like the men who teach our laws. They like people to honor them, so they put on long robes and walk around in order to show people how important they are. They also like people to greet them respectfully in the marketplaces. ³⁹ They like to sit in the most important seats in the synagogues. At festivals, they like to sit in the seats where the most honored people sit. ⁴⁰ They swindle the houses and property of widows by cheating them. Then they pretend that they are good by praying long prayers in public. God will certainly punish them severely!"

⁴¹ Later, Jesus sat down in the temple area opposite the boxes in which people put offerings. As he was sitting there, he watched as they put money in one of the boxes. Many rich people put in large amounts of money. ⁴² Then a poor widow came along and put in two small copper coins, which had a very small value. ⁴³⁻⁴⁴ Jesus gathered his disciples around him and said to them, "The truth is that those other people have a lot of money, but they gave only a small part of it. But this woman, who is very poor, has put in all the money that she had to pay for the things she needed for today. So this poor widow has put more money into the box than all the others!"

Chapter 13

¹ While Jesus was leaving the temple area, one of his disciples said to him, "Teacher, look at how marvelous these huge stones are and how wonderful these buildings are!" ² Jesus said to him, "Yes, these buildings that you are looking at are wonder-

ful, but I want to tell you something about them. They will be destroyed completely. No stone here in this temple area will remain on top of another stone."

³ After they arrived at the Mount of Olives across the valley from the temple, Jesus sat down. When Peter, James, John, and Andrew were alone with him, they asked him, ⁴ "Tell us, when will these things happen? What will happen to show us these things are about to take place?" ⁵ Jesus replied to them, "Beware that no one deceive you concerning what will happen! ⁶ Many people will come and say that I sent them. They will say, 'I am the Messiah!' They will deceive many people. ⁷ When you hear the sound of soldiers fighting battles, or when you hear news about wars that are far away, do not be troubled. These things will definitely happen. But when they do happen, do not think that God will finish all that he has planned at that time! ⁸ Groups who live in various countries will fight each other, and various kings and leaders will fight each other. There will also be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines. Yet, when these things happen, people will have only just begun to suffer. These first things that they suffer will be like the first pains a woman suffers who is about to bear a child. They will suffer much more after that.

⁹ Be ready for what people will do to you at that time. They will arrest you and put you on trial before groups of leaders. People will beat you in various synagogues. They will put you on trial in the presence of high government authorities. As a result, you will be able to tell them about me. ¹⁰ My followers must proclaim the good news to people in all nations before God finishes everything that he has planned. ¹¹ When people arrest you, do not worry about what you will say. In-

stead, say what God puts into your mind at that time. Then it will not be just you who will be speaking. It will be the Holy Spirit who will be speaking through you.

¹² Some brothers and sisters will betray other brothers and sisters. Some fathers will betray their children. Some children will betray their parents so that government officials will kill their parents. ¹³ Most people will hate you because you believe in me. But all you who continue to trust in me until your life is finished will be saved.

¹⁴ During that time the detestable thing will enter the temple. It will defile the temple and cause people to abandon it. When you see it where it should not be, you should run away quickly! (May everyone who is reading this pay attention to this warning!) At that time those people who are in the district of Judea should flee to higher hills. ¹⁵ Those people who are outside their houses should not enter their houses in order to get anything. ¹⁶ Those who are working in a field should not return to their houses in order to get additional clothes. ¹⁷ I feel very sorry for women who will be pregnant and women who will be nursing their babies in those days, because it will be very difficult for them to run away! ¹⁸⁻¹⁹ In those days people will suffer very severely. People have never suffered like that since the time when God first created the world until now; and people will not suffer that way again. So pray that this painful time will not happen in winter, when it will be hard to travel. ²⁰ If the Lord God had not decided that he would shorten that time when people suffer so much, everyone would die. But he has decided to shorten that time because he is concerned about the people whom he has chosen. ²¹⁻²² At that time people will falsely say that they are the Messiah. And some will appear claiming to be prophets from God. Then

they will perform many kinds of miracles. They will even try to deceive the people whom God has chosen. So at that time if someone says to you, 'Look, here is the Messiah!', or if someone says, 'Look, there he is!', do not believe it! ²³ Be alert! Remember that I have warned you about all this before it happens!

²⁴ After the time when people suffer like that, the sun will become dark, and the moon will not shine; ²⁵ the stars will fall from the sky, and all powerful things in the sky will be shaken out of their place. ²⁶ Then people will see me, the Son of Man, coming through the clouds powerfully and gloriously. ²⁷ Then I will send out my angels so they can gather together the people whom God has chosen from everywhere, from the most remote places on earth.

²⁸ Now I want you to learn something from how fig trees grow. When their branches become tender and their leaves begin to sprout, you know that summer is near for us. ²⁹ Similarly, when you see what I have just described happening, you yourselves will know that it is very near the time for me to return. It will be as though I am already at the door. ³⁰ Keep this in mind: this generation will not die until these things take place. ³¹ You can be certain that these things that I have prophesied will happen. The earth and what is in the sky will one day be destroyed, but these things that I have told you will certainly happen. ³² But no one knows the exact time when I will return. The angels in heaven also do not know. Even I, God's Son, do not know. Only my Father knows. ³³ So be ready! Always be alert, because you do not know when that time will come when all these events will happen! ³⁴ When a man who wants to travel to a distant place is about to leave his house, he tells his servants that they

should manage the house. He tells each one what he should do. Then he tells the doorkeeper to be ready for his return.³⁵ That man must always be ready, because he does not know whether his master will return in the evening, at midnight, when the rooster crows, or at dawn. Similarly, you also must always be ready, because you do not know when I will return.³⁶ May it not happen that when I come suddenly, I will find that you are not ready!³⁷ These words that I am saying to you disciples I am saying to everyone: Always be ready!"

Chapter 14

¹ It was only two days before the people would begin to celebrate the week-long festival that they called the Passover. During those days they also celebrated the festival which they called Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the men who taught the Jewish laws were planning how they could arrest Jesus secretly and put him to death.² But they were saying to one another, "We must not do it during the festival because if we do it then, the people will be very angry with us and riot!"

³ Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon, who was known as a leper. While they were eating, a woman came to him. She was carrying a stone jar that contained expensive, fragrant perfume called nard. She opened the jar and then poured all the perfume on Jesus' head.⁴ Some of the people who were present became angry and said to themselves, "It is terrible that she wasted that perfume!⁵ It could have been sold for almost a year's wages and then the money could have been given to poor people!" So they scolded her.⁶ But Jesus said, "Stop scolding her! She has done to me what I consider to be very

appropriate. So you should not bother her!"⁷ You will always have poor people among you. So you can help them whenever you want to. But I will not be here with you much longer.⁸ It is appropriate that she has done what she could do. It is as if she had known that I was going to die soon, because she has anointed my body ahead of time so that it is ready for burial.⁹ I will tell you this: Wherever my followers preach the good news throughout the world, they will also tell what she has done, and people will remember her."

¹⁰ Then Judas Iscariot went to the chief priests to talk about helping them to capture Jesus. He did that even though he was one of the twelve disciples.¹¹ When the chief priests heard what he was willing to do for them, they were very happy. They promised that they would give him a large amount of money in return. Judas agreed and began watching for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them.

¹² On the first day of the festival that they call Unleavened Bread, when they kill the lambs for the Passover, Jesus' disciples said to him, "Where do you want us to go and prepare the meal for the Passover Celebration so that we can eat it?"¹³ So Jesus chose two of his disciples to prepare everything. He said to them, "Go into Jerusalem. A man will meet you, who will be carrying a large jar full of water. Follow him.¹⁴ When he enters a house, say to the man who owns the house, 'Our teacher wants us to prepare the meal of the Passover Celebration so that he can eat it with us his disciples. Please show us the room.'¹⁵ He will show you a large room that is on the upper floor of the house. It will be furnished and ready for us to eat a meal in it. Then prepare the meal there for us."¹⁶ So the two disciples left. They went into the city and found everything to be just like he had told them. They prepared the

meal for the Passover Celebration there.
¹⁷ When it was evening, Jesus arrived at that house with the twelve disciples.

¹⁸ As they were all sitting there and eating, Jesus said, "Listen carefully to this: One of you will make it possible for my enemies to arrest me. It is one of you who is eating with me right now!" ¹⁹ The disciples became very sad and they said to him one by one, "Surely it is not I?" ²⁰ Then he said to them, "It is one of you twelve disciples, the one who is dipping bread into the sauce in the dish along with me. ²¹ It is certain that I, the Son of Man, will die, because that is what has been written about me. But there will be terrible punishment for the man who betrays me! In fact, he would have been better off if he had never been born!"

²² While they were eating, he took a flat loaf of bread and thanked God for it. Then he broke it into pieces and gave it to them and said to them, "This bread is my body. Take it and eat it." ²³ Afterwards, he took a cup that contained wine and thanked God for it. Then he gave it to them and they all drank. ²⁴ He said to them, "This wine is my blood, which is about to be shed when my enemies kill me. With this blood I will confirm the covenant that God has made to forgive the sins of many people. ²⁵ I want you to know this: I will not drink any more wine until the time when I drink it again when God shows himself as king." ²⁶ After they sang a hymn, they went out toward the Mount of Olives.

²⁷ While they were on their way, Jesus said to them, "They wrote in the scriptures that God said about me, 'I will kill the shepherd and scatter his sheep.' Those words will come true. You will leave me and run away. ²⁸ But after God makes me alive again, I will go ahead of you to the district of Galilee and meet you there." ²⁹ Then Peter said to him, "Perhaps all the other

disciples will leave you, but I will not! I will not leave you!" ³⁰ Then Jesus said to him, "The truth is that this very night, before the rooster crows two times, you will say about me three times, that you do not know me. ³¹ But Peter replied strongly, "Even if they kill me, I will not say that I do not know you." And all the other disciples said the same thing.

³² On the way, Jesus and the disciples came to the place that people call Gethsemane. Then he said to some of his disciples, "Stay here while I pray!" ³³ Then he took Peter, James, and John with him. He became extremely upset. ³⁴ He said to them, "I am very sorrowful. It is as if I were about to die. You men stay here and keep watch!" ³⁵ He went a bit farther and threw himself on the ground. Then he prayed that if it were possible, he would not have to suffer. ³⁶ He said, "O my Father, because you are able to do everything, rescue me so that I do not have to suffer now! But do not do what I want. Instead, do what you want!" ³⁷ Then he returned and found his disciples sleeping. He woke them up and said, "Simon! Are you sleeping? Were you not able to stay awake for just a short time?" ³⁸ And he said to them, "You want to do what I say, but you are weak. So keep awake and pray so that you can resist when you are tempted!" ³⁹ Then he went away again and prayed again what he prayed before. ⁴⁰ When he returned, he found that they were sleeping again; they were so sleepy that they could not keep their eyes open. Because they were ashamed, they did not know what to say to him when he awakened them. ⁴¹ Then he went and prayed again. He returned a third time and found them sleeping again. He said to them, "You are still asleep? No more of this! The time for me to suffer is about to begin. Look! Someone is about to enable sinful men to capture me, the Son of Man. ⁴² So get up! Let us go! Look!

Here comes the one who is enabling them to capture me!”

⁴³ While he was still speaking, Judas arrived. Even though he was one of Jesus’ twelve disciples, he came to enable Jesus’ enemies to capture him. A crowd who carried swords and clubs was with him. The leaders of the Jewish council had sent them. ⁴⁴ Judas, who was betraying Jesus, had previously told this crowd, “The man whom I kiss is the one whom you want. When I kiss him, seize him and lead him away.” ⁴⁵ So, when Judas arrived, he immediately went to Jesus and said, “My teacher!” Then he kissed Jesus. ⁴⁶ Then the crowd seized Jesus. ⁴⁷ But one of the disciples who was standing nearby drew his sword. He struck the servant of the high priest with it, but he only cut off his ear. ⁴⁸⁻⁴⁹ Jesus said to them, “It is ridiculous that you come here to seize me with swords and clubs, as if I were a robber! Day after day I was with you in the temple courtyard teaching the people! Why did you not arrest me then? But this is happening so that what the prophets have written in the scriptures about me may come true.”

⁵⁰ All the disciples at once left him and ran away. ⁵¹ At that time, a young man was following Jesus. He was wearing only a linen cloth around his body. The crowd seized him, ⁵² but, as he pulled away from them, he left behind the linen cloth in their hands, and then he ran away naked.

⁵³ The men who had seized Jesus led him away to the high priest’s house. All of the Jewish council were gathering there. ⁵⁴ Peter followed Jesus at a distance. He went into the courtyard of the house where the high priest lived, and he sat there with the men who guarded the house of the high priest. He was warming himself beside a fire. ⁵⁵ The chief priests and all the rest of the Jewish council were look-

ing for evidence against Jesus that would be strong enough to put him to death. But they did not find any evidence that would require the officials to put him to death. ⁵⁶ Many other people told lies about Jesus, but the statements they made did not agree with each other. And so, their statements were not strong enough to make a charge against Jesus. ⁵⁷ Finally, some stood up and accused him falsely by saying, ⁵⁸ “We heard him when he said, ‘I will destroy this temple that was built by men, and then within three days I will build another temple without help from anyone else.’” ⁵⁹ But what some of these men said also did not agree with what others of them said.

⁶⁰ Then the high priest himself stood up in front of them and said to Jesus, “Are you not going to reply? What do you say about all the things that they are saying in order to accuse you?” ⁶¹ But Jesus was silent and did not reply. Then the high priest tried again. He asked him, “Are you the Messiah? Do you say that you are the Son of God?” ⁶² Jesus said, “I am. Furthermore, you will see me, the Son of Man, ruling beside God, who is completely powerful. You will also see me coming down through the clouds in the sky!” ⁶³ When Jesus said this, the high priest tore his own outer garment in protest, and the high priest said, “Do we need more witnesses to testify against this man? ⁶⁴ You have heard his blasphemy! He claims to be God!” They all agreed that Jesus was guilty and that he deserved to be put to death. ⁶⁵ Then some of them began spitting on Jesus. They put a blindfold on him, and then they began striking him and saying to him, “If you are a prophet, tell us who hit you!” And those who were guarding Jesus struck him with their hands.

⁶⁶ While Peter was outside in the courtyard of the high priest’s house, one of the

girls who worked for the high priest came near him. ⁶⁷ When she saw Peter warming himself beside the fire, she looked at him closely. Then she said, "You also were with Jesus, that man from Nazareth!" ⁶⁸ But he denied it by saying, "I do not know what you are talking about! I understand nothing of it!" Then he went away from there to the gate of the courtyard. ⁶⁹ The servant girl saw him there and said again to the people who were standing nearby, "This man is one of those who have been with that man they arrested." ⁷⁰ But he denied it again. After a little while, those who were standing there said to Peter again, "You also are from Galilee. So it is certain that you are one of those who accompanied Jesus!" ⁷¹ But he began to say that God could punish him if he were not telling the truth; he said, "I do not know the man that you are talking about!" ⁷² Immediately the rooster crowed a second time. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said to him earlier: "Before the rooster crows a second time, you will deny three times that you know me." When he realized that he had denied him three times, he started crying.

Chapter 15

¹ Very early in the morning the chief priests met together with the rest of the Jewish council in order to decide how to accuse Jesus before the Roman governor. Their guards tied Jesus' hands again. They took him to the residence of Pilate, the governor. ² Pilate asked Jesus, "Do you say that you are the king of the Jews?" Jesus answered him, "You yourself have said so." ³ Then the chief priests claimed that Jesus had done many bad things. ⁴ So Pilate asked him again, "Do you have nothing to reply? Listen to how many bad things they are saying that you have

done!" ⁵ But Jesus did not say anything more. The result was that Pilate was very much surprised.

⁶ Now it was the governor's custom each year during the Passover Celebration to release one person who was in prison. He usually released any prisoner the people requested. ⁷ At that time there was a man called Barabbas who was in prison with some other men. They had committed murder when they rebelled against the Roman government. ⁸ A crowd approached Pilate and asked him to release someone, just as in the past. ⁹ Pilate answered them, "Would you like me to release for you the man whom you people say is your king?" ¹⁰ He asked this because he realized what the chief priests were wanting to do. They were accusing Jesus because they were jealous of him because many people were becoming his disciples. ¹¹ But the chief priests urged the crowd to request that Pilate release Barabbas for them instead of Jesus. ¹² Pilate said to them again, "If I release Barabbas, what do you want me to do with your king?" ¹³ Then they shouted back, "Crucify him!" ¹⁴ Then Pilate said to them, "Why? What crime has he committed?" But they shouted even louder, "Crucify him!" ¹⁵ So because Pilate wanted to please the crowd, he released Barabbas to them. Then his soldiers flogged Jesus; after that, Pilate told them to take him away and crucify him.

¹⁶ The soldiers took Jesus into the courtyard of the barracks. Then they summoned the whole cohort who were on duty there. ¹⁷ After the soldiers gathered together, they put a purple robe on Jesus. Then they placed on his head a crown that they had woven from thorn-bush branches. ¹⁸ Then they greeted him like they would greet a king, in order to ridicule him; they said, "Greetings, King of

the Jews!" ¹⁹ They repeatedly struck his head with a reed and spat on him. They knelt down in front of him to pretend to honor him. ²⁰ When they had finished mocking him, they pulled off the purple robe. They put his own clothes on him, and then they led him outside of the city in order to nail him to a cross.

²¹ Now a man named Simon from Cyrene came along. He was the father of Alexander and Rufus, and he was passing by Jesus on his way to the city from somewhere else. The soldiers compelled Simon to carry the cross for Jesus. ²² The soldiers brought them both to a place that they call Golgotha. That name means, "A place like a skull." ²³ Then they tried to give Jesus wine that was mixed with myrrh. But he refused to drink it. ²⁴ Some of the soldiers took his clothes. Then they nailed him to a cross. Afterwards, they divided his clothes among themselves by gambling for them.

²⁵ It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. ²⁶ They attached to the cross above Jesus' head a sign on which it had been written the reason why they were nailing him to the cross. It said, "The King of the Jews." ²⁷ They also nailed to crosses two men who were robbers. They nailed one to a cross at the right side of Jesus and one to a cross at his left side. ^{28[1]} ²⁹ The people who were passing by insulted him by shaking their heads at him. They said, "Aha! You said that you would destroy the temple and then you would build it again within three days. ³⁰ If you could do that, then rescue yourself by coming down from the cross!" ³¹ The chief priests, along with the men who taught the Jewish laws, also wanted to make fun of Jesus. So they said to each other, "He has saved others from trouble, but he cannot save himself! ³² He said, 'I am the Messiah. I am the King who rules the people

of Israel.' If his words are true, he should come down now from the cross! Then we will believe him!" The two men who were crucified beside him also insulted him.

³³ At noon the whole land became dark, and it stayed dark until three o'clock in the afternoon. ³⁴ At three o'clock Jesus shouted loudly, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" That means, "My God, my God, why have you deserted me?" ³⁵ When some of the people who were standing there heard the word 'Eloi', they misunderstood it and said, "Listen! He is calling for the prophet Elijah!" ³⁶ One of them ran and filled a sponge with sour wine. He placed it on the tip of a reed, and then held it up to try to get Jesus to suck on it. He said, "Wait! Let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down from the cross!" ³⁷ And then Jesus shouted loudly, stopped breathing, and died. ³⁸ At that moment the curtain in the temple sanctuary split into two pieces from top to bottom. ³⁹ The officer who supervised the soldiers who nailed Jesus to the cross was standing in front of Jesus. When he saw how Jesus had died, he exclaimed, "Truly, this man was the Son of God!" ⁴⁰⁻⁴¹ There were also some women there; they were watching these events from a distance. They had accompanied Jesus when he was in Galilee, and they had provided what he needed. They had come with him to Jerusalem. Among those women was Mary from Magdala. There was another Mary, who was the mother of the younger James and of Joses. There was also Salome.

⁴²⁻⁴³ When evening was near, a man named Joseph from Arimathea came there. He was a member of the Jewish council, one whom everyone respected. He was also one of those who had been waiting expectantly for when God would show himself as king. Evening was now approaching. It was the day before the

Sabbath, a day the Jews called the day of preparation. So he went with courage to Pilate and asked him to permit him to take the body of Jesus down from the cross and bury it immediately. ⁴⁴ Pilate was surprised when he heard that Jesus was already dead. So he summoned the officer who was in charge of the soldiers who had crucified Jesus, and he asked him if Jesus had already died. ⁴⁵ When the officer told Pilate that Jesus was dead, Pilate allowed Joseph to take away the body. ⁴⁶ After Joseph had bought a linen cloth, he and others took Jesus' body down from the cross. They wrapped it in the linen cloth and laid it in a tomb that previously had been dug out of the rock cliff. Then they rolled a huge flat stone in front of the entrance to the tomb. ⁴⁷ Mary from Magdala and Mary the mother of Jesus were watching where Jesus' body was placed.

15:28 ^[1]The best ancient copies do not have verse 28

Chapter 16

¹ When the Sabbath had ended, Mary from Magdala, Mary the mother of the younger James, and Salome bought fragrant ointments to anoint Jesus' body for burial. ² Very early on the first day of the week, just after the sun rose, they took the fragrant ointment and started toward the tomb. ³ While they were going there, they were asking each other, "Who will roll away for us the stone that blocks the entrance of the tomb?" ⁴ After they arrived, they looked up and saw that someone had rolled away the stone, which was very large. ⁵ They entered the tomb and saw an angel who looked like a young man. He was sitting at the right side of the

cave. He was wearing a white robe. As a result, they were astonished. ⁶ The young man said to them, "Do not be astonished! I know that you are looking for Jesus, the man from Nazareth, who was nailed to a cross and crucified. But he has become alive again! He is not here! Look! Here is the place where they placed his body. ⁷ Go and tell his disciples. Particularly be sure that you tell Peter. Tell them, 'Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee, and you will see him there, just like he told you previously!'" ⁸ The women went outside and ran from the tomb. They were trembling because they were afraid, and they were astonished. But they did not say anything to anyone about this because they were afraid.

⁹ When Jesus became alive again early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary from Magdala. She was the woman from whom he had previously forced out seven evil spirits. ¹⁰ She went to those who had been with Jesus, while they were mourning and crying. She told them what she had seen. ¹¹ But when she told them that Jesus was alive again and that she had seen him, they refused to believe it. ¹² Later that day, Jesus appeared in a different form to two of his disciples while they were walking from Jerusalem to the surrounding area. ¹³ After they recognized him, those two went back to Jerusalem. They told his other followers what had happened, but they did not believe it. ¹⁴ Later Jesus appeared to the eleven apostles while they were eating. He scolded them because they had stubbornly refused to believe the reports of those who saw him after he had become alive again.

¹⁵ He said to them, "Go into the whole world and preach the good news to everyone! ¹⁶ God will save everyone who believes your message and who is baptized.

He will condemn everyone who does not believe. ¹⁷ Those who believe the good news will perform miracles to show that I am with them. By my power they will do miracles like these: they will force evil spirits out of people. They will speak in languages that they have not learned. ¹⁸ If they pick up snakes or if they drink any poisonous liquid, they will not be hurt. God will heal sick people on whom they lay their hands.”

¹⁹ After the Lord Jesus had said this to the disciples, God took him up into heaven. Then he sat down on his throne beside God at the place of highest honor at his right hand, to rule with him. ²⁰ As for the disciples, they went out from Jerusalem, and then they preached everywhere. Wherever they went, the Lord enabled them to perform miracles. By doing that, he showed people that God’s message is true.

LUKE

Chapter 1

¹ Dear Theophilus,

Many people have written reports about the amazing events that have happened among us. ² We heard about these things from people who saw them happen, from the time everything first started happening. These people taught others about God's message. ³ I myself have carefully studied everything that these people wrote and taught. So I decided that it would also be good for me to write for you, noble Theophilus, an accurate account of these matters. ⁴ I am doing this so that you may know that what you have been taught about these things is true.

⁵ When King Herod ruled the province of Judea, there was a Jewish priest named Zechariah. He belonged to the group of priests called the Abijah group. He and his wife Elizabeth were both descended from Aaron. ⁶ God considered that both of them were righteous, because they always obeyed without fault everything that God had commanded. ⁷ But they had no children, because Elizabeth was unable to bear children. Furthermore, she and her husband were very old.

⁸ One day Zechariah was serving as a priest in the temple in Jerusalem during his group's regular time of service there. ⁹ Following their custom, the priests chose him by lot to go into the Lord's temple and burn incense. ¹⁰ When the time came for him to burn the incense, many people were praying in the courtyard outside the temple. ¹¹ Then an angel whom the Lord had sent appeared to him. The angel was standing at the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² When Zechariah saw the angel,

he was startled and became very afraid. ¹³ But the angel said to him, "Zechariah, do not be afraid! When you prayed, the Lord heard your request. So your wife Elizabeth will bear a son for you. You must name him John. ¹⁴ You will be very happy, and many other people will also be happy because he is born. ¹⁵ God will consider him to be very important. He must never drink wine or any other alcoholic drink. He will be empowered by the Holy Spirit even before he is born. ¹⁶ He will persuade many descendants of Israel to stop sinning and start obeying the Lord their God again. ¹⁷ Your son will go in advance of the Lord as his forerunner and will be powerful in his spirit like the prophet Elijah was. He will cause parents to love their children again. He will cause many people who do not obey God to live wisely and to obey him as righteous people do. He will do this in order to cause many people to be ready when the Lord comes."

¹⁸ Then Zechariah said to the angel, "I am very old, and my wife is also very old. So how can I believe that the things you said will really happen?"

¹⁹ Then the angel said to him, "I am Gabriel! I stand in God's presence! I was sent to tell you this good news about what will happen to you. ²⁰ What I have told you will certainly happen at the time God has decided, but you did not believe my words. So now God will cause you to be unable to talk until the day your son is born!"

²¹ While Zechariah and the angel were talking in the temple, the people in the courtyard were waiting for Zechariah to come out. They wondered why he was staying in the temple for such a long time.

²² When he came out, he was not able to speak to them. Because he could not talk, he made motions with his hands to try to explain what had happened. Then they realized that he had seen a vision from God

while he was in the temple.

²³ When Zechariah's time to work as a priest in the temple was finished, he left Jerusalem and went to his home.

²⁴ Some time after this, his wife Elizabeth became pregnant, but she did not go out in public for five months. ²⁵ She said to herself, "The Lord has enabled me to become pregnant. In this way, he had compassion on me and has taken away the reason that people looked down on me!"

²⁶ When Elizabeth had been pregnant for almost six months, God sent the angel Gabriel to the town of Nazareth in the district of Galilee. ²⁷ He went there to speak to a virgin who was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, who was a descendant of King David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel said to her, "Greetings! The Lord is with you and has shown great kindness to you!" ²⁹ But Mary felt very troubled when she heard his greeting. She wondered what the angel meant by these words. ³⁰ Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have received favor from God! ³¹ You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you must name him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God. The Lord God will make him a king over his people as his ancestor David was. ³³ He will rule forever over the descendants of Jacob. He will rule forever!"

³⁴ Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this happen, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵ The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come to you and the power of God will cover you. So the baby you will bear will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ And listen to this. Your relative Elizabeth is pregnant with a son, even though she is very old. And though people thought that she could not bear children, she has now been pregnant for almost six months. ³⁷ For God can do anything!" ³⁸ Then Mary

said, "All right, I am the Lord's servant, so let what you have said about me happen!" Then the angel left her.

³⁹ Very soon after that, Mary got ready and went quickly to the highlands of Judea, to the city where Zechariah lived. ⁴⁰ She entered his house and greeted his wife Elizabeth. ⁴¹ As soon as Elizabeth heard Mary greet her, the baby leaped inside Elizabeth's womb. Immediately the Holy Spirit guided Elizabeth to start praising God. ⁴² She exclaimed loudly to Mary, "God has blessed you more than he has blessed other women, and he has blessed the baby you will bear! ⁴³ How wonderful it is that you, the mother of my Lord, have come to me! ⁴⁴ As soon as I heard you greet me, the baby in my womb leaped because he was so happy that you had come! ⁴⁵ You are blessed because you believed that what the Lord told you would come true."

⁴⁶ Then Mary praised God by saying:

"Oh, how I praise the Lord!

⁴⁷ I feel very joyful about God,
who is the one who saves me.

⁴⁸ I was only his lowly servant girl, but he did not forget me.

So from now on, people living in all time periods will say that God has blessed me.

⁴⁹ They will say this because of the great things that God, the Powerful One, has done for me.

His name is holy!

⁵⁰ He acts mercifully from one generation to the next toward those who respect him.

⁵¹ He shows people that he is very powerful.

He scatters those who think proudly within their inner beings.

⁵² He has stopped kings from ruling,

and he has honored people who are oppressed.

⁵³ He has given good things to eat to those who are hungry,

and he has sent away rich people without giving them anything.

⁵⁴⁻⁵⁵ He has helped Israel, the people who serve him.

Long ago he promised our ancestors that he would be merciful to them.

He has kept that promise and has always acted mercifully toward Abraham and all who descended from him."

⁵⁶ Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months. Then she returned to her home.

⁵⁷ When it was time for Elizabeth to bear her child, she bore a son. ⁵⁸ Her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had been so kind to her, and they were happy along with Elizabeth. ⁵⁹ On the eighth day after this, people gathered together for the ceremony to circumcise the baby. Since his father's name was Zechariah, they wanted to give the baby the same name. ⁶⁰ But his mother said, "No, his name must be John!" ⁶¹ So they said to her, "But John is not the name of any of your relatives!" ⁶² Then they made motions with their hands to his father, for him to indicate what name he wanted to be given to his son. ⁶³ So he signaled that they should give him a tablet to write on. When they gave him one, he wrote on it, "His name is John." All those who were there were surprised! ⁶⁴ Immediately Zechariah was able to speak again, and he began praising God. ⁶⁵ Everyone who lived nearby was completely awed by what God had done. They told many other people about what had happened and the news spread all over the highlands of Judea. ⁶⁶ Everyone who heard

it kept thinking about it. They were saying, "We wonder what work this child will do when he grows up!" Because of everything that had happened, they were sure that God would be helping him in a powerful way. ⁶⁷ After Zechariah's son was born, Zechariah was controlled by the Holy Spirit and he spoke these words from God:

⁶⁸ "Praise the Lord, the God whom we people of Israel worship,

because he has come to set us, his people, free.

⁶⁹ He is sending us someone who will powerfully save us,

someone who is descended from his servant, King David.

⁷⁰ Long ago God caused his prophets to say that he would do that.

⁷¹ This powerful Savior will rescue us from our enemies,

and he will save us from the power of all those who hate us.

⁷² He has done this because he is merciful to our ancestors and remembers his holy covenant,

⁷³ which is the oath that he promised to our ancestor Abraham.

⁷⁴ God promised to rescue us from the power of our enemies,

and to enable us to serve him without being afraid,

⁷⁵ in holy and righteous ways all of our lives.

⁷⁶ Then Zechariah said this to his baby son:

"My child, you will be called a prophet of the Most High God.

You will go ahead of the Lord

to prepare a people to be ready when he comes.

⁷⁷ You will tell people that God is able to forgive them and save them from being punished for their sins.

⁷⁸ God will forgive us because he is kind and merciful to us.

And because of that, this Savior, who is like the rising sun,

will come to us from heaven to help us.

⁷⁹ He will shine on people who live in spiritual darkness and in the fear of death.

He will guide us so that we will live peacefully.

⁸⁰ Over time, Zechariah and Elizabeth's baby boy grew up and became spiritually strong. Then he lived in a desolate region and was still living there when he began to preach publicly to God's people, Israel.
1

Chapter 2

¹ Around that time Caesar Augustus sent out an official order that every person living under Roman rule must be registered in a public record. ² This first happened during the time that Quirinius was governing the province of Syria. ³ So everyone had to go to his family's hometown to be registered. ⁴⁻⁵ Joseph also traveled to his family's hometown, along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was pregnant. Because Joseph was a descendant of King David, they left the town of Nazareth in the region of Galilee and traveled to the region of Judea, to the town of Bethlehem, which is also known as the city of David. Joseph and Mary went there to be registered in the public record. ⁶⁻⁷ When they arrived in Bethlehem, there was no

place for them to stay in a place where visitors usually stayed. So they had to stay in a place where animals slept overnight. While they were there the time came for Mary to give birth and she gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him in wide strips of cloth and laid him down where the food was kept for the animals inside the barn.

⁸ That night, there were some shepherds who were taking care of their sheep in the fields near Bethlehem. ⁹ Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared to them. A bright light shone all around them, showing the Lord's glory. So they became very afraid. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid! I have come to tell you good news, which will benefit all people and will make you all very happy!" ¹¹ Today, in the city of David, a baby has been born who will save you from your sins! He is the Messiah, the Lord! ¹² This is how you will recognize him: In Bethlehem you will find a baby who has been wrapped in strips of cloth and placed in a feeding place for animals."

¹³ Suddenly a large group of angels from heaven appeared and joined the other angel. They all praised God, saying,

¹⁴ "May all the angels in the highest heaven praise God! And may there be peace on earth among people who are pleasing to God!"

¹⁵ After the angels left them and returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "We should go right now to Bethlehem to see this wonderful thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about!" ¹⁶ So they went quickly and when they had found the place where Mary and Joseph were staying, they saw the baby lying in a feeding place for animals. ¹⁷ After seeing him, they told everyone what had been told to them about this child. ¹⁸ All the people who heard what the shepherds

said to them were amazed. ¹⁹ But Mary kept thinking about all the things she had heard and carefully remembered them. ²⁰ The shepherds returned to the fields where their sheep were. They kept talking about how great God is and praising him for all the things that they had heard and seen, because everything happened exactly like the angels had told them.

²¹ Eight days later, it was the day when the baby was circumcised, and they gave him the name Jesus. This was the name the angel had told them to give him, even before he was conceived.

²² When the required number of days for their purification had gone by, according to the law of Moses, Mary and Joseph traveled up to Jerusalem to dedicate their son to the Lord. ²³ It had been written in the law of the Lord, "Every male offspring that is the first to be born will be set apart to be holy to the Lord." ²⁴ The law of the Lord also said the parents of a newborn son must offer as a sacrifice: "two turtledoves or two young pigeons."

²⁵ At that time there was an old man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. He did what was pleasing to God and obeyed God's laws. He was eagerly waiting for God to send the Messiah to encourage the Israelite people, and the Holy Spirit was directing him. ²⁶ The Holy Spirit had previously revealed to him that he would see the Lord's promised Messiah before he died. ²⁷ When Joseph and Mary brought their baby, Jesus, to the temple in order to perform the rituals that God had commanded in his laws, the Spirit led Simeon to enter the temple courtyard. ²⁸ Then he took Jesus up in his arms and praised God, saying,

²⁹ "Lord, you have made me content and I can now die in peace according to your promise.

³⁰ I have seen the one whom you sent to save people,

³¹ the one you prepared in the midst of all the peoples.

³² He will be like a light that will reveal your truth to the Gentiles, and he will bring honor to the Israelite people."

³³ Jesus' father and mother were very amazed at what Simeon said about him. Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Jesus' mother, Mary, ³⁴ "Note what I say: God has determined that because of this child, many Israelite people will turn away from God, and many others will turn to God. He will be like a sign to warn people, and many people will oppose him. ³⁵ As a result, the thoughts of many people will be made evident. A sword will also pierce your own soul."

³⁶ There was also in the temple courtyard a prophetess named Anna who was very old. Her father Phanuel was a member of the tribe of Asher. She had been married for seven years and then her husband died. ³⁷ After that, she lived eighty-four more years as a widow. She was always serving in the temple area and worshiped God night and day. She often fasted and prayed. ³⁸ At that very moment, Anna came up to them and began thanking God for the baby. Then she spoke about Jesus to many people who were expecting God to redeem Jerusalem.

³⁹ After Joseph and Mary had finished doing everything required of them by the laws of the Lord, they returned to their own town, Nazareth, in the district of Galilee. ⁴⁰ As the child grew up, he became strong and very wise, and God was very pleased with him.

⁴¹ Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. ⁴² So when Jesus was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem for the festival as

they always did. ⁴³ When all the days for the festival had ended, his parents started to return home, but Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know he was still there. ⁴⁴ They assumed that he was with the other people who were traveling with them. After walking a whole day's journey, they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. ⁴⁶ After three days, they found him in the temple courtyard, sitting in the midst of the Jewish religious teachers. He was listening to them teach, and he was asking them questions. ⁴⁷ All the people who heard what he said were amazed at how much he understood and how well he answered the questions that the teachers asked. ⁴⁸ When his parents saw him, they were very surprised. His mother said to him, "My son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been very worried as we have been searching for you!" ⁴⁹ He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I needed to be involved in what my Father does?" ⁵⁰ But they did not understand the meaning of what he said to them. ⁵¹ Then he returned with them to Nazareth and he always obeyed them. His mother kept thinking deeply about all those things.

⁵² As the years passed, Jesus continued to become wiser and he grew taller. God and people continued to approve of him more and more.

Chapter 3

¹ When Tiberius Caesar had been ruling the Roman Empire for about fifteen years, Pontius Pilate was the governor of the province of Judea, Herod Antipas was ruling the district of Galilee, his brother

Philip was ruling the regions of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was ruling the region of Abilene. ² During that time, when Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests in Jerusalem, God spoke to Zechariah's son John while he was living out in the wilderness. ³ John was traveling all around the area near the Jordan River. He kept telling people, "If you want God to forgive your sins, you must repent; then I will baptize you!" ⁴ The prophet Isaiah wrote these words on a scroll long ago:

"In the wilderness, someone will be calling out:

Prepare the way of the Lord,

Make straight paths for him.

⁵ Every valley will be filled,

And every mountain and hill will be made level;

The crooked roads will become straight,

And the rough ways will be made smooth.

⁶ Then everyone will see God's way of saving people."

⁷ John said to the crowds of people who were coming to be baptized by him, "You people are evil like poisonous snakes! No one warned you that one day God will punish everyone who sins, did they? Do not think that you can escape from him!

⁸ Do the things that show that you have truly turned away from your sinful behavior! And do not start saying to yourself, 'We are descendants of Abraham!' Because I tell you that God could make even these stones become descendants of Abraham! ⁹ The ax is already placed at the root of the trees, so that every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire." ¹⁰ Then some of the people in the crowd asked

him, "What, then, should we do?" ¹¹ He answered them, "If any of you has two shirts, you should give one of them to someone who does not have a shirt. If any of you has plenty of food, you should give some to those who do not have food." ¹² Some tax collectors also came to John to be baptized. They asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" ¹³ He said to them, "Do not collect from the people more money than the Roman government tells you to collect!" ¹⁴ Some soldiers asked him, "And us? What should we do?" He said to them, "Do not force people to give you money by threatening them, and do not falsely accuse anyone of doing something wrong! Be content with the amount of money you earn." ¹⁵ People were getting very hopeful that the Messiah might be coming soon, and many of them were wondering if John might be the Messiah. ¹⁶ But John replied to them all, "No, I am not. The Messiah is far greater than I am. He is so great that I am not worthy even to untie the straps of his sandals! When I baptized you, I used only water. But when the Messiah comes, he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." ¹⁷ A winnowing fork is in his hand, ready to separate good grain from the useless chaff. He will store the grain safely in his barn but will burn up the chaff in a fire that never stops burning. ¹⁸ In many different ways like this, John urged the people to repent and turn back to God, as he kept telling them the good message from God. ¹⁹ He also rebuked King Herod for marrying his brother's wife, Herodias, while his brother was still alive, and for doing many other evil things. ²⁰ Then Herod had his soldiers put John in prison, which was another very evil thing. ²¹ But before John was put in prison, when many people were being baptized, Jesus also was baptized. Afterwards, while he was praying, the sky opened. ²² Then the Holy

Spirit, resembling a dove, came down and landed on Jesus. And God spoke to Jesus from heaven, saying, "You are my Son, the one whom I love dearly. I am very pleased with you!" ²³ When Jesus began his work for God, he was about thirty years old. He was the son of Joseph (or so it was thought). Joseph was the son of Heli. ²⁴ Heli was the son of Matthat. Matthat was the son of Levi. Levi was the son of Melchi. Melchi was the son of Jannai. Jannai was the son of Joseph. ²⁵ Joseph was the son of Mattathias. Mattathias was the son of Amos. Amos was the son of Nahum. Nahum was the son of Esli. Esli was the son of Naggai. ²⁶ Naggai was the son of Maath. Maath was the son of Mattathias. Mattathias was the son of Semein. Semein was the son of Josech. Josech was the son of Joda. ²⁷ Joda was the son of Joanan. Joanan was the son of Rhesa. Rhesa was the son of Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel was the son of Shealtiel. Shealtiel was the son of Neri. ²⁸ Neri was the son of Melchi. Melchi was the son of Addi. Addi was the son of Cosam. Cosam was the son of Elmadam. Elmadam was the son of Er. ²⁹ Er was the son of Joshua. Joshua was the son of Eliezer. Eliezer was the son of Jorim. Jorim was the son of Matthat. Matthat was the son of Levi. ³⁰ Levi was the son of Simeon. Simeon was the son of Judah. Judah was the son of Joseph. Joseph was the son of Jonam. Jonam was the son of Eliakim. ³¹ Eliakim was the son of Melea. Melea was the son of Menna. Menna was the son of Mattatha. Mattatha was the son of Nathan. Nathan was the son of David. ³² David was the son of Jesse. Jesse was the son of Obed. Obed was the son of Boaz. Boaz was the son of Salmon. Salmon was the son of Nahshon. ³³ Nahshon was the son of Amminadab. Amminadab was the son of Admin. Admin was the son of Arni. Arni was the son of Hezron. Hezron was the son of Perez. Perez was the son

of Judah. ³⁴ Judah was the son of Jacob. Jacob was the son of Isaac. Isaac was the son of Abraham. Abraham was the son of Terah. Terah was the son of Nahor. ³⁵ Nahor was the son of Serug. Serug was the son of Reu. Reu was the son of Peleg. Peleg was the son of Eber. Eber was the son of Shelah. ³⁶ Shelah was the son of Cainan. Cainan was the son of Arphaxad. Arphaxad was the son of Shem. Shem was the son of Noah. Noah was the son of Lamech. ³⁷ Lamech was the son of Methuselah. Methuselah was the son of Enoch. Enoch was the son of Jared. Jared was the son of Mahalalel. Mahalalel was the son of Cainan. ³⁸ Cainan was the son of Enos. Enos was the son of Seth. Seth was the son of Adam. Adam was the son of God, the man God created.

Chapter 4

¹ Then Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan River, and the Holy Spirit led him into the wilderness. ² The Holy Spirit led him around in the wilderness for forty days. While he was there, the devil kept tempting him. During the entire time Jesus was in the wilderness he did not eat anything, so when the forty days were over, he was very hungry. ³ Then the devil said to Jesus, "If you really are the Son of God, command these stones to become bread for you to eat!" ⁴ Jesus replied, "No, I will not do that, because it is written in the scriptures, 'People need more than just food in order to live.'" ⁵ Then the devil took Jesus up to the top of a high mountain and showed him in an instant all the nations in the world. ⁶ Then he said to Jesus, "I will give you the right to rule all these nations and you will possess all their splendor and wealth. God has permitted me to control them all, and so I can do whatever I want to do with them." ⁷

So if you worship me, I will let you rule them all!" ⁸ But Jesus replied, "No, I will not worship you, because it is written in the scriptures, 'You must only worship the Lord, your God. He is the only one you may serve!'"

⁹ Then the devil took Jesus to Jerusalem. He set him on the highest part of the temple and said to him, "If you really are the Son of God, jump down from here." ¹⁰ You will not be hurt, because it is written in the scriptures,

'God will command his angels to protect you.' ¹¹ And it also says,

'They will lift you up in their hands when you are falling, so that you will not get hurt. You will not even strike your foot on a stone.'" ¹² But Jesus replied, "No, I will not do that, because it is written in the scriptures: 'Do not try to test the Lord your God'."

¹³ Then, after the devil had finished trying to tempt Jesus in many ways, he left him until a later time.

¹⁴ After this, Jesus left the wilderness and returned to the district of Galilee. The Holy Spirit was empowering him. Throughout that region, people heard about Jesus and told others about him. ¹⁵ He taught people in their synagogues and they all spoke highly of him because of his teaching.

¹⁶ Then Jesus went to Nazareth, the town where he grew up. On the Sabbath he went to the synagogue, as he usually did. He stood up to read aloud something from the scriptures. ¹⁷ A synagogue attendant handed him a scroll containing the words that the prophet Isaiah had written long ago. Jesus unrolled the scroll and found the place where these words were written:

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is in me.

He has appointed me to declare God's good news to people who are poor.

He has sent me here to proclaim that the captives will go free,

And will tell those who are blind that they will see again.

I will free people who have been oppressed.

¹⁹ He sent me here to declare that now is the time when the Lord will act favorably toward people."

²⁰ Then he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. Everyone in the synagogue was looking intently at him. ²¹ He said to them, "Today this scripture passage was fulfilled as you heard it." ²² Everyone there heard what he said and marveled at him, and they were amazed at how well he spoke. But some of them said, "This man is only Joseph's son, right?" ²³ He said to them, "Surely some of you will quote to me the proverb that says, 'Doctor, heal yourself!' You will say, 'Do here in your hometown the same kind of miracles that you did in Capernaum!'" ²⁴ Then he said, "It is certainly true that the people in a prophet's own hometown do not accept his message. ²⁵ But think about this: There were many widows in Israel during the time when the prophet Elijah lived, when there was a great famine throughout the country because there had been no rain for three and half years. ²⁶ But God did not send Elijah to help any of those Israelite widows. God sent him to the town of Zarephath near the city of Sidon, to help a widow. ²⁷ There were also many Israelite lepers in Israel during the time when the prophet Elisha lived. But Elisha did not heal any of them. He healed only Naaman, a man from Syria." ²⁸ When all the people in the synagogue heard him say that, they were very angry. ²⁹ So they all got up and

shoved him out of the city. They took him to the top of the hill outside their city in order to throw him off the cliff and kill him. ³⁰ But he simply walked through their midst and went away.

³¹ One day he went down to Capernaum, a city in the district of Galilee. On the next Sabbath, he taught the people in the synagogue. ³² They were continually amazed at what he was teaching, because he spoke with confidence. ³³ That day, there was a man in the synagogue who was controlled by an evil spirit. The man shouted very loudly, ³⁴ "Ha! Jesus, from Nazareth! Evil spirits have nothing to do with you! Have you come to destroy us all? I know who you are. You are the Holy One from God!" ³⁵ Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, saying, "Be quiet and come out of him!" The demon threw the man down on the ground in the midst of the people and came out of him without harming him. ³⁶ All the people in the synagogue were very amazed. They said to each other, "He speaks with confidence, and his words have so much power! Even evil spirits obey him and come out of people when he commands them to!" ³⁷ And in every place throughout the surrounding regions, people kept talking about what Jesus had done.

³⁸ Then Jesus left the synagogue and went to Simon's house. Simon's mother-in-law was sick and had a high fever. Some people who were there asked Jesus to heal her. ³⁹ So he bent over her and commanded the fever to leave her. Immediately she became well! She got up and served them some food.

⁴⁰ When the sun was setting that day, many people brought to Jesus their friends or relatives who were sick with various diseases. He put his hands on them and healed all of them. ⁴¹ He also was forcing evil spirits to come out of many people. As the evil spirits left those

people, they shouted to Jesus, “You are the Son of God!” But he commanded those evil spirits not to tell people about him, because they knew that he was the Messiah.

⁴² The next morning Jesus went out to an uninhabited place. Crowds of people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. ⁴³ But he said to them, “I must tell people in other cities also the message about how God is going to rule everyone, because that is what I was sent to do.” ⁴⁴ So he kept preaching in the synagogues in various towns in the province of Judea.

Chapter 5

¹ One day, while many people were crowding around Jesus and listening to him teach God’s message, he was standing next to Lake Gennesaret. ² He saw two fishing boats there at the edge of the lake. The fishermen had left the boats and were washing their fishing nets. ³ Jesus stepped into one of the two boats. (This boat belonged to Simon.) Jesus asked Simon to push the boat out a short distance from the shore. Jesus sat in the boat and continued to teach the crowds from there. ⁴ After he finished teaching them, he said to Simon, “Take the boat out to deeper water and let your nets down into the water to catch some fish.” ⁵ Simon replied, “Master, we worked hard through the whole night, and yet we did not catch any fish. But I will let down the nets again, because you told me to.” ⁶ So Simon and his men let down their nets and they caught so many fish that their nets began to break. ⁷ They motioned to their fishing partners in the other boat to come and help them. So they came and filled both boats so full with fish

that they began to sink. ⁸ Seeing this, Simon Peter fell at the knees of Jesus and said, “Please leave me, because I am a sinful man, Lord.” ⁹ He said this because he marveled at the huge number of fish that they had caught. All the men who were with him also marveled, including James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were two of Simon’s fishing partners. ¹⁰ But Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid! Until now you gathered in fish, but from now on you will gather in people to become my disciples.” ¹¹ So after the men brought the boats to the shore, they left their fishing business and everything else and went with Jesus.

¹² While Jesus was in one of the towns nearby, there was a man there who was covered with a skin disease called leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he bowed down to the ground in front of him and pleaded with him, “Lord, please heal me, because you are able to heal me if you are willing!” ¹³ Then Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. He said, “I am willing to heal you, and I heal you now!” Immediately the man was healed. He no longer had leprosy! ¹⁴ Then Jesus told him, “Make sure that you do not tell people about your healing immediately. First, go to a priest in Jerusalem and show yourself to him so that he can examine you and see that you no longer have leprosy. Also take to the priest the offering that Moses commanded that people who have been healed from leprosy should offer.” ¹⁵ But many people heard about how Jesus had healed the man. The result was that large crowds came to Jesus to hear him teach and to have him heal them from their sicknesses. ¹⁶ But he often would go away from them to isolated areas and pray.

¹⁷ One day when Jesus was teaching, some men from the Pharisee sect were sitting nearby. Some of them were expert

teachers of the Jewish laws. They had come from many villages in the district of Galilee and also from Jerusalem and other cities in the province of Judea. At that same time, the Lord was giving Jesus power to heal people. ¹⁸ While Jesus was there, several men brought to him a man who was paralyzed. They were carrying the man on a sleeping pad and tried to bring him into the house to lay him down in front of Jesus. ¹⁹ But they were not able to bring him in because there was such a large crowd of people in the house, so they went up the outside steps onto the roof. Then they removed some of the tiles from the roof to make an opening. They lowered the man on his sleeping pad through the opening into the middle of the crowd and put him down right in front of Jesus. ²⁰ When Jesus perceived that they believed that he could heal the man, he said to him, "Friend, I forgive your sins!" ²¹ The men who were expert teachers of the Jewish laws and the rest of the Pharisees began to think to themselves, "This man is proud and insults God by saying that! We all know that nobody except God can forgive sins!" ²² Jesus knew what they were thinking. So he said to them, "You should not question within yourselves about what I said! Consider this: ²³ It is easy to say, 'Your sins are forgiven' because no one can see whether or not the person was really forgiven. But it is not easy to say 'Get up and walk' because people can immediately see whether or not he was healed. ²⁴ So I will heal this man so that you will know that God has also given to me, the Son of Man, permission to forgive people on earth their sins." Then he said to the man who was paralyzed, "To you I say, get up, pick up your sleeping pad, and go home!" ²⁵ Immediately the man was healed! He got up in front of them all. He picked up the sleeping pad on which he

had been lying, and he went home, praising God. ²⁶ All the people there were astonished! They praised God and were overcome with amazement at what they saw Jesus do. They kept saying, "We have seen wonderful things today!"

²⁷ Then Jesus left that place and saw a man named Levi who collected taxes for the Roman government. He was sitting in the booth where the people came to pay him the taxes that the government required. Jesus said to him, "Come with me and become my disciple!" ²⁸ So Levi left his work and went with Jesus.

²⁹ Later on, Levi prepared a big feast in his own house for Jesus and his disciples. There was a large group of tax collectors and others eating together with them. ³⁰ Some men who belonged to the Pharisee sect, including those of them who taught Jewish laws, complained to Jesus' disciples, saying, "You should not be eating with tax collectors and other terrible sinners. ³¹ Then Jesus said to them, "It is people who are sick who know they need a doctor, not those who think they are well. ³² Similarly, I did not come from heaven to invite those who think they are righteous to come to me. On the contrary, I came to invite those who know that they are sinners, to turn from their sinful behavior and come to me."

³³ Those Jewish leaders said to Jesus, "The disciples of John the Baptizer often abstain from food and pray, and the disciples of the Pharisees do that, too. But your disciples keep on eating and drinking! Why do they not fast like the others?" ³⁴ Jesus answered, "You do not tell the friends of the bridegroom to fast while he is still with them, do you? No, no one would do that! ³⁵ But some day the bridegroom will be taken away from his friends. Then, at that time, they will abstain from food."

³⁶ Then Jesus gave other examples to explain what he meant: He said, "People never tear a piece of cloth from a new garment and attach it to an old garment to mend it. If they did that, they would ruin the new garment by tearing it and the new piece of cloth would not match the old garment. ³⁷ And no one puts newly squeezed wine into old skin bags to store it. If anyone did that, the skin bags would tear open because they would not stretch when the new wine fermented and expanded. Then the skin bags would be ruined, and the wine would also be ruined because it would spill out. ³⁸ On the contrary, new wine must be put into new skin bags.

³⁹ Furthermore, those who have drunk only old wine are content with that. They do not want to drink the new wine, because they say, 'The old wine is good!'"

Chapter 6

¹ One Sabbath day, as Jesus and his disciples were walking through some grain fields, the disciples were picking some heads of grain. They rubbed them in their hands to separate the grains from the husks, and ate the grain. ² Some Pharisees who were watching this said to them, "You should not be doing work; our laws forbid us to do work on the Sabbath day!" ³ Jesus replied to the Pharisees, "Certainly you have read what is written in the scriptures about what David did (before he was king), when he and the men with him were hungry! ⁴ As you know, David entered the tabernacle and asked for some food. The priest gave him the bread that had been on display before God. In one of Moses' laws God had said that only the priests were permitted to eat that bread. But even though David and his men were

not priests, he ate some of the bread, and also gave some to the men who were with him!" ⁵ Jesus also said to them, "In the same way, the Son of Man has the authority to determine what is right for people to do on the Sabbath!"

⁶ On another Sabbath day, Jesus was teaching the people in the synagogue and a man was there whose right hand was withered. ⁷ The men who taught the Jewish laws and the Pharisees who were there were watching Jesus closely. They wanted to see if he would heal the man, and then they would accuse him of disobeying their laws about not working on the Sabbath. ⁸ But Jesus knew what they were thinking. So he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come and stand here in front of everyone!" So the man got up and stood there. ⁹ Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you this: Do the laws that God gave Moses command people to do good on the Sabbath, or to do harm? To save a life on the Sabbath, or destroy it?" ¹⁰ No one answered him, so he looked around at them all and then said to the man, "Stretch out your withered hand!" The man did that, and his hand became completely well again! ¹¹ But the religious leaders were very angry, and they discussed with one another about what they could do to get rid of Jesus.

¹² One day, some time after that, Jesus went up into the hills to pray. He prayed to God all night there. ¹³ The next day he summoned all his disciples to come near him. From them he chose twelve men whom he also called apostles. ¹⁴ These men were: Simon, to whom he gave the new name, Peter; Andrew, Peter's younger brother; James and his younger brother, John; Philip; Bartholomew; ¹⁵ Matthew, whose other name was Levi; Thomas; another James, the son of Alphaeus; Simon the Zealot, ¹⁶ Judas, the son of a different man named James; and Ju-

das Iscariot, who later betrayed Jesus.

¹⁷ Jesus came down from the hills with his disciples and stood on a level area. There was a great crowd of his disciples there. There was also a large group of people who had come from Jerusalem and from many other places in the region of Judea, and from the coastal areas near the cities of Tyre and Sidon. ¹⁸ They came to hear Jesus teach them and to be healed from their diseases. He also healed those whom evil spirits had troubled. ¹⁹ Everyone in the crowd tried to touch him, because he was healing everyone by his power. ²⁰ Then he looked at his disciples and said, "It is very good for you who are poor, because God is ruling you. ²¹ It is very good for you who are hungry now, because God will give you everything you need.

It is very good for you who are grieving now, because God will someday make you laugh with joy.

²² It is very good when other people hate you, when they reject you, when they insult you and say that you are evil because you follow me, the Son of Man. ²³ When that happens, rejoice! Jump up and down because you are so happy! God will give you a great reward in heaven! Do not forget that their ancestors did similar things to God's prophets long ago!

²⁴ But how sad for you who are rich; your riches have already given you all the comfort you will get. ²⁵ How sad for you who think that you have everything that you need now; you will realize that these things will not satisfy you.

How sad for you who are joyful now; later you will grieve and be very sad. ²⁶ How sad it is when everyone says good things about you. In the same way, their ancestors used to say good things about men who falsely claimed to be God's prophets.

²⁷ "But I say this to each of you who are lis-

tening to what I say: Love your enemies, not only your friends! Do good things for those who hate you! ²⁸ Ask God to bless those who curse you! Pray for those who treat you badly! ²⁹ If someone insults you by striking you on one of your cheeks, turn your face so that he can strike the other cheek also. If someone wants to take away your coat, let him also have your shirt. ³⁰ Give something to everyone who asks you. If someone asks you to give him things that belong to you, do not ask him to return them. ³¹ In whatever way you want others to act toward you, that is the way that you should act toward them.

³² If you love only those who love you, do not expect God to praise you for doing that, because even sinners love those who love them. ³³ If you do good things only for those who do good things for you, do not expect God to reward you for doing that, because even sinners do that. ³⁴ If you lend money or property only to those who will give it back to you, do not expect that God will reward you for doing that! Even sinners lend to other sinners, because they expect them to pay everything back. ³⁵ Instead, love your enemies! Do good things for them! Lend to them, and do not expect them to pay anything back! Then God will give you a great reward. And you will be children of God the Most High, since God is kind even to people who are unthankful and wicked. ³⁶ So you should act mercifully toward other people, just like your Father in heaven acts mercifully toward people.

³⁷ Do not harshly criticize people, and then God will not harshly criticize you. Do not condemn other people, and then he will not condemn you. Forgive others for the evil things that they have done, and then God will forgive you. ³⁸ Give good things to others, and then God will give good things to you. It will be like he is giv-

ing you a generous amount of grain, pressing it down in a basket and shaking the basket to make sure it is completely full, to the point that some of the grain even spills over the sides! Remember that the standard you use to judge or bless others will be the standard God uses to judge or bless you!”

³⁹ He also gave his disciples this parable: “A blind man should not try to lead another blind man. If he did, they both would fall into a hole! ⁴⁰ A disciple is not greater than his teacher. But when he is fully trained, he will become like his teacher. So you should become like me.

⁴¹ None of you should be concerned about someone else’s small faults. That is like noticing a speck of straw in that person’s eye while not noticing a huge wooden plank in your own eye. ⁴² If you do that, you are a hypocrite! You should first remove the plank out of your own eye before trying to get the speck out of someone else’s eye. When you have stopped sinning, then you will have the spiritual insight to help others get rid of their sins.

⁴³ Everyone knows that healthy trees do not produce bad fruit and unhealthy trees do not produce good fruit. ⁴⁴ And anyone can tell what kind of tree it is by looking at the kind of fruit it has. For example, a thornbush does not produce figs and a bramble bush does not produce grapes. In the same way it is easy to know what a person is like inside by looking at what that person does. ⁴⁵ Good people do good things which show that they think good thoughts, and evil people do evil things which show that they think evil thoughts. People will speak and act according to what they think about in their minds.”

⁴⁶ Jesus said to the people, “Why do you call me ‘Lord’ when you do not even obey what I say to do? ⁴⁷ Let me tell you what people are like who come to me, hear my

teachings, and obey them. ⁴⁸ They are like a man who dug deep into the ground to prepare to build his house. He made sure that the foundation for the house was built on solid rock. Then there was a flood and a torrent of water was beating against the house. But the torrent could not even shake the house, because the house was built on a solid foundation. ⁴⁹ But some people who hear my teachings do not obey them. They are like a man who built a house on top of the ground without building a foundation. When the river flooded, the house collapsed immediately and was completely ruined.”

Chapter 7

¹ After Jesus finished speaking to the people, he went to the town of Capernaum.

² In that town there was a centurion in the Roman army who had a slave that was dear to him. This slave was so sick that he was about to die. ³ When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to Jesus to ask him to come and heal his slave. ⁴ When they came to Jesus, they earnestly asked him to help the centurion’s slave. They said, “He deserves that you do this for him, ⁵ because he loves our people and he built our synagogue for us.” ⁶ So Jesus went with them to the officer’s house. When he was almost there, the officer sent some friends to give this message to Jesus: “Lord, do not trouble yourself any further, since I am not worthy that you should come into my house. ⁷ That is why I do not think that I am worthy to come to you myself. But you can heal my slave if you say just one word. ⁸ I know that you can do this because I am a man who must obey the orders of my superiors, and I also have soldiers who must obey my orders. When I say to one of them, ‘Go!’, he goes, and when I say to another,

‘Come!’, he comes. When I say to my slave, ‘Do this!’, he does it.” ⁹ When Jesus heard what the officer had said, he was amazed at him. Then he turned to the crowd that was with him and said, “I tell you, I have not found any Israelite who trusts me as much as this Gentile does!” ¹⁰ When those people who had come from the centurion returned to his house, they found out that the slave was in good health again.

¹¹ Soon after that, Jesus traveled to the town of Nain. His disciples and a large crowd went with him. ¹² As Jesus came near to the town gate, he saw a large crowd coming out of the town, carrying a man who had just died. Now his mother was a widow, and he was her only son. She was with the crowd, and they were going to bury her son. ¹³ When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, “Do not cry!” ¹⁴ Then he came close to them and touched the stretcher on which the body was lying. The men carrying it stood still. He said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” ¹⁵ The man sat up and began to talk! Then Jesus led him back to his mother. ¹⁶ Everyone there was overcome with awe. They praised God and said to each other, “A great prophet has come among us!” and “God has come to care for his people!” ¹⁷ Then this news about what Jesus had done spread throughout the region of Judea and all the other nearby areas.

¹⁸⁻¹⁹ The disciples of John the Baptizer told him about all these things. So John called for two of his disciples and told them to go to the Lord and ask him: “Are you the one whom God promised would come, or should we be expecting someone else?” ²⁰ When those two men came to Jesus, they said, “John the Baptizer sent us to ask you, ‘Are you the one whom God promised would come, or should we expect someone else?’” ²¹ At that same time Jesus was

healing many people from sicknesses and serious diseases, and from evil spirits. He also healed many blind people so that they were able to see. ²² So he answered those two men, “Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: People who were blind are now seeing. People who were lame are now walking. People who had skin diseases are being healed. People who were deaf can now hear. People who were dead are being made to live again and good news is being proclaimed to the poor. ²³ And also tell him, “God will bless anyone who sees what I do and hears what I teach and does not turn away from me.”

²⁴ When the men whom John had sent left, Jesus began to talk to the crowd of people about John. He said, “What did you go into the wilderness to see? A thin stalk of a plant shaken by the wind? ²⁵ But what did you go out to see? A man in fancy clothing? Look, those who wear splendid clothes and who have the best of everything live in kings’ palaces. ²⁶ Then what did you go out there to see? A prophet? Yes! But I tell you that John is more important than an ordinary prophet. ²⁷ He is the one about whom the prophets wrote long ago: ‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you. He will prepare people for your coming.’

²⁸ I tell you that of all the people who ever lived, there is no one greater than John. Yet the most insignificant people who will live with God where he dwells will be greater than John.”

²⁹ When all the people who had been baptized by John heard what Jesus said—including the tax collectors—they agreed that God was just. ³⁰ But the Pharisees and the experts in the Jewish laws had not been baptized by John and they rejected God’s will for them.

³¹ Then Jesus also said, “What are you peo-

ple living in this time period like? I will tell you: ³² You are like children playing games in an open area. They call out to each other, saying, “We played happy music for you on the flute, but you did not dance! Then we sang sad funeral songs for you, but you did not cry!” ³³ Similarly, when John came to you and did not eat ordinary food or drink wine, you rejected him and said, ‘A demon is controlling him!’ ³⁴ But when the Son of Man came to you and he ate ordinary food and drank wine as others do, then you rejected him and said, ‘Look! This man eats too much food and drinks too much wine, and he associates with tax collectors and other sinners!’ ³⁵ But God’s wisdom is proved right by those who follow it.

³⁶ One day a certain Pharisee named Simon invited Jesus to eat a meal with him. So Jesus went to the man’s house and reclined at a table to eat. ³⁷ There was also a woman in that city whom many people knew had been a prostitute. When she heard that Jesus was eating in the Pharisee’s house, she went there, taking a stone jar that contained perfume. ³⁸ As Jesus was reclining to eat, the woman stood behind him at his feet. She was crying, and her tears fell on Jesus’ feet. She continually wiped his feet with her hair, and kept kissing them and anointing them with the perfume. ³⁹ When the Pharisee who had invited Jesus saw what the woman was doing, he thought, “If this man were really a prophet, he would have known who this woman is who is touching him, and what kind of person she is, that she is a sinner.” ⁴⁰ In response, Jesus said to him, “Simon, there is something I want to tell you.” He replied, “Teacher, what is it?” ⁴¹ Jesus told him this story: “Two people owed money to a man who had a business lending money to people. One of these people owed him five hundred silver coins, and the other one owed

him fifty silver coins. ⁴² Neither of them was able to pay back what he owed, so the man very kindly said that they did not have to pay back anything. So, which of those two men will love that man more?”

⁴³ Simon replied, “I assume that the one who had owed him the most money will love him more.” Jesus said to him, “You are correct.” ⁴⁴ Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, “Think about what this woman has done! When I entered your house, you did not do what hosts usually do to welcome their guests. You did not give me any water to wash my feet, but this woman has washed my feet with her tears and then wiped them with her hair! ⁴⁵ You did not greet me with a kiss, but from the moment I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet! ⁴⁶ You did not anoint my head with olive oil, but she has anointed my feet with fragrant perfume. ⁴⁷ So I tell you that she has been forgiven for her many sins and that is why she loves me very much. But a person who thinks he has only a few sins, and has been forgiven, will love me only a little bit.” ⁴⁸ Then he said to the woman, “You have been forgiven for your sins.” ⁴⁹ Then those who were eating with him said among themselves, “Who is this man who says that he can forgive sins?” ⁵⁰ But Jesus said to the woman, “Because you have believed in me, God has saved you. May God give you peace as you go!”

Chapter 8

¹ After that, Jesus and his twelve disciples traveled around through various cities and villages. As they went, Jesus preached to people, proclaiming the good news that God would soon reveal himself as king.

² Also traveling with them were several women whom he had healed from evil spirits and sicknesses. These included

Mary from the village of Magdala, out of whom he had forced seven evil spirits; ³ Joanna the wife of Chuza, who was one of King Herod Antipas' managers; Susanna; and many others. They were providing some of their own funds to support Jesus and his disciples.

⁴ One day a very large crowd was gathering, because people were traveling to see Jesus from many different towns. Then he told them this story: ⁵ "A man went out to his field to plant some grain seeds. As he was scattering them over the soil, some of the seeds fell on the hard pathway. Then people walked on those seeds, and birds ate them. ⁶ Some of the seeds fell on rocky ground which had very little soil. Therefore, as soon as the seeds grew, the plants dried up because there was no moisture. ⁷ Some of the seeds fell on ground that contained seeds of thorn plants. The thorn plants grew up together with the young grain plants and crowded them out so that they could not grow. ⁸ But some of the grain seeds fell on fertile soil, and grew so well that they produced a crop that had a hundred times as many seeds." After saying these things, Jesus called out to them, "All of you should think carefully about what you just heard me say!"

⁹ Then Jesus' disciples asked him to tell them the meaning of the story. ¹⁰ And he said, "To you has been granted the privilege of knowing the hidden things about how God will rule as king. But I speak to everyone else only in parables, so that,

'Although they see, they may not perceive, and although they hear, they may not understand.'

¹¹ Now, this is what the story means: The seeds represent God's word. ¹² The seeds that fell on the pathway show what happens when people hear God's word, but afterwards the devil comes and takes that word away from their minds and hearts.

As a result, they do not believe it and are not saved. ¹³ The seeds that fell on the rocky ground show what happens when people hear God's word and receive it joyfully, but they do not have deep roots. As a result, they only believe for a short time. As soon as difficult things happen to them, they stop believing God's word. ¹⁴ The seeds that fell among the thorny plants show what happens when people hear God's word, but then as they go on in life they allow such things as the worries, riches and pleasures of this life to crowd out God's word from their life. As a result, they do not become spiritually mature. ¹⁵ But the seeds that fell on the fertile ground show what happens when people hear God's word and receive it with an honorable and upright heart. They persevere in believing and obeying the word, and so they produce good spiritual fruit.

¹⁶ After lighting a lamp, people do not cover it with a basket or put it under a bed. Instead, they put it on a lampstand, so that everyone who enters the room can see by its light. ¹⁷ This illustrates that everything that is hidden now will someday be made visible. And everything that is secret now will someday be brought out into the open. ¹⁸ So make sure that you are listening carefully to what I tell you, because God will enable those who believe his truth to understand even more. But God will cause those who do not believe his truth to not understand even the little that they think they have understood."

¹⁹ One day Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they could not get near to him because there was such a large crowd around him in the house where he was. ²⁰ Then someone told him, "Your mother and your brothers have been standing outside, wanting to see you." ²¹ But he replied to them, "Those who hear God's word and obey it are as

dear to me as my mother and my brothers.”

²² On another day Jesus got into a boat with his disciples. He said to them, “I would like us to go across to the other side of the lake.” So they started to sail across the lake. ²³ But as they were sailing, Jesus fell asleep. Then a powerful windstorm came down on the lake. Soon the boat was filling with water, and they were in danger. ²⁴ So Jesus’ disciples came to him and woke him up. They said to him, “Master! Master! We are going to die!” He then woke up and commanded the wind and the violent waves to be still and they became still. Everything became calm. ²⁵ Then he said to them, “Why is your faith so weak?” The disciples were alarmed and amazed because of what had just happened. They kept saying to one another, “Who is this, that he is able to command even the winds and the water, and they obey him?”

²⁶ Jesus and his disciples continued sailing and came to the region where the Gerasene people lived, on the opposite side of the lake from the district of Galilee. ²⁷ After Jesus stepped out of the boat onto the land, he was met by a certain man from the town in that area. This man had demons in him. For a long time this man had not worn clothes and did not live in a house. Instead, he lived in the burial caves.

²⁸ When he saw Jesus, the man cried out, lay facedown before him, and said with a loud voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me!” ²⁹ The man said this because Jesus had just commanded the evil spirit to come out of him. Although the man had been bound with chains on his wrists and ankles while people guarded him, many times the evil spirit would suddenly seize him by force.

Then the man would break the chains and the demon would make him go out into deserted places. ³⁰ Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” He replied, “My name is Thousands.” He said that because many demons had entered that man. ³¹ The demons kept begging Jesus not to command them to go into the deep pit where God punishes demons. ³² There was a large herd of pigs grazing on the hillside nearby. The demons begged Jesus to allow them to enter the pigs, and he allowed them. ³³ So the demons left the man and entered the pigs, and the herd of pigs rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned.

³⁴ When the men who were taking care of the pigs saw what happened, they ran away! They reported what they had seen to people in the town and in the countryside. ³⁵ Then the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to where Jesus was, they saw that the man from whom the demons had gone out was sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to him. They saw that he had clothes on, and that his mind was normal again, and they became afraid. ³⁶ The men who had seen what had happened told the people who had just arrived how Jesus had healed the man who had been controlled by demons. ³⁷ Then many people from the surrounding region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave their area because they were very afraid. So Jesus and the disciples got into the boat to go back across the lake. ³⁸ Before they left, the man from whom the demons had gone out begged Jesus saying, “Please, let me go with you!” But instead, Jesus sent him away by saying to him, ³⁹ “No, go back to your house and tell people how much God has done for you!” So the man went away and told people throughout the town how much Jesus had done for him.

⁴⁰ Then Jesus and the disciples went back across the lake to Capernaum. A crowd of people was waiting for him there, and they welcomed him. ⁴¹ Just then a man named Jairus, who was one of the leaders of the synagogue there, came near to Jesus and he lay facedown before him. He pleaded with Jesus to come to his house ⁴² because his only daughter, who was about twelve years old, was dying and he wanted Jesus to heal her.

But as Jesus went, many people were crowding around him. ⁴³ Now in the crowd there was a woman who had been suffering for twelve years from a disease that caused continual bleeding. She had spent all her money to pay doctors to help her, but none of them was able to heal her. ⁴⁴ She came behind Jesus and touched the edge of his robe. At once her bleeding stopped. ⁴⁵ Jesus said, "Who touched me?" As everyone around Jesus was saying they had not touched him, Peter said, "Master, there are many people crowding around you and pressing up against you, so any one of them might have touched you!" ⁴⁶ But Jesus said, "I know that someone deliberately touched me, because power has gone out of me to heal that person." ⁴⁷ And when the woman realized that she could not hide, she came trembling to him and she lay facedown on the ground before him. As the other people were listening, she told Jesus why she had touched him and that she had been healed immediately. ⁴⁸ And Jesus said to her, "My dear woman, because you believed that I could heal you, you are now well. Now go on your way, and may God's peace be with you."

⁴⁹ While he was still speaking to her, a man from Jairus' house came and said to Jairus, "Your daughter has died. So do not bother the teacher anymore!" ⁵⁰ But when Jesus heard that, he said to Jairus, "Do not

be afraid. Just believe in me and she will live again." ⁵¹ When he arrived outside the house, Jesus did not allow anyone to go in the house with him, except for Peter, John and James, and the girl's mother and father. ⁵² And all the people there were crying loudly to show that they were very sad because the girl had died. But Jesus said to them, "Stop crying! She is not dead! She is just sleeping!" ⁵³ And the people laughed at him, because they knew that the girl was dead. ⁵⁴ But Jesus took hold of her hand and called to her, saying, "Child, get up!" ⁵⁵ And immediately her spirit returned to her body and she got up. Jesus told them to give her something to eat. ⁵⁶ And her parents were amazed, but Jesus told them not to tell anyone else yet what had happened.

Chapter 9

¹ Then Jesus called together his twelve disciples and gave them the right and power to drive out all kinds of demons and to heal people's diseases. ² He sent them out to heal people and to teach them about how God was going to show himself as king. ³ Before they left, he said to them, "Do not take anything with you for your journey. Do not take a walking stick or a traveler's bag or food or money. Do not even take an extra tunic. ⁴ Whatever house you enter, stay in that house until you leave that area. ⁵ In any town where the people do not welcome you, you should not continue to stay there. As you leave that town, shake off the dust from your feet. Do that as a warning against them for rejecting you." ⁶ Then Jesus' disciples left and traveled through many villages. Everywhere they went, they talked to people about the good news from God and healed sick people.

⁷ Herod, the ruler over the district of

Galilee, heard about everything that was happening. He was perplexed, because some people were saying that John the Baptizer had become alive again.⁸ Other people were saying that the prophet Elijah had appeared again, and still others were saying that one of the other prophets from long ago had become alive again.⁹ But Herod said, "It cannot be John because I had his head cut off. So who is this man that I am hearing these things about?" And he kept looking for a way to see Jesus.

¹⁰ When the apostles returned from their trip, they told Jesus everything that they had done. Then he took them aside to go by themselves with him to the town of Bethsaida.¹¹ But when the crowds heard about where Jesus had gone, they followed him there. He welcomed them and spoke to them about how God was soon going to show himself as king, and he healed those who needed to be healed.

¹² Now it was getting late in the day, so the twelve disciples came to him and said, "Please send this large crowd of people away so that they can go to the surrounding villages and farms to get some food and find places to stay, since we are out here in this isolated place."¹³ But he said to them, "You must give them something to eat!" They replied, "All we have are five small loaves of bread and two small fish. We could never go buy enough food for all these people!"¹⁴ They said this because there were about five thousand men there. Then Jesus said to the disciples, "Tell the people to sit down in groups, with about fifty people in each group."¹⁵ So the disciples did that and the people all sat down.¹⁶ Then he took the five bread loaves and the two fish. He looked up toward heaven and praised God for them. Then he tore them into pieces and gave them to the disciples for them to distribute to the people.

¹⁷ They all ate and everyone had enough to eat. Then the disciples collected the leftover pieces of food, which filled twelve baskets!

¹⁸ One day while Jesus was praying in private, his disciples came to him and he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?"¹⁹ They replied, "Some people say that you are John the Baptizer, but others say that you are the prophet Elijah, and still others say that you are one of the other prophets from long ago who has come back to life again."²⁰ He asked them, "What about you? Who do you say that I am?" Peter replied, "You are the Messiah, who has come from God."²¹ Then Jesus warned them strongly to not tell that to anyone yet.²² Then he said, "I, the Son of Man, must suffer many things: I will be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the Jewish laws and then I will be killed. Then, on the third day after that, I will come back to life again."

²³ Then he said to them all, "If any one of you wants to follow me as my disciple, you must not do only what you desire to do. Rather, every day you must be willing to suffer, even to the point of giving up your life."²⁴ You must do that, because those who try to save their own lives for themselves will lose them eternally, but those who give up their lives because of being my disciples will save their lives eternally.²⁵ How does it benefit you if you gain everything in this world but then end up losing, or even giving up, your own self?²⁶ As for people who reject my message and refuse to say that they belong to me, I, the Son of Man will also refuse to say that they belong to me when I come back in my glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.²⁷ But I tell you this fact: Some of you standing here now will not die until you see God show himself as king!"

²⁸ About eight days after Jesus said those words, he took with him Peter, John and James, and went up onto a mountain to pray there. ²⁹ While he was praying, the appearance of his face became very different and his clothes became dazzling white and began to shine brightly. ³⁰ Suddenly, two prophets from long ago were there talking with Jesus; they were Moses and Elijah. ³¹ They appeared surrounded in glory, and spoke with Jesus about his departure, which would soon be accomplished in Jerusalem. ³² Peter and the other disciples who were with him were very sleepy. When they woke up, they saw Jesus' glory; they also saw the two men standing with him. ³³ As Moses and Elijah were starting to leave Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here! We should make three shelters, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah!" But he really did not realize what he was saying. ³⁴ As he was saying these things, a cloud formed and covered them. The disciples were afraid as the cloud surrounded them. ³⁵ God's voice spoke to them from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him!" ³⁶ When the voice had finished speaking, the three disciples saw that only Jesus was there. They were silent and for a long time they did not tell anyone what they had seen.

³⁷ The next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a large crowd of people met Jesus. ³⁸ Suddenly a man from the crowd called out, "Teacher, I plead with you, do something to help my son! He is my only child. ³⁹ An evil spirit suddenly seizes him and causes him to scream. It shakes him violently and causes him to foam at the mouth. It hardly ever leaves my child and when it does, it injures him severely. ⁴⁰ I pleaded with your disciples to command the evil spirit to come out of him, but they were not able

to do it!" ⁴¹ In response, Jesus said, "This generation of people does not believe and so your thinking is corrupt! How much longer must I be with you before you believe?" Then he said to the boy's father, "Bring your son here to me!" ⁴² While they were bringing the boy to him, the demon threw the boy down to the ground, and shook him severely. But Jesus rebuked the evil spirit and healed the boy. Then he returned him to his father. ⁴³ Then all the people there were completely amazed at the great power of God.

While they were all still in wonderment at all the miracles Jesus was doing, he said to his disciples, ⁴⁴ "Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: I, the Son of Man, will soon be handed over to my enemies." ⁴⁵ But the disciples did not understand what he meant by this. God prevented them from understanding it, so that they would not know yet what he meant, and they were afraid to ask him about what he had said.

⁴⁶ Some time later, the disciples began to argue among themselves about which one of them would be the most important. ⁴⁷ But Jesus knew what they were thinking, so he brought a young child to stand beside him. ⁴⁸ He said to them, "If someone welcomes a little child like this because of me, it is the same as welcoming me. And if someone welcomes me, it is the same as welcoming God, who sent me. Remember that those among you who seem to be the least important are the ones whom God considers to be most important."

⁴⁹ John replied to Jesus, "Master, we saw a man who was using your name to command demons to come out of people. So we told him to stop doing that, because he is not following you as part of our group." ⁵⁰ But Jesus said, "Do not stop him from doing that! If someone is not doing something that is harmful to you, then what he

is doing is helpful to you!”

⁵¹ When it was getting close to the day when God would take him back up to heaven, Jesus firmly resolved to go to Jerusalem. ⁵² He sent some messengers to go ahead of him, and they entered a village in the region of Samaria to prepare for him to go there. ⁵³ But the Samaritans would not let Jesus come to their village because he was on his way to Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ When two of his disciples, James and John, heard that, they said, “Lord, do you want us to ask God to send fire down from heaven to destroy those people?” ⁵⁵ But Jesus turned to them and sternly told them they were wrong to say that. ⁵⁶ So they went to a different village.

⁵⁷ As Jesus and the disciples were walking along the road, someone said to him, “I will go with you wherever you go!” ⁵⁸ Jesus replied, “Foxes have holes in the ground to live in, and birds have nests, but I, the Son of Man, do not have a home to sleep in!” ⁵⁹ Jesus told a different person, “Follow me!” But that person said, “Lord, let me first go home and bury my father after he dies.” ⁶⁰ But Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead; but you go and tell people everywhere that God will soon show himself as king!” ⁶¹ Someone else said, “Lord, I will come with you and be your disciple, but first let me go home to say goodbye to my people.” ⁶² Jesus said to him, “Anyone who starts plowing his field and then looks behind him is not able to serve God when he rules everything as king.”

Chapter 10

¹ After that, the Lord Jesus appointed seventy other people to go preach. He prepared to send them out in pairs to go ahead of him to every town and village

where he intended to go. ² He said to them, “The harvest is certainly plentiful, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord of the harvest and plead with him to send more workers to reap his harvest. ³ Go now, but remember that I am sending you out to tell my message to people who will try to get rid of you. You will be like lambs among wolves. ⁴ Do not take along any money. Do not take a traveler’s bag. Do not take extra shoes. Do not stop to greet people along the way. ⁵ Whenever you enter a house, first say to those people, ‘May God give peace to you who are in this house!’ ⁶ If the people who live there are desiring to have God’s peace, they will experience the peace that you are offering them. If the people who live there are not desiring to have God’s peace, the peace you have offered will return to you. ⁷ Stay in that same house until you leave that village. Do not move around from one house to another. Eat and drink whatever they provide for you, because a worker deserves to receive payment for his work. ⁸ Whenever you enter a town and the people there welcome you, eat whatever food they provide for you. ⁹ Heal the people there who are sick. Tell them, ‘God will soon rule everywhere as king.’ ¹⁰ But if you enter a town whose people do not welcome you, go into its main streets and say, ¹¹ ‘As a warning against you, we will wipe off even the dust that sticks to our feet as we are leaving your town. Yet be sure of this; God will soon rule everything as king.’ ¹² I tell you that on the final day when God judges everyone, the people of that town will be punished even more severely than the wicked people who lived long ago in the city of Sodom!

¹³ How terrible it will be for you people who live in the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida, because you refuse to repent! If the miracles that I performed for you had

been done in the ancient cities of Tyre and Sidon, the wicked people who lived there would long ago have shown that they were sorry for their sins by sitting on the ground wearing coarse cloth and putting ashes on their heads. ¹⁴ So on the final day when God judges everyone, he will punish you more severely than the wicked people who lived in Tyre and Sidon because you did not repent and believe in me even though you saw me do miracles! ¹⁵ I also have something to say to you people who live in the town of Capernaum. Do you think you will be honored up in heaven? On the contrary, you will be brought down to the place of the dead!"

¹⁶ Jesus also said to the disciples, "Whoever listens to your message is listening to me, and whoever rejects your message is rejecting me. And whoever rejects me is rejecting God, the one who sent me."

¹⁷ The seventy people whom Jesus appointed went and did as he told them to. When they returned, they were very joyful. They said, "Lord, even the demons obeyed us when by your authority we commanded them to leave people!" ¹⁸ He replied, "While you were away doing that, I saw Satan fall from heaven as suddenly and quickly as lightning strikes! ¹⁹ Listen! I have given you the right to attack evil spirits. They will not hurt you. I have given you the right to be stronger than our enemy, Satan. Nothing will hurt you at all. ²⁰ But as you rejoice that evil spirits obey you, you should rejoice even more that your names have been written in heaven."

²¹ Right then, Jesus was filled with great joy from the Holy Spirit. He said, "Father, you are Lord over everything in heaven and on earth. Some people think that they are wise because they are well educated. But I praise you that you have prevented

them from knowing these things. Instead, you have revealed them to people who accept your truth as readily as little children do. Yes, Father, you have done that because it pleased you to do so." ²² Jesus also said to the disciples, "God, my Father, has given everything to me. Only my Father really knows me, his Son. Furthermore, only I, the Son, really know who the Father is—that is, only I and those people to whom I choose to reveal him really know him."

²³ Then when his disciples were alone with him, he turned toward them and said, "God has given you a great gift by letting you see the things that I have done! ²⁴ I want you to know that many prophets and kings who lived long ago desired to see the things that you are seeing me do, but they could not, because those things did not happen then. They longed to hear the things that you have been hearing me say, but I had not yet revealed those things at that time."

²⁵ One day as Jesus was teaching people, a certain teacher of Jewish laws was there. He wanted to test Jesus by asking him a difficult question. So he stood up and asked, "Teacher, what must I do in order to live with God forever?" ²⁶ Jesus said to him, "You have read what Moses has written in the laws that God gave him. What do the laws say?" ²⁷ The man replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind. And love your neighbor as much as you love yourself." ²⁸ Jesus replied, "You have answered correctly. If you do all that, you will live with God forever."

²⁹ But the man wanted to find a reason to justify the way he treated other people. So he said to Jesus, "Which people are my neighbors that I should love?" ³⁰ Jesus replied, "One day, a Jewish man was

traveling along the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. As he was traveling, some bandits attacked him. They took away most of the man's clothes and everything else that he had, and they beat him until he was almost dead. Then they left him. ³¹ It happened that a Jewish priest was going along that road. When he saw that man, instead of helping him, he passed by on the other side of the road. ³² Similarly, a Levite, who worked in God's temple, came to that place and saw the man. But he also passed by on the other side of the road. ³³ Then a man from the region of Samaria came along that road to where the man was lying. When he saw that man, he pitied him. ³⁴ He went close to him and put some olive oil and wine on the wounds to help heal them. He wrapped strips of cloth around the wounds. Then he placed the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next morning he gave two silver coins to the innkeeper and said, "Take care of this man. If you spend more than this amount to care for him, I will pay you back when I return." ³⁶ Then Jesus said, "Three people saw the man whom bandits attacked. Which one of them showed he was a true neighbor to the man?" ³⁷ The teacher of the law replied, "The one who acted mercifully toward him." Jesus said to him, "Yes, so now you should go and act like that toward everyone whom you can help!"

³⁸ As Jesus and his disciples continued to travel, they entered a village near Jerusalem. A woman whose name was Martha invited them to come to her house. ³⁹ Her younger sister, whose name was Mary, was sitting near Jesus' feet. She was listening to what he was teaching. ⁴⁰ But Martha was very much concerned about preparing the meal. She went to Jesus and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to prepare everything by myself? Please tell her that she should

help me!" ⁴¹ But the Lord replied, "Martha, Martha, you are very worried about many things. ⁴² But the only thing that is truly necessary is to listen to what I am teaching. Mary has made the best choice. The blessing that she is receiving from doing that will not be taken away from her."

Chapter 11

¹ One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished praying, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us what to say when we pray, as John taught his disciples!" ² He said to them, "When you pray, say things like this: 'Father, may all people honor your name as holy. May you soon rule all people everywhere. ³ Please give us each day the food that we need. ⁴ Please forgive us for the wrong things that we have done, just as we ourselves forgive people for the wrong things that they do to us. Help us to not sin when we are tempted.'"

⁵ Then he said to them, "Suppose that one of you goes to the house of a friend at midnight. Suppose that you stand outside and call out to him, 'My friend, please lend me three loaves of bread! ⁶ Another friend of mine who is traveling has just arrived at my house, but I have no food ready to give to him!' ⁷ Suppose that he answers you from inside the house, 'Do not bother me! The door has been locked and all my family are in bed. So I cannot get up and give you anything!' ⁸ I tell you, he may not want to get up and give you any food even though you are his friend. But because you keep persisting in asking him, he will certainly get up and give you whatever you need. ⁹ So I tell you this: Keep asking God for what you need, and he will give it to you. Keep seeking his will and he will show it to you. Keep on praying urgently to God, like someone knocking on

a door, and he will open the way for you to receive what you pray for. ¹⁰ Remember that anyone who asks will receive and anyone who seeks will find, and anyone who knocks will have the door opened for him. ¹¹ If one of you had a son who asked you for a fish to eat, you certainly would not give him a poisonous snake instead, would you? ¹² And if he asked you for an egg, you certainly would not give him a scorpion instead, would you? ¹³ Even though you people are sinful, you know how to give good things to your children. So it is even more certain that your Father in heaven will give the Holy Spirit to you if you ask him to do that.”

¹⁴ One day a man came to Jesus who was not able to speak because a demon controlled him. After Jesus forced out the demon, the man began to talk, and crowds of people were amazed. ¹⁵ But some of them said, “It is Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons, who enables this man to force out demons!” ¹⁶ Other people there asked him to perform a miracle to prove he was from God. ¹⁷ But he knew what they were thinking. So he said to them, “If the people in one nation fight against each other, their nation will be destroyed. If the people in one household oppose each other, their family will fall apart. ¹⁸ Similarly, if Satan and his demons were fighting against each other, his rule over them would certainly not last! I say this because you are saying that I force out demons by the power of the ruler of demons! ¹⁹ Now, if it is really true that Satan is enabling me to force out demons, is it also true that your disciples who force out demons do so by Satan’s power? Of course not! So they prove that you are wrong. ²⁰ But since it is actually by the power of God that I force out demons, I am showing you that God has begun to rule over you.”

²¹ Jesus continued, “When a strong man

who has many weapons guards his own house, no one can steal the things in his house. ²² But when someone else who is stronger attacks that man and subdues him, he is able to take away the weapons in which the man trusted. Then he can take from that man’s house anything he wants to. ²³ Anyone who is not supporting me is opposing me, and anyone who does not bring people to me causes them to go away from me.”

²⁴ Then Jesus said this: “Sometimes when an evil spirit leaves someone, it wanders around in desolate areas seeking relief. If it does not find any, it says to itself, ‘I will return to the person in whom I used to live!’ ²⁵ So it goes back and finds that the person is like a house that has been swept clean and put in order, but is still empty. ²⁶ Then this evil spirit goes and gets seven other spirits that are even more evil than it is. They all enter that person and begin living there. So, although that person’s condition was bad before, it became much worse.”

²⁷ When Jesus said that, a woman who was listening called out to him loudly, “How greatly blessed by God is the woman who gave birth to you and who nursed you at her breasts!” ²⁸ Then he replied, “Even more blessed by God are those who hear his message and obey it!”

²⁹ As more and more people were coming to join the crowd around Jesus, he said, “The people living at this time are evil people. Many of you want me to perform a miracle as proof that I have come from God. But the only proof that you will receive is a miracle like what happened to Jonah. ³⁰ Just as the miracle that God did for Jonah long ago was a testimony to the people from the city of Nineveh, so God will do a similar miracle for the Son of Man that will be a testimony to you people living now. ³¹ Long ago the Queen

of Sheba traveled a very long distance to hear Solomon speak wise things. And now someone who is much greater than Solomon is here, but you have not really listened to what I say. Therefore, at the time when God will judge all people, this queen will stand there and condemn the people alive now. ³² The men who lived in the ancient city of Nineveh turned from their sinful ways when Jonah preached to them. And now I, who am greater than Jonah, have come and preached to you, but you have not turned from your sinful ways. Therefore, at the time when God judges all people, the men who lived in Nineveh long ago will stand there and condemn the people alive now.”

³³ “People who light a lamp do not then hide it or put it under a basket. Instead, they put it on a lampstand so that those who enter the room or house can see the light. ³⁴ Your eye is the lamp of your body. If your eye is healthy, then your whole body is full of light. If, on the other hand, it is unhealthy, then your body will be full of darkness. ³⁵ Therefore, be careful that the light in you is not darkness. ³⁶ If your whole body is full of light and no part of it is darkened, all of your body will be full of light like the light of a lamp that enables you to see everything clearly.”

³⁷ After Jesus finished saying those things, a Pharisee invited him to eat a meal with him. So Jesus went into the Pharisee’s house and reclined at the table to eat. ³⁸ The Pharisee was surprised when he saw that Jesus did not ritually wash his hands before eating. ³⁹ The Lord Jesus said to Him, “You Pharisees wash the outside of cups and dishes before you eat, but within yourselves you are very greedy and wicked. ⁴⁰ You foolish people! Surely you know that God not only made the outside, but he also made the inside! ⁴¹ Instead of worrying about dishes being ritu-

ally clean, be merciful and give whatever is inside the dishes to those in need, and then both the inside and outside of you will be clean.

⁴² But how terrible it will be for you Pharisees! You carefully give to God a tenth of all you have, including even the herbs that you grow in your gardens. But then you do not love God or act justly toward others. You should make sure that you love God and act justly toward others in addition to giving to God. ⁴³ How terrible it will be for you Pharisees, because you like to sit in the most important seats in the synagogues, and you like people to greet you with special honor in the marketplaces. ⁴⁴ How terrible it will be for you, because you are like unmarked graves that cannot be seen, which people walk over without realizing it and become ceremonially unclean.”

⁴⁵ One of those who were teachers of the Jewish laws replied, “Teacher, by saying this you are criticizing us also!” ⁴⁶ Jesus said, “How terrible it will be for you who are teachers of the Jewish laws! You weigh people down with very heavy burdens, yet you will not do even the smallest thing to help people bear those burdens! ⁴⁷ How terrible it will be for you, because you construct buildings to mark the graves of the prophets, but your ancestors are the ones who killed them! ⁴⁸ So when you build these buildings, you are declaring that you approve of what your ancestors did when they killed the prophets. ⁴⁹ So God, who is very wise, said, ‘I will send prophets and apostles to guide my people. But they will cause them to suffer greatly and will even kill some of them.’ ⁵⁰ As a result, many of the people living now at this time will be considered guilty of the murder of all God’s prophets from the time the world was created, ⁵¹ starting from when Abel was killed by his brother and con-

tinuing until the prophet Zechariah was killed in the temple between the altar and the holy place. Yes, the people living at this time will be considered guilty for all those murders of the prophets! ⁵² How terrible it will be for you men who teach the Jewish laws. Because of you, people cannot know how to have God rule over them! You do not let God rule over you, and you even get in the way of people who want to have God rule over them.”

⁵³ After Jesus finished saying those things, he left there. Then the men who taught the Jewish laws and the Pharisees began to act in a very hostile way toward him. They intensely questioned him about many things. ⁵⁴ They kept waiting for him to say something wrong for which they could accuse him.

Chapter 12

¹ Meanwhile, many thousands of people gathered around Jesus. There were so many that they were stepping on each other. But first he said to his disciples, “Be careful that you do not become like the Pharisees, who act religious in public, but do evil things in secret. Just like yeast causes a lump of dough to rise, their evil behavior causes others to be hypocrites like they are. ² People cannot cover up their sins. Someday God will let everyone know everything people are trying to hide. ³ Everything you say in the dark, someday people will hear in the daylight. Whatever you whisper in your room will someday be as public as if it were shouted from the rooftops.”

⁴ “My friends, listen carefully! Do not be afraid of people; they can kill you, but they cannot do anything more to you after that! ⁵ But I will warn you about the one that you should truly be afraid of. You

should be afraid of God, because he not only has the right to cause people to die, he also has the right to throw them into hell afterward! Yes, he is truly the one that you should be afraid of! ⁶ Think about the sparrows. They have so little value that you can buy five of them for only two small coins and yet God never forgets any of them! ⁷ God even knows how many hairs there are on your head. Do not be afraid, because you are more valuable to God than many sparrows.

⁸ I tell you also, that if people tell others that they are my disciples, then I, the Son of Man, will say that they are my disciples to God’s angels. ⁹ But if they tell others that they are not my disciples, then I will say to God’s angels that they are not my disciples. ¹⁰ I also tell you that if people say evil things about me, the Son of Man, God will forgive them for that. But if people say evil things about the Holy Spirit, God will not forgive them for that. ¹¹ So when people bring you into the synagogues to question you before the religious leaders and other people who have power in the country, do not worry about how you will answer them or about what you should say, ¹² because the Holy Spirit will tell you at that very time what you should say.”

¹³ Then one of the people in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide my father’s property with me!” ¹⁴ But Jesus replied to him, “Man, no one made me a judge to settle arguments that people have about property!” ¹⁵ Then he said to the whole crowd, “Be careful not to be greedy in any way! The value of a man’s life is not determined by how many things he owns.”

¹⁶ Then he told them this illustration: “The fields of a certain rich man produced abundant crops. ¹⁷ So he thought to himself, ‘I do not know what to do, because I do not have any place big enough to store

all my crops!’ ¹⁸ Then he thought to himself, ‘I know what I will do! I will tear down my grain bins and build larger ones! Then I will store all my grain and other things in the big new bins. ¹⁹ Then I will say to myself, “Now I have enough things stored up to last many years. So now I will take life easy. I will eat and drink and be happy!”’ ²⁰ But God said to him, ‘You foolish man! Tonight you will die! Then all the things you have saved up for yourself will belong to someone else, not to you!’”

²¹ Then Jesus ended this illustration by saying, “That is what will happen to those who store up things just for themselves, but who do not value the things that God considers valuable.”

²² Then Jesus said to his disciples, “So I want to tell you this: Do not worry about things you need in order to live. Do not worry about whether you will have enough food to eat or enough clothes to wear. ²³ Your life is more important than the food you eat and your body is more important than the clothes you put on it. ²⁴ Think about the birds: They do not plant seeds, and they do not harvest crops. They do not have rooms or buildings in which to store crops. But God provides food for them. You are certainly much more valuable than birds. ²⁵ None of you can add even a minute to his life by worrying about it! ²⁶ So since you cannot even do that small thing, you certainly should not worry about anything else. ²⁷ Think about the way that flowers grow. They do not work to earn money and they do not make their own clothes. But I tell you that even though King Solomon, who lived long ago, wore very beautiful clothes, he was never as well dressed as one of those flowers. ²⁸ God makes the plants beautiful even though they grow for only a short time. Then they are cut and thrown into the fire. But you are very precious to God,

and he will care for you much more than he cares for the plants. Why do you trust him so little? ²⁹ Do not wonder about what you will eat and drink, and do not keep worrying about those things. ³⁰ The people who do not know God are always worried about such things. But your Father in heaven knows that you need them. ³¹ Instead, make it the most important thing in your life to accept God when he rules over you. Then he will also give you everything you need.

³² So you should not be afraid, little flock. Your Father in heaven wants to give you all the benefits he plans to when he rules everything completely. ³³ So now sell the things that you own. Give the money to those who do not have the food and clothing they need or a place to live. Get yourselves wallets that do not wear out, and you will store up treasure in heaven where it will always be safe. There, no thief can come near to steal it, and no moths can destroy your clothing. ³⁴ Whatever it is that you treasure, that is what you will think about and spend your time on.

³⁵ Always be ready for doing God’s work, like people who have put on their work clothes and keep their lamps burning all night. ³⁶ Be ready for me to return, like servants who are waiting for their master to return after being at a wedding feast. They are waiting to open the door for him as soon as he arrives and knocks at the door. ³⁷ If those servants are awake when he returns, he will reward them. I will tell you this: He will get dressed to serve, tell them to sit down, and he will serve them a meal. ³⁸ Even if he comes between midnight and sunrise, if he finds that his servants are awake and ready for him, he will be very pleased with them. ³⁹ But you must also remember this: If the owner of a house knew what time the thief was

coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have allowed the thief to break into his house. ⁴⁰ So be ready, because I, the Son of Man, will come again at a time when you do not expect me.”

⁴¹ Peter asked, “Lord, are you giving this illustration only for us or for everyone else also?” ⁴² The Lord replied, “I am saying it for everyone who is like a faithful and wise servant who is a manager in his master’s house. His master puts him in charge of making sure the other servants get their food at the proper time. ⁴³ If the servant is doing that work when his master returns, his master will reward him. ⁴⁴ I tell you this: The master will put that servant in charge of all he owns. ⁴⁵ But if that servant manager says to himself, ‘My master has been away for a long time,’ then he might start to beat the other servants, both male and female ones. He might also start to eat a lot of food and get drunk. ⁴⁶ If he does that, his master might return at a time when the servant does not expect him. Then his master will punish him severely and assign him a place with those who do not serve him faithfully. ⁴⁷ The servant who knew what his master wanted but did not get ready and do it will be severely punished. ⁴⁸ But every servant who did not know what his master wanted him to do, and then did something wrong, will only get a mild punishment. A lot is expected from those people who have been given a lot. Even more is expected from those who have been entrusted with a lot.”

⁴⁹ “I came to set the earth on fire. I wish that it were already on fire. ⁵⁰ Soon I must go through a baptism of terrible suffering. I will continue to be distressed until my suffering is finished. ⁵¹ Do you think that as a result of my coming to earth people will live together peacefully? No! I must tell you, instead, people will be divided. ⁵²

Because some people in one house will believe in me and some will not, they will be divided. Three people in one house who do not believe in me will oppose two who do believe. ⁵³ A man will oppose his son, or a son will oppose his father. A woman will oppose her daughter, or a woman will oppose her mother. A woman will oppose her daughter-in-law, or a woman will oppose her mother-in-law.”

⁵⁴ He also said to the crowds, “When you see a dark cloud forming in the west, you immediately say ‘It is going to rain!’ and that is what happens. ⁵⁵ When the wind blows from the south, you say, ‘It is going to be a very hot day!’ and you are right. ⁵⁶ You hypocrites! By observing the clouds and the wind, you are able to discern what is happening regarding the weather. Why are you not able to discern what God is doing at this present time?

⁵⁷ Each of you ought to decide what is the right thing for you to do while you still have time to do that! ⁵⁸ You should try to settle things with someone who has accused you while you are still on the way to the court. If he forces you to go to the judge, the judge could decide that you are guilty and turn you over to the court officer. Then that officer will put you in prison. ⁵⁹ I tell you that if you go to prison, you will never get out until you are able to pay every bit of what the judge says you owe.”

Chapter 13

¹ At that time, some people told Jesus about some Galileans whom soldiers had recently killed in Jerusalem. Pilate, the Roman governor, had ordered soldiers to kill them while they were offering sacrifices in the temple. ² Jesus replied to them, “Do you think that this happened to those peo-

ple from Galilee because they were more sinful than all the other Galileans? ³ I assure you, that was not the reason! But you need to remember that God will similarly punish you if you do not turn from your sinful behavior. ⁴ Or what about the eighteen people who died when the tower at Siloam outside Jerusalem fell on them? Do you think that this happened to them because they were worse sinners than everyone else in Jerusalem? ⁵ I assure you, that was not the reason! But instead, you need to realize that God will similarly punish you if you do not turn from your sinful behavior!"

⁶ Then Jesus told them this story: "A man planted a fig tree in his garden. Each year he came to pick the figs, but there were never any on it. ⁷ Then he said to the gardener, 'Look at this tree! I have been looking for fruit on it every year for the past three years, but there have been no figs. Cut it down! It is just using up the nutrients in the soil for nothing!' ⁸ But the gardener replied, 'Sir, leave it here for another year. I will dig around it and fertilize it. ⁹ If it has figs on it next year, we can allow it to keep growing! But if it does not bear any fruit by then, you can cut it down.'"

¹⁰ On one Jewish day of rest, Jesus was teaching people in one of the synagogues. ¹¹ There was a woman there whom an evil spirit had crippled for eighteen years. She was always bent over; she could not stand up straight. ¹² When Jesus saw her, he called her over to him. He said to her, "Woman, I have healed you of this illness!" ¹³ He put his hands on her. Immediately she stood up straight and began praising God! ¹⁴ But the leader of the synagogue was angry because Jesus had healed her on the Jewish rest day. So he said to the people, "There are six days each week in which our laws permit people to work. If

you need healing, those are the days to come to the synagogue and be healed." Do not come on our day of rest!" ¹⁵ Then the Lord replied to him, "You and your fellow religious leaders are hypocrites! Each of you also works on the day of rest sometimes! Would you not untie your ox or donkey to lead it from the food trough to where it can drink water? ¹⁶ This woman is a Jew, descended from Abraham! But Satan has kept her crippled for eighteen years, as though he had tied her up! Certainly you would agree that it is right that I free her from Satan, even if I do it on a day of rest! ¹⁷ After he said that, his enemies were ashamed of themselves. But all the other people were happy about all the wonderful things he was doing.

¹⁸ Then he said, "How can I explain what it will be like when God shows himself as king? I will tell you what it will be like. ¹⁹ It is like a tiny mustard seed that a man planted in his field. It grew until it became big, like a tree. It was so big that birds built nests in its branches."

²⁰ Then again he said, "I will tell you in another way what it will be like when God shows himself as king. ²¹ It is like a little bit of yeast that a woman mixed with about twenty-five kilograms of flour. That small amount of yeast made the whole batch of dough swell up."

²² Jesus continued traveling toward Jerusalem. He stopped in all the towns and villages along the way and taught the people. ²³ Someone asked him, "Lord, will God only save a few people?" Jesus replied, ²⁴ "You need to try hard to enter the narrow doorway. I tell you that many people will try some other way, but they will not be able to get in. ²⁵ After the owner of the house gets up and locks the door, you will stand outside and you will knock on the door. And you will beg the owner and say to him, 'Lord, open the

door for us!’ But he will reply, ‘No, I will not open it, because I do not know you, and I do not know where you are from!’²⁶ Then you will say, ‘You must have forgotten that we ate meals with you, and you taught us in the streets of our towns!’²⁷ But he will say, ‘I tell you again, I do not know you, and I do not know where you are from. You are wicked people! Get away from here!’”²⁸ Then Jesus continued by saying, “You will see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the distance. All the prophets who lived long ago will also be there, where God will rule everything as king. But you will be outside, crying and grinding your teeth in pain!”²⁹ Furthermore, many non-Jewish people will be inside. There will be ones who have come from lands to the north, east, south, and west. They will be feasting to celebrate that God is ruling everything.³⁰ Think about this: Some people who seem the least important now will be the most important then, and others who seem important now will be the least important then.”

³¹ That same day, some Pharisees came and said to Jesus, “Leave this area, because the ruler Herod Antipas wants to kill you!”³² He replied to them, “Tell that fox Herod this message from me: ‘Listen! I am expelling demons and performing miracles today, and I will continue doing it for a short time. After that, I will finish my work.’”³³ But I must continue my trip to Jerusalem during the coming days, since it is not appropriate to kill a prophet in a place other than Jerusalem.

³⁴ Oh, people of Jerusalem! You killed the prophets who lived long ago and you killed others whom God sent to you, by throwing stones at them. Many times I wanted to gather you together to protect you like a hen gathers her young chicks under her wings. But you did not want

me to do that.³⁵ Now look! God will no longer protect you, people of Jerusalem. I will also tell you this: I will enter your city only once more. After that, you will not see me until the time when I return, when you will say about me, ‘May God bless this man who comes with God’s authority!’”

Chapter 14

¹ One day, which was a day of rest, Jesus went to eat at the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees, and they were watching him carefully.² Right there in front of Jesus was a man who had a disease that caused his arms and legs to be very swollen.³ Jesus asked the experts in Jewish law and the Pharisees who were present, “Is it permitted in the law to heal people on the day of rest, or not?”⁴ They did not reply. So Jesus put his hands on the man and healed him. Then he told him he could go.⁵ And he said to the others there, “If you had a son or an ox that fell into a well on the day of rest, would you not immediately pull him out?”⁶ Again, they were not able to answer him.

⁷ Jesus noticed that the people who had been invited to the meal were choosing to sit in the places where important people usually sit. Then he gave this advice to them:⁸ “When one of you is invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit in a place where important people sit. It may be that a man more important than you has also been invited to the feast.⁹ When that man comes, the man who invited both of you will come say to you, ‘Let this man take your seat!’ Then you will have to take the least important seat, and you will be ashamed.”¹⁰ Instead, when you are invited to a feast, go and sit in the least important seat. Then when the man who invited everyone comes, he will say

to you, 'Friend, come sit in a better seat!' Then all the people who are eating with you will see that he is honoring you. ¹¹ For God will humble those who exalt themselves, and he will exalt those who humble themselves."

¹² Jesus also said to the Pharisee who had invited him to the meal, "When you invite people to a midday or evening meal, do not only invite your friends, relatives or rich neighbors, since they will later repay you by inviting you for a meal. ¹³ Instead, when you give a feast, invite poor people, crippled people, lame people or blind people. ¹⁴ They will be unable to repay you. But God will bless you! He will repay you at the resurrection of the righteous."

¹⁵ One of those who were eating with him heard him say that. He said to Jesus, "God has truly blessed everyone who will eat the feast to celebrate that God has begun to rule everywhere!" ¹⁶ Jesus replied to him, "One time a man decided to prepare a large feast. He invited many people to come. ¹⁷ When it was the day for the feast, he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come now because everything is ready!' ¹⁸ But when the servant did that, all of the people whom he had invited began to say why they could not come. The first man that the servant went to said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go there and see it. Please ask your master to forgive me for not coming!' ¹⁹ Another person said, 'I have just bought five pairs of oxen, and I must go to examine them. Please ask your master to forgive me for not coming!' ²⁰ Another person said, 'I have just been married, so I cannot come.' ²¹ So the servant returned to his master and reported what everyone had said. The owner of the house was angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and alleys of the city and find poor and crippled and blind and

lame people, and bring them here into my house!' ²² After the servant went out and did that, he came back and said, 'Sir, I have done what you told me to do, but there is still room for more people.' ²³ So his master said to him, 'Then go outside the city. Search for people along the highways. Search also along the narrow roads with hedges. Strongly urge the people in those places to come to my house. I want it to be full of people! ²⁴ Moreover I tell you this, the ones who were invited first will not get to enjoy my feast because they refused to come.'"

²⁵ A large crowd of people was traveling with Jesus. He turned toward the people and said to them, ²⁶ "If anyone comes to me who loves his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters more than he loves me, he cannot be my disciple. He must even love me more than he loves his own life! ²⁷ Whoever does not carry his own cross and whoever does not obey me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ If one of you desired to build a tower, would you not first sit down and determine how much it would cost? Then you would be able to determine whether you had enough money to complete it. ²⁹ Otherwise, if you laid the foundation and were not able to finish the rest of the tower, everyone who saw it would make fun of you. ³⁰ They would say, 'This man started to build a tower, but he was not able to finish it!' ³¹ Or, if a king decided to send his army to war against another king, he would surely first sit down with those who advised him. They would determine whether his army, which had only ten thousand soldiers, could defeat the other king's army, which had twenty thousand soldiers. ³² If he decided his army could not defeat the other army, he would send a messenger to the other king while the other army was still far away. He would tell the messenger to say to that

king, 'What things must I do to have peace with you?' ³³ So, similarly, if any one of you does not first decide that you are willing to give up all that you have, you cannot be my disciple."

³⁴ Jesus also said, "You are like salt, which is very useful. But if salt were to lose its saltiness, could it ever be made to taste salty again? ³⁵ If salt does not taste salty anymore, it is no longer any good even for the soil or manure heap. People just throw it away. Every one of you should listen carefully to what I am telling you!"

Chapter 15

¹ Now, many tax collectors and other people who were considered to be habitual sinners kept coming to Jesus to listen to him teach. ² When the Pharisees and teachers of the Jewish laws saw this, they began to grumble, saying, "This man welcomes sinners and even eats with them." They thought Jesus was defiling himself by doing this. ³ So Jesus told them this parable: ⁴ "Suppose that one of you has a hundred sheep and you lose one of them. Certainly you will leave the ninety-nine other sheep in the wilderness and go search for the lost sheep until you have found it. ⁵ When you find it, you will joyfully put it on your shoulders to carry it home. ⁶ Then when you arrive home, you will call together your friends and neighbors and say to them: 'Be joyful with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost!' ⁷ I tell you that, in a similar way, there will be more joy in heaven because of one sinner who repents from his sins than many people who were already right with God and do not need to repent.

⁸ Or, suppose that a woman has ten very valuable silver coins and then she loses one of them. Certainly she will light

a lamp and sweep the floor and search carefully until she finds it. ⁹ When she finds it, she will call together her friends and neighbors and say to them, "Be very happy with me, because I have found the coin that I lost!" ¹⁰ I tell you that, in a similar way, there is much joy among the angels of God because of one sinner who repents from his sins."

¹¹ Then Jesus continued and said, "There once was a man who had two sons. ¹² One day the younger son said to his father, 'Father, give me now the share of your property that would normally be given to me when you die.' So the father divided his property between his two sons. ¹³ Only a few days later, the younger son gathered together all that he owned and traveled to a country far away. There in that country he spent all his money foolishly in wasteful, immoral living. ¹⁴ After he had spent all his money, there was a severe famine throughout that country. Soon he did not have anything left to live on. ¹⁵ So he went to a man who lived in that country and asked him to hire him. So the man sent him out to his fields to feed his pigs. ¹⁶ He became so hungry that he wished he could eat the bean pods that the pigs ate, yet no one gave him anything. ¹⁷ Finally he began to think clearly about how foolish he had been and he said to himself: 'All of my father's hired servants have more than enough food to eat, but here I am dying because I do not have anything to eat! ¹⁸ So I will leave here and go back to my father. I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against God and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; please just employ me to work for you as one of your hired servants.'" ²⁰ So he left there and started traveling back to his father's house. But while he was still a great distance from the house, his father saw him and felt deep compassion for him. He ran to his son and embraced him and

kissed him on the cheek. ²¹ His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against God and against you. So I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²² But his father said to his servants; 'Go quickly and bring my best robe and put it on my son. Also put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet! ²³ And bring the calf that has been fattened for a special occasion and kill it, so that we can eat it and celebrate! ²⁴ We need to celebrate because this son of mine was like a dead man, but he is now alive again! He was like a lost person, but he has now been found!' So they all began to celebrate.

²⁵ While all that was happening, the father's older son was out working in the fields. After he finished working and was getting close to the house, he heard people playing music and dancing. ²⁶ He called for one of the servants and asked what was happening. ²⁷ The servant said to him, 'Your brother has come home. Your father has told us to kill the fattened calf to celebrate because your brother has returned safe and healthy.' ²⁸ But the older brother was angry and did not want to go into the house. So his father came out and pleaded with him to come in. ²⁹ But he replied to his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have worked for you as hard as a slave. I always obeyed everything you told me to do. But you never gave me even a young goat to eat so that I could give a feast with my friends. ³⁰ But now that this son of yours has come back home, after wasting all your money on prostitutes, you have told your servants to kill the fattened calf for a celebration!' ³¹ But his father said to him, 'My son, you are always with me, and all that I own is yours. ³² But it is right for us to rejoice and celebrate, because it is as though your brother was dead and is alive again! It is as though he was lost and has now been found!'"

Chapter 16

¹ Jesus also said to his disciples, "Once there was a rich man who had a household manager. One day the rich man was told that the manager was managing his property so badly that he was causing the rich man to lose his possessions. ² So he called the manager to come to him and said to him, 'What you have been doing is terrible! Give me a final written report of what you have been managing, because you may no longer be my household manager!' ³ Then the manager said to himself, 'My master is going to dismiss me from being his manager, so I have to think of what to do. I am not strong enough to work by digging ditches, and I am ashamed to beg for money. ⁴ I know what I will do, so that people will take me into their houses and provide for me after I am dismissed from my management work!' ⁵ So one by one he asked everyone who owed his master money to come to him. He asked the first one, 'How much do you owe my master?' ⁶ The man replied, '3,000 liters of olive oil.' The manager said to him, 'Take your bill, sit down, and quickly change it to 1,500 liters!' ⁷ He said to another man, 'How much do you owe?' The man replied, 'A thousand baskets of wheat.' The manager said to him, 'Take your bill and change it to eight hundred baskets!' ⁸ When the master heard what his manager had done, he praised the dishonest manager for being so shrewd. The truth is, the people who belong to this world are wiser than the people who belong to God in how they relate to the people around them. ⁹ I tell you, use the money you have in this world to make friends for yourself. Then when the money is gone, you will have friends who will welcome you into the eternal homes. ¹⁰ People who faithfully manage only small amounts of money can also be trusted with much more. People

who are dishonest in the way they handle unimportant duties will be dishonest in the way they handle important matters.¹¹ So if you have not faithfully handled the money God has given you from this world, he will certainly not let you have the true riches of heaven.¹² If you have not faithfully managed property that belongs to other people, you should not expect anyone to give you property of your own.¹³ No servant is able to serve two different masters at the same time. If he tried to do that, he would hate one of them and love the other one, or he would be loyal to one of them and despise the other one. You cannot devote your life to serving God if you are also devoting your life to acquiring money and other material possessions.”

¹⁴ When the Pharisees who were there heard Jesus say that, they made fun of him because they loved to acquire money.¹⁵ But Jesus said to them, “You try to make other people think that you are righteous, but God knows your hearts. Keep in mind that many things that people praise as being very important, God considers to be detestable.

¹⁶ The laws that God gave Moses and what the prophets wrote were proclaimed until John the Baptizer came. Since then I have been preaching that God will soon show himself as king. Many people are accepting that message and are very eagerly asking God to rule their lives.¹⁷ All of God’s laws, even those that seem insignificant, are more permanent than heaven and earth.

¹⁸ Any man who divorces his wife and marries another woman is committing adultery, and any man who marries a woman who is divorced from her husband is also committing adultery.”

¹⁹ Jesus also said, “Once there was a rich man who wore fine purple and linen

clothes. Every day he gave expensive feasts.²⁰ And every day a poor man whose name was Lazarus was laid at the gate of the rich man’s house. Lazarus’ body was covered with sores.²¹ He was so hungry that he wanted to eat the scraps of food that fell from the table where the rich man ate. While he was lying there dogs came and licked his sores.²² Eventually the poor man died. Then he was taken by the angels to his ancestor Abraham. The rich man also died, and his body was buried.²³ In the place of the dead, the rich man was suffering great pain. He looked up and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus sitting very close to Abraham.²⁴ So the rich man shouted, ‘Father Abraham, I am suffering very much in this fire! So please pity me, and send Lazarus here so that he can dip his finger in water and touch my tongue to cool it!’²⁵ But Abraham replied, ‘Child, remember that while you were alive on earth you enjoyed many good things. But Lazarus was miserable. Now he is happy here, and you are suffering.’²⁶ Besides that, God has placed a huge ravine between you and us. So those who want to go from here to where you are are not able to. Furthermore, no one can cross from there to where we are, either.’²⁷ Then the rich man said, ‘If that is so, Father Abraham, I ask you to send Lazarus to my father’s house.’²⁸ I have five brothers who live there. Tell him to warn them so that they do not also come to this place, where we suffer great pain!’²⁹ But Abraham replied, ‘No, I will not do that, because your brothers have what Moses and the prophets wrote long ago. They should obey what they wrote!’³⁰ But the rich man replied, ‘No, Father Abraham, that will not be enough! But if someone from those who have died goes back to them and warns them, they will turn from their sinful behavior.’³¹ Abraham said to him, ‘No! If they do not listen to what Moses

and the prophets wrote, even if someone would rise from among the dead and go warn them, they would still not be convinced that they should turn from their sinful behavior.”

Chapter 17

¹ Jesus said to his disciples, “Things that tempt people to sin will certainly happen, but how terrible it will be for anyone who causes those things to happen! ² It would be better for that person if someone fastened a huge stone around his neck and threw him into the sea, than if he were to cause to sin someone who is weak in his faith. ³ Be careful how you act. If one of your brothers sins, you should rebuke him. If he says that he is sorry for having sinned and asks you to forgive him, then you should forgive him. ⁴ Even if he sins against you seven times in one day, if he comes to you each time and says, ‘I am sorry for what I did,’ you must continue forgiving him.”

⁵ Then the apostles said to the Lord, “Give us more faith!” ⁶ The Lord replied, “Even if you had faith that was no bigger than this tiny mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Pull yourself with your roots out of the ground and plant yourself in the sea’ and it would obey you!”

⁷ Jesus also said, “Suppose that one of you had a servant who was plowing your fields or taking care of your sheep. After he comes into the house from the field, you would not say, ‘Come sit down immediately and eat!’ ⁸ Instead, you would say to him, ‘Prepare a meal for me! Then put on your serving clothes and serve it to me so that I can eat and drink! Afterwards you can eat and drink.’ ⁹ You will not thank your servant for doing the work

that he had been told to do! ¹⁰ Similarly, when you have done everything that God has told you to do, you should say, ‘We are only God’s servants and do not deserve for him to thank us. We have only done the things that he told us to do.’”

¹¹ As Jesus and his disciples were walking along the road to Jerusalem, they were going through the area between the regions of Samaria and Galilee. ¹² As Jesus entered a village, ten lepers came toward him, but stood at some distance away. ¹³ They called out, “Jesus, Master, please have pity on us!” ¹⁴ When he saw them, he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” So they went, and as they were going, they were healed. ¹⁵ Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God loudly. ¹⁶ He came to Jesus and he lay down on the ground with his face at Jesus’ feet, and he thanked him. This man was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ Then Jesus said, “I healed ten lepers! Why did the other nine not come back? ¹⁸ This foreign man was the only one who returned to thank God; none of the others came back!” ¹⁹ Then he said to the man, “Get up and go on your way. God has healed you because you trusted in me.”

²⁰ One day Jesus was asked by some Pharisees, “When will God begin to rule everyone?” He replied, “That is not about signs that people can see with their own eyes. ²¹ People will not be able to say, ‘Look! He is ruling here!’ or ‘He is ruling there!’ because, contrary to what you think, God has already begun to rule within you.”

²² Jesus said to his disciples, “There will be a time when you will want to see me, the Son of Man, ruling powerfully. But you will not see that. ²³ People will say to you, ‘Look, the Messiah is over there!’ or they will say, ‘Look, he is here!’ When they say that, do not follow them. ²⁴ Because when

the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, everyone can see it. Similarly when I, the Son of Man, come back again, everyone will see me. ²⁵ But before that happens, I must suffer in many ways, and I will be rejected by people. ²⁶ But when I, the Son of Man, come again, people will be doing things just like people were doing at the time when Noah lived. ²⁷ At that time people ate and drank as usual, and they got married as usual, up until the day when Noah and his family entered the big boat. But then the flood came and destroyed all those who were not in the boat. ²⁸ Similarly, when Lot lived in the city of Sodom, people there ate and drank as usual. They bought things and they sold things. They planted crops and they built houses as usual. ²⁹ But on the day that Lot left Sodom, fire and burning sulfur came down from the sky and destroyed all those who stayed in the city. ³⁰ Similarly, when I, the Son of Man, return to earth, people will be unprepared. ³¹ On that day, those who are outside their houses, with all the things that they own inside the houses, must not take time to go inside to take them away. Similarly, those who are working in a field must not turn back to get anything; they must flee quickly. ³² Remember what happened to Lot's wife! ³³ Anyone who continues in his own way of living will die. But anyone who leaves his way for my sake will live forever. ³⁴ I tell you this: On the night when I return, there will be two people sleeping in one bed. The one who believes in me will be taken and the other one will be left behind. ³⁵⁻³⁶ Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left behind." ³⁷ His disciples said to him, "Lord, where will this happen?" He replied to them, "Wherever there is a dead body, the vultures will gather to eat it."

Chapter 18

¹ Jesus told his disciples another story to teach them that they ought to pray continually and not become discouraged if God does not immediately answer their prayers. ² He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who did not revere God and did not care about people. ³ There was a widow in that city who kept coming to that judge, saying, 'Please get justice for me from the man who is opposing me in court. ⁴ For a long time the judge refused to help her. But later, he said to himself, 'I do not revere God and I do not care about people, ⁵ but this widow keeps bothering me! So I will judge her case and make sure she is treated fairly, because if I do not do that, she will exhaust me by continually coming to me!'" ⁶ Then the Lord Jesus said, "Think carefully about what the unjust judge said. ⁷ Even more certainly will God, who is just, bring about justice for his chosen people, who pray earnestly to him night and day! And he is always patient with them. ⁸ I tell you, God will quickly do justice for his chosen ones! Nevertheless when I, the Son of Man, come back to earth, there will still be many people who do not believe in me."

⁹ Then Jesus also told the following story to some people who thought they were righteous and who looked down on other people. ¹⁰ He said, "Two men went up to the temple in Jerusalem to pray. One of the men was a Pharisee. The other was someone who collected taxes from the people for the Roman government. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood and prayed about himself in this way, 'O God, I thank you that I am not like other people. Some steal money from others, some treat others unjustly, and some commit adultery. I do not do any of those things. And I am certainly not like this sinful tax collector who cheats

people! ¹² I fast two days every week and I give to the temple ten percent of all that I earn!" ¹³ But the tax collector stood far away from the other people in the temple courtyard. He would not even look up toward heaven. Instead, he beat on his chest and said, "O God, please be merciful to me and forgive me, because I am a terrible sinner!" ¹⁴ Then Jesus said, "I tell you that the tax collector was forgiven as they left to go home, but not the Pharisee. This is because everyone who exalts himself will be made humble, and everyone who humbles himself will be exalted."

¹⁵ One day people were bringing even their babies to Jesus so that he would put his hands on them and bless them. When the disciples saw this, they told them not to do that. ¹⁶ But Jesus called for the children to be brought to him. He said, "Let the little children come to me! Do not stop them! It is humble and trusting people like these children over whom God will agree to rule. ¹⁷ Indeed I say to you that whoever does not accept with humility like a child for God to rule over them, God will not accept that person at all."

¹⁸ Once a Jewish leader asked Jesus, "Good teacher, what must I do in order to have eternal life?" ¹⁹ Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? God is the only one who is truly good!"

²⁰ In answer to your question, certainly you know the commandments that God gave to Moses for us to obey: "Do not commit adultery, do not murder anyone, do not steal, do not give a false report, honor your father and mother." ²¹ The man said, "I have obeyed all those commandments ever since I was young." ²² When Jesus heard him say that, he replied to him, "You still need to do one more thing. Sell all that you own. Then give the money to people who have very little to live on. The result will be that you will have spiri-

tual riches in heaven. Then come and be my disciple!" ²³ The man became very sad when he heard that, because he was extremely rich. ²⁴ When Jesus saw how sad the man was, he too became very sorrowful. He said, "It is very difficult for those who are wealthy to agree for God to rule over them." ²⁵ In fact, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for rich people to let God rule their lives." ²⁶ Those who heard Jesus say that replied, "Then it seems that no one can be saved!" ²⁷ But Jesus said, "What is impossible for people is possible for God." ²⁸ Then Peter said, "Look, we have left everything we had in order to become your disciples. ²⁹ Jesus said to them, "Yes, and I also tell you that those who have left their homes, their wives, their brothers, their parents, or their children in order to submit to God's will for them ³⁰ will receive in this life many times as much as they left behind, and in the coming age they will receive eternal life."

³¹ Jesus took the twelve disciples to a place by themselves and said to them, "Listen carefully! We are now going up to Jerusalem. While we are there, everything that the prophets wrote long ago about me, the Son of Man, will be accomplished. ³² My enemies will put me into the power of the non-Jews. They will mock me, treat me with disdain, and spit on me. ³³ They will whip me and then they will kill me. But on the third day after that I will become alive again." ³⁴ But the disciples did not understand any of those things that he said. God prevented them from understanding the meaning of what he was telling them.

³⁵ As Jesus and his disciples came near to the city of Jericho, a blind man was sitting beside the road. He was begging for money. ³⁶ When he heard the crowd of people passing by, he asked someone,

“What is happening?” ³⁷ They told him, “Jesus, the man from the town of Nazareth, is passing by.” ³⁸ He shouted, “Jesus, you who are descended from King David, have pity on me!” ³⁹ Those who were walking at the front of the crowd scolded him and told him to be quiet. But he shouted even more loudly, “You who are descended from King David, have pity on me!” ⁴⁰ Jesus stopped walking and commanded the people to bring the man to him. When the blind man came near, Jesus asked him, ⁴¹ “What do you want me to do for you?” He replied, “Lord, I want you to enable me to see!” ⁴² Jesus said to him, “Then see! Because you have trusted in me, I have healed you!” ⁴³ Immediately he was able to see. And he went with Jesus, praising God. And when all the people there saw this, they also praised God.

Chapter 19

¹ Jesus entered Jericho and was going through the city. ² There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was in charge of collecting taxes and was very rich. ³ He wanted to see Jesus but he could not see him over the crowd. He was a very short man and there were many people around Jesus. ⁴ So he ran further down the road. He climbed a sycamore fig tree so he could see Jesus when he came by. ⁵ When Jesus got there, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down quickly, I have to stay at your house tonight!” ⁶ So he came down quickly. He was glad to welcome Jesus into his home. ⁷ But the people who saw Jesus go there grumbled, saying, “He has gone to be the guest of a real sinner!” ⁸ Then Zacchaeus stood up while they were eating and said to Jesus, “Lord, I want you to know that I am going to give half of what I own to poor people. And as for the people whom I have cheated, I

will pay them back four times the amount I have gotten from them.” ⁹ Jesus said to him, “Today God has saved this household, because this man has shown that he is a true descendant of Abraham. ¹⁰ Remember this: I, the Son of Man, came to find and save people like you who have gone astray from God.”

¹¹ The people were listening to everything Jesus said. Since he was getting close to Jerusalem, Jesus decided to tell them another story. He wanted to correct their idea that as soon as he got to Jerusalem he would begin to rule as king over God’s people. ¹² He said, “A prince prepared to go to a distant country in order to receive from a higher king the right to become king over the country where he lived. After he received the right of being king, he would return to rule his people. ¹³ Before he left, he summoned ten of his servants. He gave each of them an equal amount of money. He said to them, ‘Do business with this money until I return!’ Then he left. ¹⁴ But many people of his country hated him. So they sent some messengers to follow him and say to the higher king, ‘We do not want this man to be our king!’ ¹⁵ But he was made king anyway. Later he returned as the new king. Then he called in the servants to whom he had given the money. He wanted to know how much they had gained by doing business with the money he had given them. ¹⁶ The first man came to him and said, ‘Sir, with your money I have earned ten times as much!’ ¹⁷ He said to this man, ‘You are a good servant! You have done very well! Because you have faithfully taken care of a small amount of money, I will give you ten cities to rule over.’ ¹⁸ Then the second servant came and said, ‘Sir, the money you gave me is now worth five times as much!’ ¹⁹ He also said to that servant, ‘Well done! I will put you over five cities.’ ²⁰ Then another servant came. He said, ‘Sir, here is

your money. I wrapped it up in a cloth and hid it to keep it safe. ²¹ I was afraid of what you would do to me if the business failed. I know you are a hard man who takes from others that which does not really belong to you. You are like a farmer who harvests grain that another man planted.’ ²² He said to that servant, ‘You wicked servant! I will condemn you by the words you just said. You knew I was a hard man, because I take what does not belong to me and harvest what I did not plant. ²³ So you should at least have given my money to money lenders! Then when I returned I could have collected that amount plus the interest it would have earned!’ ²⁴ Then the king said to those who were standing near, ‘Take the money from him and give it to the servant who made ten times as much!’ ²⁵ They protested, ‘But sir, he already has a lot of money!’ ²⁶ But the king said, ‘I tell you this: To the people who use well what they have received, I will give even more. But from the people who do not use well what they have received, I will take away even what they already have. ²⁷ Now, as for those enemies of mine who did not want me to rule over them, bring them here and execute them while I am watching!’”

²⁸ After Jesus said those things, he continued on the road up to Jerusalem, going ahead of the disciples. ²⁹ When they got close to the villages of Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, ³⁰ he said to two of his disciples, “Go to the village just ahead of you. As you enter it, you will see a young donkey tied up there that no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it to me. ³¹ If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying the donkey?’ say to him, ‘The Lord needs it.’” ³² So the two disciples went to the village and found the donkey, just as Jesus had told them. ³³ As they were untying it, its owners said to them, “Why are you untying our donkey?” ³⁴

They replied, “The Lord needs it.” ³⁵ Then the disciples brought the donkey to Jesus. They threw their cloaks on the donkey’s back for him to sit on and helped Jesus get on it. ³⁶ Then as he rode along, others spread their cloaks on the road in front of him to honor him. ³⁷ As they came along the road that goes down from the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God loudly for all the great miracles that they had seen Jesus do. ³⁸ They were saying things like, “May God bless our king who comes with God’s authority! May there be peace between God in heaven and us his people, and may everyone praise God!” ³⁹ Some of the Pharisees who were in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell your disciples to stop saying those things!” ⁴⁰ He replied, “I tell you this: if these people were silent, the stones themselves would shout to praise me!”

⁴¹ When Jesus came near to Jerusalem and saw the city, he cried about its people. ⁴² He said, “I wish that today you people knew how to have God’s peace. But now you are unable to know it. ⁴³ I want you to know this: Soon your enemies will come and will set up a barricade around your city. They will surround the city and attack it on all sides. ⁴⁴ They will break through the walls and destroy everything. They will destroy it and you and all your children. When they finish destroying everything, there will not be one stone left on top of another. All this will happen because you did not recognize the time when God came to save you!”

⁴⁵ Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courtyard. He saw in that place the people who were selling things, ⁴⁶ and he began to chase them out. He said to them, “It has been written in the scriptures, ‘I want my house to be a place where people pray,’ but you have made it

a hideout for thieves!”

⁴⁷ Each day during that week Jesus was teaching people in the temple courtyard. The chief priests, the teachers of religious laws, and other Jewish leaders were trying to find a way to kill him. ⁴⁸ But they did not find any way to do it, because all the people were eager to hear him.

Chapter 20

¹ One day during that week Jesus was teaching the people in the temple courtyard and telling them God’s good message. As he was doing that, the chief priests, the teachers of the Jewish laws, and other elders came to him. ² They said to him, “Tell us, what right do you have to do these things? And who gave you this right?” ³ He replied, “I will also ask you a question. Tell me, ⁴ about John baptizing people: Did God command him to baptize or did humans command him?” ⁵ They discussed this among themselves. They said, “If we answer, ‘God commanded him,’ then he will say, ‘So why did you not believe him?’ ⁶ But if we say, ‘It was only humans who told him to baptize,’ the people will stone us to death, because they all believe that John was a prophet that God sent.” ⁷ So they replied that they did not know who told John to baptize. ⁸ Then Jesus said to them, “Neither will I tell you who sent me to do those things.”

⁹ Then Jesus told the people this parable, “A man planted a vineyard. He rented the vineyard to some men to care for it. Then he went to another country and stayed there for a long time. ¹⁰ When it was time to harvest the grapes, he sent a servant to the men who were taking care of the vineyard, so they would give him his share of the grapes that the vineyard had produced. But after the servant arrived,

they beat him and sent him away without any grapes. ¹¹ Later, the owner sent another servant. But they beat and shamed him also. They sent him away without any grapes. ¹² Still later, the owner sent another servant. This third servant they wounded and threw out of the vineyard. ¹³ So the owner of the vineyard said to himself, ‘What should I do now? I will send my son, whom I love very much. They will probably respect him.’ ¹⁴ So he sent his son, but when the men who were caring for the vineyard saw him coming, they said to each other, ‘Here comes the man who will some day inherit the vineyard! Let us kill him so that this vineyard might become ours!’ ¹⁵ So they dragged him outside the vineyard and they killed him. So I will tell you what the owner of the vineyard will do to them! ¹⁶ He will come and kill those men who were taking care of the vineyard. Then he will arrange for other people to take care of it.” When the people listening to Jesus heard this, they said, “May a situation like this never happen!” ¹⁷ But Jesus looked directly at them and said, “You can say that, but think about the meaning of these words that are written in the scriptures,

‘The stone which the builders rejected has become the most important stone in the building.

¹⁸ Everyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.”

¹⁹ The chief priests and the teachers of the Jewish laws realized that he was accusing them when he told the story about those wicked men. So they immediately tried to find a way to arrest him, but they did not arrest him, because they were afraid of what the people would do if they did so. ²⁰ So they watched him carefully. They also sent spies who pretended to be sincere. But they really wanted to get Jesus to say

something wrong for which they could accuse him. They wanted to be able to turn him over to the governor of the province. ²¹ So one of the spies asked him, "Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right. You tell the truth even if important people do not like it. You teach truthfully what God wants us to do. ²² So tell us what you think about this matter: Is it right that we pay taxes to the Roman government, or not?" ²³ But he knew that they were trying to trick him to get him into trouble, either with the Jews, who hated to pay those taxes, or with the Roman government. So he said to them, ²⁴ "Show me a Roman coin. Then tell me whose picture is on it. And tell me whose name is on it." So they showed him a coin and said, "It has the picture and name of Caesar, the head of the Roman government." ²⁵ He said to them, "In that case, give to the government what belongs to them, and give to God what belongs to him." ²⁶ The spies were amazed at his answer, so much that they could not answer him. There was nothing that Jesus said before the people standing around him that the spies could find anything wrong with.

²⁷ After that, some Sadducees came to Jesus. They were a group of Jews who said that no one will rise from the dead. ²⁸ They also wanted to ask Jesus a question. One of them said to him, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us Jews that if a man who has a wife but no children dies, his brother should marry the widow so that she can have a child by him. In this way, people will consider that the child is the descendant of the man who died. ²⁹ Well, there were seven brothers in one family. The oldest one married a woman but she did not have any children. Later he died, leaving her to be a widow. ³⁰ The second brother followed this law and married the widow, but the same thing happened to him. ³¹ Then the third brother married

her, but the same thing happened again. All seven brothers, one by one, married that woman, but they had no children, and one by one they died. ³² Afterwards, the woman died, too. ³³ Therefore, if it is true that there will be a time when people who have died will become alive again, whose wife do you think that woman will be then? Keep in mind that she was married to all seven brothers!" ³⁴ Jesus replied to them, "In this world, men take wives, and people give their daughters in marriage to men. ³⁵ But the people whom God considers worthy of being in heaven after they rise from the dead will not marry. ³⁶ Also, they cannot die anymore, because they are like the angels of God who live forever. They are God's children, since they are children whom God raised to new life. ³⁷ But in the account of the bush, even Moses wrote about how God raises the dead to life. In the place where he wrote, he calls the Lord, 'the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' Moses showed us that the leaders of God's people, when they die, still worship and honor God, because they still live before God. That proves that God makes people who die, alive again. ³⁸ Now he is the God of those who are alive. He is not the God of people who are dead! But all of us are given life so we can be with God, and when we are with him, we can honor him!"

³⁹ Some of the teachers of the Jewish law replied, "Teacher, you have answered very well!" ⁴⁰ After that, no one dared to ask him any more questions like that to trap him.

⁴¹ Later Jesus said to them, "I will show you that when people say that the Messiah is only a descendant of King David, they are wrong! ⁴² David himself wrote in the Book of Psalms about the Messiah,

God said to my Lord,

'Sit here beside me at my right, where I will highly honor you.

⁴³ Sit here while I completely defeat your enemies.'

⁴⁴ King David calls the Messiah 'my Lord'! So the Messiah cannot be just someone descended from King David! What I just said proves that he is much greater than David, right?"

⁴⁵ While all the other people were listening, Jesus said to his disciples, ⁴⁶ "Beware that you do not act like the men who teach our Jewish laws. They like to put on long robes and walk around to make people think that they are very important. They also like people to greet them respectfully in the marketplaces. They like to sit in the most important places in the synagogues. At dinner parties they like to sit in the seats where the most honored people sit.

⁴⁷ They also steal all the property of widows. Then they pray for a long time in public. God will certainly punish them very severely."

Chapter 21

¹ Jesus looked up from where he was sitting and saw rich people putting their gifts into the temple offering box. ² He also saw a poor widow put in two small coins of very little value. ³ And he said to his disciples, "The truth is that this poor widow has put into the offering box more money than all these rich people. ⁴ For they all have a lot of money, but they gave only a small part of it. But this widow, who is very poor, has given all the money that she had to buy what she needed.

⁵ Some of Jesus' disciples were talking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and decorations that people had given. But Jesus said, ⁶ "These

things you are looking at will be destroyed completely. Yes, the time is coming when not one of these stones will be left on top of another."

⁷ Then they asked him, "Teacher, when will these things happen? And what will happen to show that these things are about to take place?" ⁸ Jesus replied, "Be careful that no one deceives you. For many people will come and each will claim to be me. Each will say about himself, 'I am the Messiah!' They will also say, 'The time is almost here, when God will rule as king!' Do not follow after them to become their disciples! ⁹ Also, whenever you hear about wars and people fighting each other, do not be terrified. For these things must happen before the end of the world comes."

¹⁰ "Various people groups will attack each other, and various kings will fight each other. ¹¹ And in various places there will be great earthquakes, as well as famines and terrible diseases. Many things will happen that will cause people to be very afraid, and people will see strange things in the sky that will show that something very important is going to happen. ¹²

But before all these things happen, they will arrest you, treat you badly and hand you over to the synagogues for trial and hand you over to the prisons. They will put you on trial in the presence of kings and high government authorities because you follow me. ¹³ That will be a time for you to tell them the truth about me. ¹⁴

So be determined not to worry ahead of time about what you will say to defend yourselves, ¹⁵ because I will give you the right words and wisdom so that you will know what to say. As a result, none of the people accusing you will be able to say you are wrong. ¹⁶ And even your parents and brothers and other relatives and

friends will betray you, and they will kill

some of you. ¹⁷ In general, everybody will hate you because you believe in me. ¹⁸ But not even one hair from your head shall be destroyed. ¹⁹ If you go through difficult times and prove your trust in God, you will save yourselves.”

²⁰ “When you see armies surround Jerusalem, then you will know that they will soon destroy this city. ²¹ At that time those of you who are in the region of Judea must flee to the mountains. And those of you who are in this city must leave. Those of you who are in the nearby countryside must not come into the city. ²² For this will be the time when God will punish this city; when he does, the words in the scriptures will come true. ²³ How terrible it will be for the pregnant women and those nursing their babies in those days, because there will be great suffering in the land, and its people will suffer enormously because God will be angry with them. ²⁴ Many of them will die because soldiers will attack them with weapons. Others will become prisoners and they will be sent to many places around the world. The Gentiles will keep marching their troops through the streets of Jerusalem for as long as God allows.”

²⁵ “At this time, strange things will happen to the sun, the moon, and the stars. And on earth, people groups will become very frightened, and they will become confused because of the roaring ocean and its huge waves. ²⁶ People will be so afraid that they will faint, because they are waiting for what will happen next in the world. The stars in the sky will have to leave from their usual places. ²⁷ Then all people will see me, the Son of Man, coming in the clouds with power and brilliant light. ²⁸ So when those terrible things begin to happen, stand up straight and look upward, because God will soon rescue you.”

²⁹ Then Jesus told them a parable: “Think

about the fig trees, and even all the trees.

³⁰ Whenever you see that their leaves are sprouting, you know that summer is near.

³¹ In the same way, when you see these things that I have just described happening, you will know then that God will soon show himself as king. ³² I am telling you the truth: This generation of people will not come to an end before all these things that I have just now described happen. ³³ The sky and the earth will come to an end, but what I tell you will never come to an end.

³⁴ “Be very careful to control yourselves. Do not go to parties where people are acting immorally or getting drunk. And do not carry the cares of this life with you. If you live this way, you will stop waiting for me to return. And then, at that moment, I will surprise you when I come. I will come so suddenly it will be like when a animal trap springs closed without warning. ³⁵ Indeed, I will return without warning, and that day will come when you are not ready to see me. ³⁶ So you must be always ready for my coming. And always pray that you may be able to go through all these hard things in safety, and that I, the Son of Man, declare you innocent when I come to judge the world.”

³⁷ Each day Jesus was teaching people in the temple. But every evening he went out of the city and stayed all night on the Mount of Olives. ³⁸ And early every morning all the people came to the temple to listen to him.

Chapter 22

¹ It was now almost time for the Celebration of Unleavened Bread, which people also call the Passover. ² Now the chief priests and the teachers of the Jewish laws were looking for a way to kill Je-

sus because they feared the people who followed him.

³ Then Satan entered into Judas, the one called Iscariot, who was one of the twelve disciples. ⁴ He went and talked with the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard about how he might turn Jesus over to them. ⁵ They were very pleased that he wanted to do that. They offered to pay him money for doing this. ⁶ So Judas agreed, and then he started looking for a way to help them arrest Jesus when there was no crowd around him.

⁷ Then the Day of Unleavened Bread came, the day when the lambs for the Passover Celebration had to be killed. ⁸ So Jesus said to Peter and John, "Go and prepare the meal for the Passover Celebration for us so we can eat it together." ⁹ They replied to him, "Where do you want us to prepare to eat it?" ¹⁰ He answered, "Listen carefully. When you go into the city, a man carrying a large jar of water will meet you; follow him into the house that he enters. ¹¹ Say to the owner of the house, 'Our teacher says to show us the room where he can eat the Passover meal together with us, his disciples.' ¹² He will show you a large room that is on the upper floor of the house. It will be all set up, with everything ready for guests. Prepare the meal for us there." ¹³ So the two disciples went into the city. They found everything to be just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the meal for the Passover Celebration there.

¹⁴ When it was time to eat the meal, Jesus came and sat down with the apostles. ¹⁵ He said to them, "I have wanted very much to eat this Passover meal with you before I suffer and die. ¹⁶ I tell you, I will not eat it again until I do so when God rules everyone everywhere, when he finishes what he started to do in the Passover." ¹⁷ Then he took a cup of wine

and thanked God for it. He said, "Take this, and share it among yourselves. ¹⁸ For I tell you that I will not drink any of this wine again until God rules everyone everywhere." ¹⁹ Then he took some bread and thanked God for it. He broke it into pieces and gave it to them to eat. As he did so, he said, "This bread is my body, which I am about to sacrifice for you. Do this later to honor me." ²⁰ In the same way, after they had eaten the meal, he took the cup of wine and said, "This is the new covenant I will make using my own blood, which will pour out for you. ²¹ But, look! The person who will hand me over to my enemies is here eating with me. ²² Indeed, I, the Son of Man, will die, because that is what God has planned. But how terrible it will be for the man who hands me over to my enemies!" ²³ Then the apostles began to ask one another, "Which one of us is planning to do this thing?"

²⁴ After that, the apostles began to argue among themselves; they said, "Which one of us will have the most honor when Jesus becomes king?" ²⁵ Jesus answered them, "The kings of the Gentile nations like to show people that they are powerful. Yet they give themselves the title, 'ones who help the people.' ²⁶ But you should not be like those rulers! Instead, the most honored persons among you should act as if they were the youngest, and the one who leads must act like a servant. ²⁷ For you know that the important person is the one who eats at the table, not the servant who brings the food. But I am your servant.

²⁸ You are the persons who have stayed with me during all the hard things I have suffered. ²⁹ So now, I will make you powerful officials when God rules everyone, just as my Father appointed me to rule as a king. ³⁰ You will sit and eat and drink with me when I become king. In fact, you will sit on thrones to judge the people of

the twelve tribes of Israel.”

³¹ “Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has asked God to let him test you, like someone shakes grain in a sieve, and God has permitted him to do it. ³² But I have prayed for you, Simon, that you will not completely stop believing in me. So when you come back to me, give courage again to these men, your brothers. ³³ Peter said to him, “Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison; I am willing to die with you!” ³⁴ Jesus replied, “Peter, I want you to know that this night, before the rooster crows, you will say three times that you do not know me!”

³⁵ Then Jesus asked the disciples, “When I sent you out to the villages, and you went without any money, food, or sandals, was there anything you needed but could not get?” They replied, “Nothing!” ³⁶ And he said, “But, now, if anyone among you has some money, he should take it with him. Also, whoever has food should take it with him, and whoever does not have a sword should sell his coat and buy one!” ³⁷ I tell you this because what a prophet wrote about me in the scriptures must happen: ‘People considered him to be a criminal.’ Everything that is written about me in the scriptures is happening. ³⁸ The disciples said, “Lord, look! We have two swords!” He replied, “Enough. Do not talk like this any longer.”

³⁹ Jesus left the city and went to the Mount of Olives, as he usually did; his disciples went with him. ⁴⁰ When he came to the place where he wanted to go, he said to them, “Pray that God will help you not to be tempted to sin.” ⁴¹ Then he went about thirty meters from them, knelt down and prayed. He said, ⁴² “Father, the terrible things that are about to happen to me: If you are willing to keep from happening, do it. But do not do what I want, but what you want.” ⁴³ Then an angel from

heaven came and gave him courage. ⁴⁴ He was suffering greatly. So he prayed more intensely. His sweat was falling to the ground like large drops of blood. ⁴⁵ When he got up from praying, he returned to his disciples. He found that they were so tired out because of their sorrow that they were sleeping. ⁴⁶ He woke them up and said to them, “You should not be sleeping! Get up! Pray that God will help you so that nothing will persuade you to sin.”

⁴⁷ While Jesus was still speaking, a crowd of people came to him. Judas, one of the twelve disciples, was leading them. He came up to Jesus to kiss him. ⁴⁸ But Jesus said to him, “Judas, will you really kiss me, the Son of Man, in order to hand me over to my enemies?” ⁴⁹ When the disciples realized what was happening, they said, “Lord, shall we strike them with our swords?” ⁵⁰ One of them struck the servant of the high priest, but only cut off his right ear. ⁵¹ But Jesus said, “Do not do any more of that.” Then he touched the servant’s ear and healed him. ⁵²⁻⁵³ Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guards, and the Jewish elders who had come to arrest him, “It is surprising that you have come here with swords and clubs to arrest me, as if I were a robber. For many days I was with you in the temple, but you did not try to arrest me at all! But this is the time you are doing what you want. It is also the time when Satan is doing the evil things as he wants to do.

⁵⁴ They seized Jesus and led him away. They brought him to the high priest’s house. Peter followed them far behind. ⁵⁵ The people lit a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together. Peter sat among them. ⁵⁶ A female servant saw Peter sitting there as the fire shone upon him. She looked at him carefully and said, “This man was also with the one whom they have arrested!” ⁵⁷ But he de-

nied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him!" ⁵⁸ A little later someone else saw Peter and said, "You also are one of those who were with the man they arrested!" But Peter said, "Man, I am not one of them!" ⁵⁹ About an hour later someone else said loudly, "The way that this man speaks shows that he is from the region of Galilee. Certainly this man was also with the man whom they arrested!" ⁶⁰ But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about!" Immediately a rooster crowed, while he was still speaking. ⁶¹ The Lord Jesus turned around and looked right at Peter. Then Peter remembered what the Lord had said to him, "This night, before the rooster crows, you will deny three times that you know me." ⁶² And he went out of the courtyard and cried with great sorrow.

⁶³ The men who were guarding Jesus made fun of him and beat him. ⁶⁴ They put a blindfold on him and said to him, "Show us that you are a prophet! Tell us who it was that struck you!" ⁶⁵ They said many other evil things about him, insulting him.

⁶⁶ At dawn the next morning, many of the Jewish leaders gathered together. In this group were the chief priests and the men who taught the Jewish laws. They took Jesus to the Jewish council chamber. There they said to him, ⁶⁷ "If you are the Messiah, tell us!" But he replied, "If I say that I am he, you will not believe me. ⁶⁸ If I ask you what you think about the Messiah, you will not answer me. ⁶⁹ But from now on, I, the Son of Man, will be sitting next to almighty God and ruling!" ⁷⁰ Then they all asked, "If that is so, are you saying that you are the Son of God?" He answered, "Yes, it is just like you say." ⁷¹ Then they said to each other, "We certainly do not need any more people to testify against him! We ourselves have heard him say

that he is equal to God!"

Chapter 23

¹ Then the whole group got up and took him to Pilate, the Roman governor. ² They accused him in front of Pilate: "We have seen this fellow causing trouble by telling lies to our people. He has been telling them to not pay taxes to Caesar, the Roman emperor. Also, he has been saying that he is the Messiah, a king!" ³ Pilate then asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus replied, "Yes, it is just as you have asked me." ⁴ Then Pilate said to the chief priests and to the crowd, "This man is not guilty of any crime." ⁵ But they kept on accusing Jesus; they said, "He is trying to get the people to riot! He has been teaching his ideas throughout all of the region of Judea. He started doing this in the region of Galilee and now he is doing it here, also!"

⁶ When Pilate heard their words, he asked, "Does this man come from the district of Galilee?" ⁷ Because Pilate learned that Jesus was from Galilee, where Herod Antipas ruled, he sent Jesus to him, because Herod was in Jerusalem at that time. ⁸ When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad. He had been wanting for a long time to see Jesus, because he was hearing many things about him and wanted to see him perform a miracle. ⁹ So he asked Jesus many questions, but Jesus did not reply to any of them. ¹⁰ And the chief priests and some experts in the Jewish laws stood near him, accusing him very of all kinds of crimes. ¹¹ Then Herod and his soldiers made fun of Jesus. They put expensive clothes on him to pretend that he was a king. Then Herod sent him back to Pilate. ¹² Until that time Herod and Pilate had been very hostile to each other, but that very day they became friends.

¹³ Pilate then gathered together the chief priests and other Jewish leaders and the crowd that was still there. ¹⁴ He said to them, "You brought this man to me, saying that he has been leading the people to revolt. But I want you to know that after having examined him while you were listening, I do not think that he is guilty of any of the things you have told me about. ¹⁵ Even Herod does not think he is guilty. I know this, because he sent him back to us without punishing him. So it is clear that this man does not deserve to die. ¹⁶ So I will tell my soldiers to whip him and then set him free." ¹⁷ (Pilate said this because he had to set free one prisoner at the Passover Celebration.) ¹⁸ But the whole crowd shouted together saying, "Put this man to death! Set Barabbas free for us!" ¹⁹ Now Barabbas was a man who had led some people in the city to rebel against the Roman government. He was also a murderer. He was in prison because of these crimes, and he was waiting for them to put him to death. ²⁰ But Pilate wanted very much to set Jesus free, so he tried to speak to the crowd again. ²¹ But they kept on shouting, saying, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" ²² Pilate spoke to them a third time and asked them, "Why? What crime has he committed? He has done nothing for which he deserves to die. So I will have my soldiers whip him and then set him free." ²³ But they kept insisting with loud voices that Jesus should be die on a cross. Finally, because they continued to shout so loudly, they persuaded Pilate ²⁴ to do what they requested. ²⁵ So he set free the man who was in prison because he had fought against the government and murdered people! He then commanded the soldiers to take Jesus and do what the crowd wanted.

²⁶ Now there was a man named Simon, who was from the city of Cyrene in Africa. He was coming into Jerusalem from the

countryside. As the soldiers were leading Jesus away, they grabbed hold of Simon. They took from Jesus the cross that they had made him carry, and they they put it on Simon's shoulders. They told him to carry it and follow behind Jesus. ²⁷ Now a large crowd was following Jesus. It had many women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. ²⁸ Jesus turned to them and said, "You women of Jerusalem, do not weep for me! Instead, weep because of what is going to happen to yourselves and your children! ²⁹ For I want you to know that there will soon be a time when people will say, 'How fortunate are the women who have never given birth to children or nursed babies!' ³⁰ Then the people in this city will say, 'We wish that the mountains would fall on top of us and that the hills would cover us up!' ³¹ If I have to die, even though I have nothing wrong, terrible things will certainly happen to people who deserve to die.

³² Two other men who were criminals were also walking to the place where they would die with Jesus. ³³ When they came to the place named 'The Skull', there they crucified Jesus by nailing him to a cross. They did the same thing to the two criminals. They put one at the right side of Jesus and one at his left side. ³⁴ But Jesus said, "Father, forgive these people who did this, because they do not really know whom they are doing this to." Then the soldiers divided his clothes by gambling with something like dice, to decide which piece of clothing each one would get. ³⁵ Many people stood nearby, watching. Even the Jewish leaders were mocking Jesus: "He saved other people! If God has really chosen him to be the Messiah, he should save himself!" ³⁶ The soldiers also mocked him. They came up to him and offered him some sour wine. ³⁷ They kept saying to him, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" ³⁸ They also fastened on

the cross above his head a sign that stated, 'This is the King of the Jews.'

³⁹ One of the criminals who was hanging on a cross also insulted Jesus; he said, "You are the Messiah, are you not? So save yourself, and save us too!" ⁴⁰ But the other criminal stopped him from speaking; he said, "You should be afraid of God punishing you! They are punishing him and us in the same way. ⁴¹ We two deserve to die. They are punishing us as we deserve for the evil things that we did. But this man has done nothing wrong!" ⁴² Then he said to Jesus, "Jesus, please remember to save me when you begin to rule as king!" ⁴³ Jesus replied, "I want you to know that today you will be with me in paradise!"

⁴⁴ Then it was about noontime. But it became dark over all the land until three o'clock in the afternoon. ⁴⁵ There was no light from the sun. And the thick curtain that closed off the most holy place in the temple split into two pieces. ⁴⁶ When that happened, Jesus shouted loudly, "Father, I put my spirit into your care!" After he said that, he stopped breathing and died.

⁴⁷ When the centurion who was over the soldiers saw what happened, he said, "Indeed, this man has done nothing wrong!" What he said honored God. ⁴⁸ When the crowd of people who had gathered to see these men die saw what actually happened, they returned to their homes, hitting their own chests to show that they were sorrowful. ⁴⁹ All of Jesus' acquaintances, including the women who had come with him from the region of Galilee, stood at a little distance away and watched everything happen.

⁵⁰⁻⁵¹ Now there was a man named Joseph from Arimathea, a Jewish town. He was a good and a righteous man, and he was a member of the Jewish council. He saw everything happen, but he had not agreed with the other Council members when

they decided to kill Jesus and when they did it. He was waiting eagerly for the time when God would send his king to begin to rule. ⁵² Joseph went to Pilate and asked Pilate to permit him to take Jesus' body to bury it. Pilate gave him permission, ⁵³ so he took Jesus' body down from the cross. He wrapped it in a linen cloth. Then he put his body in a burial chamber that someone had cut in a rock cliff. No one had ever put a body in it before. ⁵⁴ It was the day when people got ready for the Jewish day of rest called the Sabbath. It was soon going to be sunset, the start of the Sabbath. ⁵⁵ The women who had come with Jesus from the district of Galilee followed Joseph and the men who were with him. They saw the burial chamber, and they saw how the men laid Jesus' body inside it. ⁵⁶ Then the women went back to where they were staying in order to get spices and ointments to put on Jesus' body. However, they did no work on the Sabbath, just as the Jewish law required.

Chapter 24

¹ Before dawn on Sunday those women went to the burial chamber. They took with them the spices that they had prepared to put on the body of Jesus. ² When they arrived, they discovered that somebody had rolled the stone away from the entrance to the burial chamber. ³ They went into the burial chamber, but the body of the Lord Jesus was not there! ⁴ They did not know what to think about that. Then suddenly two men stood by them wearing bright, shining clothes! ⁵ The women were frightened. As they bowed down low to the ground, the two men said to them, "You should not be looking for someone who is alive in a place where they bury dead people! ⁶ He is not here; he has been made alive again! Re-

member that while he was still with you in Galilee, he said to you, ⁷ 'They will have to hand me, the Son of Man, over to sinful men. They will kill me by nailing me to a cross. But on the third day after that, I will become alive again.'" ⁸ The women remembered what Jesus had said to them. ⁹ So they left the burial chamber and went to the eleven apostles and his other disciples and told them what happened. ¹⁰ The women who told these things to the apostles were Mary from Magdala village, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women who were with them. ¹¹ But the apostles dismissed their words as nonsense. ¹² However, Peter got up and ran to the burial chamber anyway. He stooped down and looked inside. He saw the linen cloths in which Jesus' body had been wrapped, but Jesus was not there. So, wondering what had happened, he went home.

¹³ That same day two of Jesus' disciples were walking to a village named Emmaus. It was ten kilometers from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking with each other about all the things that had happened to Jesus. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing those things, Jesus himself approached them and started walking with them. ¹⁶ But God did not allow them to recognize him. ¹⁷ Jesus said to them, "What have you two been talking about while you were walking?" They stopped, and their faces looked very sad. ¹⁸ One of them, whose name was Cleopas, said, "You must be the only person who is visiting Jerusalem who does not know the events that have happened there in recent days!" ¹⁹ He said to them, "What events?" They replied, "The things that happened to Jesus, the man from Nazareth, who was a prophet. 'God enabled him to perform great miracles and to teach wonderful messages. The people thought he was wonderful.'" ²⁰ But our chief priests and

leaders handed him over to the Roman authorities. The authorities sentenced him to die, and they killed him by nailing him to a cross. ²¹ We were hoping that he was the one who would free us Israelites from our enemies! But this does not seem possible now, because three days have already passed since he was killed. ²² In spite of this, some women from our group amazed us. Early this morning they went to the burial chamber, ²³ but the body of Jesus was not there! They came back and said that they had seen some angels in a vision. The angels said that he was alive! ²⁴ Then some of those who were with us went to the burial chamber. They saw that things were exactly as the women had reported. But they did not see Jesus." ²⁵ He said to them, "You two foolish men! You are so slow to believe all that the prophets have written about the Messiah! ²⁶ You should certainly have known that it was necessary that the Messiah should suffer all those things and die, and then enter his glorious home in heaven!" ²⁷ Then he explained to them all the things that the prophets had written in the scriptures about himself. He started with what Moses wrote and then explained to them what all the other prophets wrote.

²⁸ They came near to the village to which the two men were going. He indicated that he would go further, ²⁹ but they urged him not to do that. They said, "Stay with us tonight, because it is late in the afternoon and it will soon be dark." So he went in the house to stay with them. ³⁰ When they sat down to eat, he took some bread and thanked God for it. He broke it and gave some pieces to them. ³¹ And then God enabled them to recognize him. But immediately he disappeared! ³² They said to each other, "While we were walking along the road and he talked with us and enabled us to understand the scriptures, we started thinking that something very, very good

was going to happen, although we did not know what. We should not stay here; we should go tell others what happened!" ³³ So they left immediately and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven apostles and others who had gathered together with them. ³⁴ They told those two men, "It is true that the Lord has become alive again, and he has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵ Then those two men told the others what had happened as they were walking along the road. They also told them how they both recognized him as he broke some bread for them.

³⁶ As they were saying that, Jesus himself suddenly appeared among them. He said to them, "May God give you peace!" ³⁷ They were startled and afraid, because they thought that they were seeing a ghost! ³⁸ He said to them, "You should not be alarmed! And you should not doubt that I am alive. ³⁹ Look at the wounds in my hands and my feet! You can touch me and see my body. Then you can see that it is really I myself. You can tell that I am really alive because ghosts do not have bodies, as you see that I have!" ⁴⁰ After he said that, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his feet. ⁴¹ They were joyful and amazed, but they still could hardly believe that he was really alive. So he said to them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" ⁴² So they gave him a piece of broiled fish. ⁴³ While they were watching, he took it and ate it.

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, "I will repeat what I told you while I was with you: Everything that was written about me in the Law of Moses, the writings of the Prophets, and in the Psalms, all must be fulfilled!" ⁴⁵ Then he enabled them to understand the things that had been written about him in the scriptures. ⁴⁶ He said to them, "This is what you can read in the scriptures: That the Messiah would

suffer and die, but on the third day after that he would become alive again. ⁴⁷ They also wrote that those who believe in him must preach everywhere that people should turn away from committing sin and turn to God, so that he would forgive their sins. The followers of the Messiah should preach that message because God sent them to do so. They wrote that they should start preaching it in Jerusalem and then go and preach it to all people groups. ⁴⁸ You must tell people that you know that those things that happened to me are true. ⁴⁹ And I want you to know that I will send the Holy Spirit to you, as my Father promised that he would do. But you must stay in this city until God fills you with the power of the Holy Spirit."

⁵⁰ Then Jesus led them outside the city until they came near the village of Bethany. There he lifted up his hands and blessed them. ⁵¹ As he was doing that, he left them and went up to heaven. ⁵² After they worshiped him, they returned to Jerusalem very joyfully. ⁵³ Each day they went into the temple courtyard, and spent a lot of time praising God.

JOHN

Chapter 1

¹ In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God before he began to create anything. ³ He is the one who carried out God's command to create everything—yes, absolutely everything that was made! ⁴ All life is in the Word, so he could give life to everything and everyone. The Word was God's light that shone on everyone, everywhere. ⁵ This light shone in the darkness, and the darkness tried to put it out, but it could not.

⁶ God sent a man named John. ⁷ He came to testify to the people about the light. What he said was true, and he proclaimed that message so that everyone might believe. ⁸ John himself was not the light, but he came to tell people about the light. ⁹ This was the true light that shines upon everyone, and that light was coming into the world.

¹⁰ The Word was in the world and, although he had made the world, none of its people knew who he was. ¹¹ Although he came to the world he owned, and even to his own people, the Jews, they rejected him. ¹² But all who took him into their lives and trusted in him, to them he gave the right to become God's children. ¹³ These are children born from God. They were not born by means of a normal human birth nor out of a human desire or choice nor because of a husband's desire to become a father.

¹⁴ Now the Word became a real human being and lived here where we live for a while. We have seen him display his splendid and amazing nature, the nature of the

one and only Son of the Father, who shows us that God loves us faithfully and teaches us about his truth.

¹⁵ One day John the Baptizer was telling people about the Word, and Jesus came to him. John shouted to the crowd around him, "I told you someone would come after me, someone who is much more important than I am. He existed long before me, eternal ages before I was born. This man here! This is that man I was talking about!" ¹⁶ We have all benefited very much from what he has done. Again and again, he has acted very kindly toward us. ¹⁷ Moses proclaimed God's laws to the Jewish people. Jesus the Messiah was kind to us far beyond what we deserved and he taught us true things about God. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. But, Jesus the Messiah, who himself is God, is always close to the Father, and he has made us know him.

¹⁹ This is what John gave as his testimony: The Jews sent priests and the Levites from Jerusalem; they came to ask John, "Who are you?" ²⁰ So John testified to them and said, "I am not the Messiah!" ²¹ Then they asked him, "What do you say about yourself? Are you Elijah?" He said, "No." They asked again, "Are you the Prophet whom the prophets say will come?" John answered, "No." ²² So they asked him once more, "Then who do you claim to be? Tell us so that we can go back and report to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" ²³ He answered as Isaiah the prophet had written, "I am the one shouting in the wilderness, 'Make the road good for the Lord to come to us.'"

²⁴ Some of these people came to John from the Pharisees. ²⁵ They asked him, "Since you say you are not the Messiah nor Elijah nor the Prophet, then why are you baptizing?" ²⁶ John replied, "I am baptizing people with water, but there is now someone standing among you whom you do not

know.²⁷ He follows after me, but I am not important enough even to untie his sandals.”

²⁸ These things happened at the village of Bethany over on the east side of the Jordan River. That is the place where John was baptizing.

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him. He said to the people, “Look! The Lamb of God, who will give his life as a sacrifice to take away the sins of the world.

³⁰ He is the one of whom I said, ‘Someone will come after me who is more important than I am, because he existed long before me, eternal ages before I was born.’ ³¹ I did not know him at first, but now I know who he is. My work was to come and baptize with water those who were sorry and turned from their sins. I want the people of Israel to know who he is.”

³² It was John’s work to tell us what he saw. He spoke like this: “I saw God’s Spirit as he was descending from heaven in the form of a dove. The Spirit came down and remained on Jesus. ³³ At first, I myself did not know him, but God sent me to baptize people with water, people who said they wanted to turn from their sinful ways. God told me, ‘The man on whom you will see my Spirit descend and remain is the one who will baptize all of you with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴ I have seen and I bear witness to you that he is the Son of God.”

³⁵ John the Baptizer was at the same place again the next day with two of his disciples. ³⁶ When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look! The Lamb of God, the man whom God appointed to give his life, like a lamb killed by the people of Israel as a payment for their sins!” ³⁷ The two disciples of John, when they heard John, left John and followed him. ³⁸ Jesus turned around and saw them following him, and he asked them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi

(which means ‘teacher’), tell us where you are staying.” ³⁹ He replied, “Come with me, and you will see!” So they came and saw where Jesus was staying. They stayed with him that day because it was getting late (it was about 4 pm.)

⁴⁰ One of those two disciples who followed Jesus was named Andrew; he was Simon Peter’s brother. ⁴¹ Andrew first went off to find his brother Simon. When he came to him, he said, “We have found the Messiah (which means ‘Christ’)!” ⁴² Andrew took Simon to Jesus. Jesus looked intently at Peter, and said, “You are Simon. Your father’s name is John. You will be given the name Cephas.” Cephas is an Aramaic name that means ‘solid rock.’ (Peter means the same thing in Greek.)

⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to leave the Jordan River valley. He went to the region around Galilee and found a man named Philip. Jesus said to him, “Come with me.” ⁴⁴ Philip, Andrew, and Peter were all from the town of Bethsaida (in Galilee). ⁴⁵ Then Philip went to search for his friend Nathaniel. When he came to him, he said, “We have found the one Moses wrote about, the Messiah. The prophets prophesied that he would come. The Messiah is Jesus. He is from the town of Nazareth. His father’s name is Joseph.” ⁴⁶ Nathaniel replied, “From Nazareth? Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip replied, “Come and you will see!” ⁴⁷ When Jesus saw Nathaniel approaching, he said this about him, “Look there! There is an honest and good Israelite! He never deceives anyone!” ⁴⁸ Nathaniel asked him, “How do you know what kind of man I am? You do not know me.” Jesus replied, “I saw you before Philip called you, when you were sitting by yourself under the fig tree.” ⁴⁹ Then Nathaniel declared, “Teacher, you must be the Son of God! You are the King of Is-

rael we have been waiting for!” ⁵⁰ Jesus replied to him, “Do you trust in me just because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see me do things that are much greater than that!” ⁵¹ Then Jesus said to him, “I am telling you the truth: Just like the vision your ancestor Jacob long ago saw, some day you will see heaven opened up, and you will see God’s angels going up and coming down on me, the Son of Man.”

Chapter 2

¹ Three days later, there was a wedding in Cana, a city in Galilee, and Jesus’ mother was there. ² They also invited Jesus and his disciples to the wedding. ³ They served wine to those attending the wedding and they drank all the wine they had. Jesus’ mother said to him, “They are out of wine.” ⁴ Jesus said to her, “Madam, what does that have to do with me? The chosen time to begin my most important work has not come yet.” ⁵ Jesus’ mother turned and said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” ⁶ There were six empty stone jars there. They held water so that the guests and servants could wash their hands and feet, and so that other Jewish rites of cleansing could be done. Each jar could hold 75 to 115 liters. ⁷ Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water!” So they filled the jars to the brim. ⁸ Then he told them, “Now, draw some water out of a jar and take it to the director of the feast.” So the servants did that. ⁹ The director of the feast tasted the water, which had now become wine. He did not know where the wine had come from, although the servants knew. So he called the bridegroom to himself. ¹⁰ “Everyone serves the best wine first, and later when the guests have drunk a lot and the best is gone, then they serve the cheap wine. But you have

kept the best wine until now.” ¹¹ That was the first miracle Jesus did, one that signified truth about Jesus. He did it in the village of Cana, in the region of Galilee. There he showed that he could do amazing things. So the disciples trusted in him.

¹² After this Jesus and his mother and brothers, along with his disciples, went down to the city of Capernaum, and they stayed there a few days.

¹³ Now it was almost time for the Jewish Passover Celebration. Jesus and his disciples went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ There in the temple courtyard he saw men selling cattle, sheep, and pigeons. The animals were sold to those who were making their sacrifices at the temple. He also saw men sitting at tables selling temple money. ¹⁵ So Jesus made a whip from some leather cords and he used it to drive out the sheep and the cattle from the temple. He overturned the tables of the moneychangers and scattered their coins on the ground. ¹⁶ He commanded those who were selling pigeons, “Take these pigeons out of here! Do not turn my Father’s house into a marketplace!” ¹⁷ This reminded his disciples about what someone had written in the scriptures long before, “I love your house so much, O God, that I will die for it.”

¹⁸ The Jewish leaders asked him, “What miracle can you do for us to prove you have permission from God to do what you are doing?” ¹⁹ Jesus replied to them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will rebuild it again.” ²⁰ “Are you saying that you are you going to rebuild this entire temple is just three days?” they asked him. “It took forty-six years to build this temple.” ²¹ However, the temple Jesus was speaking about was his own body, not the temple building. ²² Later, after Jesus had died and God had raised him from the dead, his disciples remembered what he had said about the temple. They believed

both what the scriptures said and what Jesus himself had said.

²³ When Jesus was in Jerusalem during the Passover Festival, many people trusted in him because they saw the miracles that signified truth about Jesus. ²⁴ Nevertheless, Jesus knew what people were like, and because he knew them so well, he did not trust them. ²⁵ He did not need anyone to tell him how evil people were. He knew everything about them.

Chapter 3

¹ There was a man named Nicodemus. He was a member of the Pharisees, a very strict group within the Jewish faith of that day. He was an important man, a member of the highest Jewish governing council. ² He went by night to see Jesus. He said to Jesus, "Teacher, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. We know this because no one could perform the miracles you are doing unless God helped him." ³ Jesus replied to what Nicodemus said, "I am telling you the truth, no one can enter God's kingdom unless he is born again." ⁴ Then Nicodemus said to him, "How can a person be born again when he is old? No one can enter his mother's womb and be born a second time!" ⁵ Jesus answered, "I guarantee that this also is true, no one can enter God's kingdom unless he is born both by water and the Spirit. ⁶ If someone is born from a human, that person is a human being. But those who are born again by the work of God's Spirit have a new spiritual nature that God makes within them. ⁷ Do not be amazed when I tell you that you must be born again. ⁸ It is like this: The wind blows wherever it wants. You hear the sound of the wind, but you do not know where it comes from or where

it goes. It is just like that with everyone who is made alive by the Spirit: The Spirit gives a new birth to whomever he desires. ⁹ Nicodemus replied to him, "How can this be true?" ¹⁰ Jesus replied to him, "You are an important teacher in Israel, and yet you do not understand what I am saying? ¹¹ I am telling you the truth, we say the things that we know to be true, and we are telling you what we have seen, yet none of you to whom we speak these things trusts what we are saying. ¹² If you do not trust what I say when I tell you about things of this earth, how will you trust what I say when I tell you about things of heaven? ¹³ I, the Son of Man, am the only one who has gone up to heaven, and I am the only one who has come down here to the earth. ¹⁴ Long ago Moses, when he was in the wilderness during the Exodus, lifted up a poisonous snake on a pole and all who looked up at it were saved. In the same way, the Son of Man must be lifted up ¹⁵ so that whoever looks up and trusts in him will have eternal life.

¹⁶ God loved the world in this way: He gave his only Son, so that anyone who trusts in him would not die, but would have everlasting life. ¹⁷ God did not send his Son into the world to pronounce sentence on it, but to save it. ¹⁸ Everyone who trusts in the Son, God will never condemn. But everyone who does not trust in him, God has already put under his condemnation, because they did not put their trust in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹ God has made his justice for sinful people plain for all to see: His light has come into the world, but the people of this world have loved their darkness and they hide from the light. They loved the darkness because what they were doing was ugly and evil. ²⁰ Everyone who does wicked deeds hates the light, and they never will come to it because the light exposes what they do and reveals how wicked they are.

²¹ But those who do what is good and true come to the light so that what they do may be seen by all and so that all might know that they were obeying God when they did these things.

²² After those things happened, Jesus and his disciples went to the region of Judea. He stayed there a while with his disciples and he baptized many people.

²³ John the Baptizer was also baptizing people near the village of Aenon near Salim in the region of Samaria. There was much water in that place, and so many people kept coming to John. ²⁴ This is before the time when John's enemies had put him in prison. ²⁵ An argument arose between some of John's disciples and one particular Jewish man about washing to make oneself acceptable to God. ²⁶ Those who were arguing came to John and said, "Teacher, there was a man who was with you when you were baptizing people on the other side of the Jordan River. You pointed him out to us and told us who he was. Well, now he is baptizing across the way in Judea and many people are going out to him." ²⁷ John replied to them, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless God gives it to him. ²⁸ You know I was telling the truth when I told you, 'I am not the Messiah, but I was sent before him to make the road good for when he came.' ²⁹ I am like the friend of the bridegroom. I am standing there waiting for the groom to come. The friend of the bridegroom is very happy when he hears the bridegroom's voice when he finally arrives. Therefore, because all this has happened, my joy is overflowing because he has come. ³⁰ Over time he will grow in status and importance, and I will become less and less important.

³¹ Jesus comes from heaven, and he is higher in position than anyone else. We have our home on earth, and we can

speak only of things that belong to the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above everyone on the earth and everything there is. ³² Now there is one here who gives his testimony to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts what he says or trusts it to be true. ³³ However, those who have trusted in what he said, they testify that God is the source of all truth, and that he alone is the measure and standard of everything that is true. ³⁴ God has sent his spokesman, and what he has said is true, for he speaks God's words. And he gives his Spirit with no concern for how much he gives. ³⁵ The Father loves the Son and he puts everything under his power. ³⁶ Whoever trusts in God's Son has everlasting life. Whoever does not obey the Son of God can never have everlasting life, and the righteous fury of God for every sin which that person has done will remain upon him forever."

Chapter 4

¹ Jesus got a report about the Pharisees. They found out that Jesus was gaining more followers than John the Baptizer and that he was baptizing more people than John was. ² But Jesus himself was not personally doing the work of baptizing; his disciples were doing that. ³ So Jesus and his disciples left the region of Judea and returned once more to Galilee. ⁴ Now they had to go through the region of Samaria. ⁵ So they arrived at a town called Sychar in the region of Samaria. Sychar was near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph long ago. ⁶ Just outside the town of Sychar was Jacob's well. Jesus was very tired from his long journey, and he sat down to rest beside the well. It was about noon. ⁷ A woman from Samaria came out to the well to draw some water. Jesus said to her,

"Give me a drink." ⁸ Now his disciples had left him alone because they had gone into the town to buy food. ⁹ The woman said to him, "I am surprised that you, a Jew, are asking me, a woman from Samaria, for a drink." ¹⁰ Jesus replied to her, "If you had known the gift that God wants to give you and if you had known who is asking you for a drink, you would have asked me for a drink, and I would have given you living water." ¹¹ "Sir, you do not have a bucket or a rope with which to draw the water up out of the well, and this well is deep. Where would you get this living water?" ¹² You cannot be greater than our father Jacob. He dug this well that we use today, and he drank from it himself, as did his children and his animals." ¹³ Jesus replied to her, "Everyone who drinks water from this well will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but those who drink the water I will give them will never be thirsty again. The water I give will become a spring of water that fills them up and brings them everlasting life." ¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will never be thirsty or have to come here to draw water again."

¹⁶ Jesus knew she did not understand what he was saying, so he said to her, "Madam, go and call your husband and bring him here." ¹⁷ The woman answered him, "I do not have a husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying that you have no husband, ¹⁸ because you have had not one, but five, husbands, and the man you are living with now is not your husband. What you have said about not having a husband is true."

¹⁹ The woman said to him, "Sir, I see you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped God right here on this mountain, but you Jews say that Jerusalem is the place we must worship God. Who is right?" ²¹ Jesus said to her, "Madam, believe me when

I say that a time is coming when neither here on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, will people worship the Father. ²² You people in Samaria worship what you do not know. We Jewish worshipers know whom we worship because salvation comes from the Jews. ²³ The time is coming and has now arrived when those who truly worship God will worship the Father spiritually and in truth. The Father searches for such people so that they may worship him in this way. ²⁴ God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship him spiritually, and the truth must lead them in worship." ²⁵ The woman said to him, "I know that the Messiah is coming (the one also called "Christ"). When he comes, he will tell us everything we need to hear." ²⁶ Jesus said to her, "I, who am speaking to you now, I am he!"

²⁷ Just then, the disciples came back from town. They were amazed that Jesus was talking with a woman who was not a member of his family. (That was against the Jewish custom.) Nevertheless, no one was brave enough to ask him, "What were you doing talking to a woman by yourself?" or "Why are you talking with her at all?"

²⁸ The woman left her water jar there and went back into town. She said to the people of the town, ²⁹ "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He could not be the Messiah, could he?" ³⁰ Many people started heading out of town, going where Jesus was.

³¹ His disciples, who had just returned with the food, urged him, "Teacher, eat something." ³² Jesus said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about!"

³³ So they were saying to one another, "No one else could have brought him something to eat, could they?" ³⁴ Jesus said, "I will tell what I am most hungry for: It is to do what my Father who sent me wants and to complete all his work. ³⁵ At this

time of the year you usually say, 'There are four months left, and then we will harvest the crops.' Yet look all around you! The fields are ready for harvest at this moment. The non-Jews are now wanting God to rule over them; they are like the fields that are now ready to be harvested.³⁶ The one who believes this and is ready to work in this kind of harvest is already receiving his payment and is gathering much fruit for eternal life. Those who sow the seed and those who reap the harvest will be glad together.³⁷ This statement is true: One person plants the seeds, and another person harvests the crops.³⁸ I sent you to gather the harvest from a crop you did not plant. Others have worked very hard, but you are now joining in their work."

³⁹ Many Samaritans who lived in the town of Sychar put their trust in Jesus because of what they heard about him from all the woman told them. She said, "He told me everything I have ever done."⁴⁰ When the Samaritans came to Jesus, they urged him to stay a longer time with them. So he stayed there two more days.⁴¹ Many more of them trusted in Jesus because of what he proclaimed to them.⁴² They told the woman, "We believe in Jesus now, not just because of what you told us about him but also because we have heard his message for ourselves. Now we know that this man truly is the Savior of the world."

⁴³ After those two days in Samaria, Jesus and his disciples left and went to the region of Galilee.⁴⁴ (Jesus himself confirmed that a prophet receives honor in many places but never in the place where he grew up.)⁴⁵ However, when he arrived in Galilee, many of the people there welcomed him. They knew who he was because they saw all the things he had done in Jerusalem during the recent Passover Festival that was held there.⁴⁶ Jesus went back again to Cana in Galilee. (That was

where he had turned the water into wine.) There was an official of the king who lived in Capernaum just twenty-seven kilometers away, and his son was very sick.⁴⁷ When that man heard that Jesus had come back to Galilee from Judea, he went to Jesus in Cana and begged him, "Come down to Capernaum and heal my son. He is about to die!"⁴⁸ Jesus said to him, "Unless you see me do things that prove who I am and watch me do miracles, you will not trust in me!"⁴⁹ Yet the official said to him, "Sir, please come down to my home before my son dies!"⁵⁰ Jesus said to him, "Go. Your son will live." The man trusted what Jesus said and he started on his way back home.⁵¹ As he was traveling down to his home in Capernaum, his servants met him along the road. They told him, "Your child is going to live."⁵² He asked them, "At what time did my son begin to improve?" They said to him, "His fever ceased yesterday afternoon at one o'clock."⁵³ Then the boy's father realized that this was the time Jesus told him, "Your son lives." So he trusted in Jesus, along with everyone who lived in his house.

⁵⁴ That was the second time Jesus did something to prove to people who he was. He did it during the time that he came to the region of Galilee, having traveled there from Judea.

Chapter 5

¹ Then the time came for another Jewish festival, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem for it.² There is in Jerusalem beside one of the gates going into the city, a place called the Sheep Gate. At that gate there is a pool called Bethesda (as it said in Aramaic). Next to the pool are five roofed porches or colonnades.³⁻⁴ There was a great number of people there who were

sick, blind, and could not walk. Many people who could not walk were lying on the porch. ⁵ One man who could not walk had been there for thirty-eight years. ⁶ Jesus saw him lying there and realized that he had been in this condition for a long time. He said to the man, "Do you want to become healthy and strong?" ⁷ The man replied to him, "Sir, I have no one here to help me get down into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get to the pool, someone else always steps down in front of me." ⁸ Jesus said to him, "Get up! Take up your bed and walk!" ⁹ At once the man was healed, and he picked up his bed and walked.

Now that day was the Sabbath, the day of rest. ¹⁰ So the Jewish leaders said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath day, and you know it is against our law for you to carry your mat on this day of rest." ¹¹ The man who had been healed said to them, "But the one who healed me told me, 'Take up your bed and walk!'" ¹² They asked him, "Who was that man?" ¹³ Now although Jesus had healed the man, the man did not know his name. After healing him, Jesus had left the man and disappeared into the crowd.

¹⁴ Later, Jesus found the man in the temple and said to him, "See, you are well now. Do not sin anymore, so nothing worse will happen to you." ¹⁵ The man went away and told the Jewish leaders that the man who had healed him was Jesus. ¹⁶ So the Jews began efforts to stop Jesus because he was doing marvelous things and was showing his power and because he often did those works on the Sabbath day. ¹⁷ Jesus gave this answer to them, "My Father is working even now, and I am also working." ¹⁸ This is why the Jews were trying more and more to put Jesus to death, not only because he was breaking the Sabbath day, but also because he even called

God his own Father, claiming that he was equal to God.

¹⁹ Jesus replied to them, "I am telling you the truth: I, the Son of Man, can do nothing on my own authority. I can do only what I see the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, that is what I, the Son, do. ²⁰ The Father loves me, the Son, and shows me everything he is doing. Even greater works than these the Father will show me, so that you may see what I can do and be amazed. ²¹ As the Father raises up those who have died and gives them life again, so I, the Son, give life to anyone I want. ²² The Father judges no one, but has given over all judgment to me, ²³ so that all people may honor me, the Son, in the same way that they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor me cannot honor the Father. ²⁴ I am telling you the truth: Anyone who hears my message and trusts that God sent me has eternal life and will not come into God's judgment. Instead, he has gone from being dead to being alive.

²⁵ I am telling you the truth: A time is coming when those who have died will hear my voice, that of me, the Son of God, and those who hear me will live. ²⁶ For as the Father is able to cause people to live, in the same way he has given power to me, the Son, to cause them to live. ²⁷ The Father has given me authority to do whatever he knows is just, because I am the Son of Man. ²⁸ Do not be surprised at this because there will be a time when all people who have died will hear me call, ²⁹ and they will come out of their graves. God will raise to everlasting life those who have done good. But those who have done evil—God will raise them up, but only to condemn them and punish them forever. ³⁰ I can do nothing on my own. Whatever I hear from the Father, that is how I judge, and I judge in a just manner. I judge justly because I do not try to do what I want, but

what the Father wants, he who sent me here.

³¹ If I alone were the only one to be a witness about myself, no one would believe my witness to be true or reliable. ³² Nevertheless, there is someone else who bears witness about me, and I know that his testimony about me is true. ³³ You sent messengers to John the Baptizer, and he told you the truth about me. ³⁴ I do not actually need for him or anyone else to be a witness about me, but I am saying these things so that God can save you. ³⁵ John the Baptizer was a burning and shining lamp, and you were glad to rejoice for a while in his light. ³⁶ However, the witness I give about myself is even greater than the witness John gave about me. All the things that the Father has allowed me to do—I do those things every day, and you see me doing them—those things tell much about who I am; they explain my purpose for coming here. They are proof that the Father has sent me. ³⁷ The Father who sent me, he is the one who has given testimony about me. You have never heard his voice and you have never seen him physically. ³⁸ The proof that you do not have his word living in you is that you do not trust me, the one he sent. ³⁹ You carefully study the scriptures because you think that by studying them you will find eternal life, and those scriptures tell about me. ⁴⁰ Yet still you refuse to come to me in order that you might receive everlasting life from me.

⁴¹ If people praise me or congratulate me, I ignore them. ⁴² I know this about you, you do not love God. ⁴³ I have come with my Father's authority, but still you do not welcome me or trust me. If someone else came with his own authority, you would listen to him. ⁴⁴ How can you trust in me when you work so hard for others among yourselves to honor you? Yet

all the while, you refuse to seek the true honor that comes from the one and only God.

⁴⁵ Do not think that I am the one who accuses you before my Father. You thought Moses would defend you, so on him you have set your hopes. However, it is Moses who accuses you. ⁴⁶ If you had accepted what Moses said, you would have received what I said as the truth. ⁴⁷ Since you did not even believe in what Moses wrote, how could you possibly trust what I have said to you!"

Chapter 6

¹ Jesus went across the lake to the other side. The name of the lake was the "Sea of Galilee" to some people; other people called it the "Sea of Tiberias." ² A large crowd followed him because they had seen the wonders he had done in healing people who were very sick. ³ Jesus went up on a steep hillside and sat down with his disciples. ⁴ Now it was the time of the year for the Passover Festival, a special celebration of the Jews. ⁵ Jesus looked up and saw that there was a very large crowd of people making their way toward him. Jesus said to Philip, "Where will we buy bread so that all these people can have something to eat?" ⁶ He asked Philip this question to test him, to see what sort of answer he would give. However, Jesus already knew what he was going to do about this problem. ⁷ Philip replied to him, "If we had the money that a man can earn in two hundred days of work, it would not be enough money to buy bread to give each person in this big crowd even a little piece to eat." ⁸ Another one of his disciples, Andrew, who was Simon Peter's brother, said to Jesus, ⁹ "There is a boy here who has five little barley loaves of bread and

two small fish. Yet, how could so little food feed so many people?" ¹⁰ The place where the people were all coming together had a lot of grass. So Jesus said, "Tell the people to sit down." So all of the people sat down, and after the disciples counted the crowd, they found that there were about five thousand people. ¹¹ Then Jesus took the small loaves of bread and the fish, and he thanked God for them. Then he passed the bread and the fish among all who were sitting on the ground. The people ate all the fish and bread they wanted. ¹² When everyone had finished eating, he said to the disciples, "Gather up all the pieces of barley bread that the people did not eat. Do not let anything go to waste." ¹³ So they gathered up the pieces from the five barley loaves, and they filled twelve large baskets full from what was left over.

¹⁴ After the people saw the miracle that Jesus had performed in front of them, they said, "Surely he is the Prophet that God has been going to send into the world!" ¹⁵ Jesus knew what the people were planning; they were about to come and force him to be their king. So he left them and went up the mountain to be by himself.

¹⁶ When it was evening, his disciples went down to the Sea of Galilee, ¹⁷ got into a boat, and started to sail across the sea to the city of Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus was not with them. ¹⁸ A strong wind started to blow, and the waves on the sea became very rough. ¹⁹ After they had rowed five or six kilometers, the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water and coming near the boat. They were terrified! ²⁰ Jesus said to them, "It is I! Do not be afraid!" ²¹ They were very glad to take him into the boat. As soon as he was with them, their boat arrived at the place where they were going.

²² The next day the crowd of people that had stayed on the other side of the lake re-

alized that there had been only one boat there the day before. They also knew that Jesus had not gone in the boat with his disciples. ²³ Some men came across the lake from the city of Tiberias in other boats they had. They put their boats near the place where the people had eaten the bread, that bread for which the Lord had given thanks to God. ²⁴ When the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, some of them got into those boats and sailed to Capernaum to find Jesus.

²⁵ They searched and found Jesus in Capernaum on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. They asked him, "Teacher, when did you come here?" ²⁶ Jesus replied to them, "I am telling you the truth: You are not looking for me because you saw me perform miracles that show who I am. No! You are looking for me only because you ate until you were full of the loaves of bread. ²⁷ Stop working for food that will soon spoil! Instead, work for the food that will bring you everlasting life! That is the bread that I, the Son of Man, God's chosen one, will give you. For God the Father approves of me in every way."

²⁸ Then the people asked him, "What works and service should we do to please God?" ²⁹ Jesus replied, "What God wants you to do is this: Trust in me, the one he has sent." ³⁰ So they said to him, "Then perform another miracle to prove who you are so that we can see it and believe that you came from God. What will you do for us?" ³¹ Our ancestors ate manna, just as the scriptures say: 'God gave them bread out of the heavens to eat.'"

³² Jesus said to them, "I am telling you the truth: It was not Moses who gave your ancestors that bread from heaven. No, it was my Father, the same one who is giving you the true bread from heaven. ³³ The true bread of God is I, the one who has come

down from heaven in order to make everyone in the world truly able to live.”

³⁴ They said to him, “Sir, always give us this bread.” ³⁵ Jesus said to them, “Just as people need food to live, everyone needs me to live spiritually. Those who take ordinary food and water will become hungry and thirsty again. But for those who ask me and trust me to enable them to live spiritually, I will do this for them. ³⁶ Nevertheless, I have told you that, although you see me, you still do not trust me. ³⁷ All the people my Father gives to me will come to me, and I will never drive away anyone who comes to me. ³⁸ I came down from heaven not to do what I want, but to do the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ This is what the one who sent me wants, that I lose none of those whom he has given me, and that I raise all of them up on the last day. ⁴⁰ For this is what my Father wants, that everyone who looks in faith on me, the Son, and who trust in me, will have everlasting life. I will raise them up on the last day.”

⁴¹ The Jewish leaders began to grumble about Jesus because he said, “I am the bread who came down from heaven.” ⁴² They said, “Is this not Jesus, whose father is Joseph? Do we not know his father and mother? How can he say with any truth, ‘I have come from heaven’?” ⁴³ Jesus answered them, “Stop grumbling among yourselves. ⁴⁴ No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him to me. The one who comes to me, I will raise him up on the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the Prophets, ‘God will teach them all.’ Everyone who hears and learns from the Father comes to me. ⁴⁶ No one has seen the Father except me, the one who comes from God. I alone have seen the Father. ⁴⁷ I am telling you the truth: Whoever trusts in me has everlasting life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread that gives true life. ⁴⁹ Your ances-

tors ate the manna in the wilderness, but they still died. ⁵⁰ However, the bread that I am speaking of is the bread that comes down from heaven, and the one who eats it will never die. ⁵¹ I am the bread that makes people truly live, the bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever. The bread that I give for the life of the world is the death of my physical body.”

⁵² The Jews who had listened to Jesus were now angrily arguing among themselves. They could not understand how anyone could promise that others would eat his own body. ⁵³ So Jesus confronted them with difficult words: “I am telling you the truth: Unless you eat the flesh of me, the Son of Man, and drink my blood, you will never live forever. ⁵⁴ Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood will live forever, and I will make them alive again at the last day ⁵⁵ because my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶ Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood will be joined to me, and I will be joined to him. ⁵⁷ My Father, who makes everyone alive, has sent me, and I live because my Father has made me able to. In the same way, those who feed on me will live forever because of what I will do for them. ⁵⁸ I am the true bread that comes down from heaven. Anyone who eats me—this bread—will never die, but will live forever! What I do is not like what happened to your ancestors because they ate the manna and then died.” ⁵⁹ Jesus said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue in the city of Capernaum.

⁶⁰ Many of his disciples said, “What he is teaching is hard to understand. How can anyone accept what he is saying?” ⁶¹ Jesus was aware that some of his disciples were complaining, so he said to them, “Does what I teach offend you? ⁶² What would you say if you saw me, the Son of

Man, go back up to heaven? ⁶³ Only the Spirit gives life that can make anyone live forever. The human nature is no help in this matter. The words I have taught you tell you about the Spirit, and they tell you about eternal life. ⁶⁴ Yet there are some of you who do not trust what I am teaching you." Jesus said this because he knew from the start of his work who it was who would not trust in him, and he knew the person who would betray him.

⁶⁵ Then he said, "That is why I told you that no one can come to me and to live forever unless the Father makes him able to come to me."

⁶⁶ From that time on, many of Jesus' disciples turned back from following him. ⁶⁷ So he said to the twelve, "You also do not want to leave me, do you?" ⁶⁸ Simon Peter replied, "Lord, to whom would we go? Only you have the message that allows us to live forever! ⁶⁹ We trust in you, and we know for certain that you are the Holy One whom God has sent!" ⁷⁰ Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve disciples? Yet one of you is a devil!" ⁷¹ He was talking about Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Even though Judas was one of the twelve, he was also the one who would later betray Jesus.

Chapter 7

¹ After this, Jesus went to other areas in the region of Galilee. He avoided traveling to Judea because the Jewish authorities were searching for a way to charge him with a crime and to have him put to death. ² Now it was time for the Jewish Festival of Shelters. This was a time to remember when the Jewish people lived in tents during the Exodus long ago. ³ Because the festival was to take place in Judea, Jesus' brothers said to him, "Leave

here and go to Judea so your other followers can see the powerful works you can do. ⁴ No one hides his work if he wants people to know what kind of a person he is. Show yourself to the world!" ⁵ For not even his own brothers trusted in him or thought he was telling the truth. ⁶ So Jesus said to them, "It is not yet time for me to bring my work to an end. However, you can choose any time you want to accomplish whatever you wish. ⁷ The people who live for themselves and love the things of this world cannot hate you, but they do hate me. I am the one who tells them that what they do with their lives is evil. ⁸ You go ahead to the festival. I am not going up now; it is not the right time for me." ⁹ After he said that, Jesus stayed a little longer in Galilee.

¹⁰ However, a few days after his brothers left for the festival, he also went, but he did so secretly. ¹¹ The Jewish opponents of Jesus were looking for him, hoping to find him at the festival. They were asking people, "Where is Jesus? Is he here?" ¹² Among the crowds, many people were quietly speaking with each other about Jesus. Some were saying, "He is a good man!" Others were saying instead, "No! He is deceiving and misleading the crowds!" ¹³ Because they were afraid of the Jewish enemies of Jesus, no one spoke of him in a public place where other people could overhear what they were saying.

¹⁴ When the Festival of Shelters was about half over, Jesus went to the temple courtyard and started to teach there. ¹⁵ The Jews were amazed at what he was saying. They said, "This man never studied our doctrines with an approved instructor; he never enrolled in our schools! How does he know so much?" ¹⁶ Jesus replied to them, "What I teach does not come from myself. It comes from the one who sent me. ¹⁷ If anyone chooses to do what

God wants, he will find out if what I teach comes from God or if I speak only by my own authority. ¹⁸ Anyone who speaks on his own authority speaks so others will honor only him. However, if a servant works hard to honor the person who sent him, to give him a good reputation as a man of integrity, there is no fault in that kind of a servant. ¹⁹ Did not Moses give you the law? Yet none of you does what the law demands. You are the ones plotting to murder me right now!

²⁰ Someone in the crowd answered, "You have a demon! Name the person who wants to put you to death!" ²¹ Jesus replied to the crowd, "Because I did one work of power for you to see, you all marvel at it. ²² Moses gave you a law, and that law says you must circumcise your male children and that you must do that exactly seven days after the children are born. (To be accurate, this rite was from your forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and not from Moses, who wrote down the law about this practice.) Because of that requirement in the law, you sometimes have to circumcise a baby on the Sabbath day, and that is working, too! ²³ You sometimes circumcise boys on the Sabbath so that you will not violate the law of Moses. So why are you angry with me, saying I worked on the Sabbath when I was healing a man! Healing someone is more wonderful, and it is a greater work than circumcising a baby! ²⁴ Stop deciding whether healing this man was right or wrong according to a false application of God's law, and that without any thought! Instead, decide what a person should do and how he should be judged by the principle of what is right and what is just according to God, not man."

²⁵ Some of the people from Jerusalem were saying, "Is this not the man they are trying to put to death? ²⁶ He is saying these

things publicly, but the authorities are not saying anything to oppose him. Is that because they know he is the Messiah? ²⁷ But this cannot be the Messiah! We know where this man came from, but when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from."

²⁸ So while Jesus was teaching in the temple courtyard, he called out as he taught, "Yes, you say you know me, and you think you know where I am from. But I have come here not because I appointed myself. Instead, the one who sent me bears the truth as his testimony, and you do not know him. ²⁹ I know him because I have come from him. He is the one who sent me."

³⁰ Then they tried to lay their hands on him, but no one could arrest him because it was not yet the time for him to complete his work and for his life to end. ³¹ Many in the crowd, after they heard him and saw his works, put their trust in him. They said, "When the Messiah comes, will he be able to do more miraculous signs than this man has done?" ³² The Pharisees heard them quietly speaking these things about Jesus. So they, the chief priests and Pharisees together sent some officers to arrest him.

³³ Then Jesus said, "I will be with you for a only a short time. Then I am going back to the one who sent me. ³⁴ You will search for me, but you will not find me. Where I am going, you cannot come." ³⁵ So the Jewish people who were his enemies said to themselves, "Where can this man go where we cannot find him? Does he intend to go where the Jews are spread all across the Greek world, and will he teach the people there these new things? ³⁶ What did he mean when he said, 'You will search for me, but you will not be able to find me,' and when he said, 'Where I am going, you cannot come?'"

³⁷ So on the last day of the festival, the great day, Jesus stood up cried out with a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink." ³⁸ Whoever trusts in me, as the scripture said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" ³⁹ He said this about the Spirit, whom the Father was going to give to those who trusted in him. God had not yet sent the Spirit to live within those who trusted him because Jesus had not yet finished his work, that work which would bring great honor to God by saving his people through his death.

⁴⁰ When some of the crowd heard those words, they said, "This truly is the Prophet that we were expecting." ⁴¹ Others said, "The Messiah cannot come from Galilee." ⁴² Do not the scriptures say that Messiah must come through the descendants of David and that he must be born in Bethlehem, the village that was David's home?" ⁴³ So there was a division of opinion about Jesus. ⁴⁴ Some of the people wanted to arrest him. Yet no one laid a hand on him.

⁴⁵ So the officers returned to the chief priests and the Pharisees. These were the officers that the rulers had sent to arrest Jesus. The Pharisees said to the officers, "Why did you not seize him and bring him here?" ⁴⁶ The officers replied, "No one ever spoke like this man." ⁴⁷ Then the Pharisees replied, "Have you been deceived, too?" ⁴⁸ None of the Jewish authorities or the Pharisees have trusted in Jesus. ⁴⁹ This crowd who does not know the teachings of our laws, let them be cursed!"

⁵⁰ Then Nicodemus spoke. (He was the one who had gone to see Jesus at night to speak with him, and he was one of the Pharisees.) He said to them, ⁵¹ "Our Jewish law does not permit us to condemn a man before we have listened to him. First, we give him a hearing, and we must learn

about what he has done." ⁵² They replied to him, "Are you also from Galilee? Search carefully and read what is written in the scriptures! You will find that no prophet comes from Galilee."

⁵³ [Then they all left and went to their own homes.

Chapter 8

¹ Jesus went with his disciples to the Mount of Olives, and they stayed near there that night. ² Early the next morning, Jesus returned to the temple courtyard. Many people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. ³ Then men who taught the Jewish laws and some who were Pharisees brought a woman to him. She had been caught in the act of adultery—she had been sleeping with a man who was not her husband. They made her stand up in the front of this group so they could question her. ⁴ They said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught committing adultery with a man, someone not her husband. ⁵ Now Moses commanded us in the law that we must execute such a woman with stones. Nevertheless, what do you say we should do?" ⁶ They asked this question as a trap so that they could accuse him of saying something wrong. If he said that they should not kill her, they could say that he dishonored the law of Moses. However, if he said that they should kill her, he would be breaking the Roman law that reserved for the governor the power to execute people.

However, Jesus bent down and wrote something on the ground with his finger. ⁷ While they continued to question him, he stood up and said to them, "Whichever one of you has never sinned, you are one who should lead the rest to punish her. You throw the first stone!" ⁸ Then Jesus

stooped down and wrote some more on the ground. ⁹ After they heard what he said, those who were questioning him started walking away, one by one, the older ones first and then the younger ones. They knew they were all sinners. Finally only Jesus was there with the woman. ¹⁰ Jesus stood up and asked her, "Woman, where are those who accuse you? Has no one brought a charge against you that you must be punished?" ¹¹ She said, "No, sir, no one." Then Jesus said, "I do not condemn you either. Go home now, and from now on, do not sin like this anymore!" ^[1]

¹² Jesus spoke to the people again. He said, "I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will have the light that gives life, and he will never walk in darkness again. ¹³ So the Pharisees said to him, "It sounds as though you are trying to convince us to trust you by talking about yourself more and more! What you say about yourself does not prove anything!" ¹⁴ Jesus replied, "Even if I were the only one to say these things about myself, what I say is true because I know where I came from and I know where I am going. Nevertheless, you do not know where I came from and you do not know where I am going. ¹⁵ You judge people according to human standards and the laws of men. I have not come at this time to judge anyone. ¹⁶ When I do judge, it will be right and just because I am not the only one who will bring justice. I and the Father who sent me, we will execute justice together. ¹⁷ It is written in your law that a matter can be settled only when there are at least two witnesses to give evidence in the case. ¹⁸ I am bringing evidence to you about myself, and my Father who sent me also brings evidence about me. So you should believe that what we tell you is true."

¹⁹ Then they asked him, "Where is your father?" Jesus replied, "You do not know

me, and you do not know my Father. If you knew me, you would also know my Father." ²⁰ He said these things when he was near the treasury within the temple courtyard, the place where the people brought in their offerings. Yet no one arrested him because it was not yet time for him to die.

²¹ Jesus also said to them, "I am going away, and you will seek me, but it is certain that you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come." ²² His Jewish opponents said among themselves, "Perhaps he is thinking that he will kill himself, and that is what he means when he says, 'Where I am going you cannot come.'" ²³ Jesus continued saying to them, "You are from this earth below, but I am from heaven above. You belong to this world. I do not belong to this world. ²⁴ I told you that you will die and that God will condemn you for your sins. This will certainly happen unless you trust that I am God, as I say I am."

²⁵ "Who are you?" they asked him. Jesus said to them, "Ever since the very beginning, I have been telling you! ²⁶ I could judge you and say that you are guilty of many things. Instead, I will say only this: The one who sent me tells the truth, and I tell the people in the world only what I have heard from him."

²⁷ They did not understand that he was talking about the Father. ²⁸ So Jesus said, "When you have lifted me up on a cross to kill me—me, the Son of Man,— you will know that I am God, and you will know that I do not do anything on my own authority. Instead, I only say what my Father has taught me to say. ²⁹ He who sent me is with me, and he has not left me alone because I do only the things that delight him." ³⁰ As Jesus was saying these things, many more people trusted in him.

³¹ Then Jesus said to the Jews who now were saying that they trusted in him, "If

you listen to all I teach you and live by it in everything you do, you are truly my disciples. ³² You will know the truth, and the truth will lead you to be free from everything that made you its slaves.” ³³ They answered him, “We are the descendants of Abraham, and we have never been anyone’s slaves. Why do you say we need to be free?” ³⁴ Jesus replied, “I am telling you the truth: All who sin obey their sinful desires just as a slave is forced to obey his master. ³⁵ Slaves will not remain as permanent members of a family but may be set free to return home or sold. However, a son is a member of the family forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be absolutely free. ³⁷ I know that you are in Abraham’s family; you are his descendants. Yet, your people are trying to put me to death. You will not trust anything I say. ³⁸ I tell you all about the wonders and wisdom my Father has shown me, but you are only doing what your father told you to do.”

³⁹ They replied to him, “Abraham is our ancestor.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s descendants, you would be doing the things he did. ⁴⁰ I have been telling you the truth that I heard from God, but you are trying to put me to death. Abraham did not do things like that. ⁴¹ No! You are doing the things that your real father did.” They said to him, “We do not know about you, but we are not illegitimate children. We have only one Father, and that is God.” ⁴² Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me because I came from God and now I have come here to this world. I did not come because I myself decided to come but because he sent me. ⁴³ I will tell you why you do not understand what I say. It is because you do not accept my message or my teachings. ⁴⁴ You belong to your father, the devil, and you desire to do what he wants. He was a murderer from the time

people first sinned. He has abandoned God’s truth; it is not in him. Whenever he lies, he is speaking according to his character because he is a liar; everyone who lies does what the devil wants him to do. ⁴⁵ Because I tell you the truth, you do not believe me! ⁴⁶ Which one of you finds me guilty of sin? Since I tell you the truth, what reason do you give for not trusting me? ⁴⁷ Those who belong to God hear and obey what he tells them. The reason that you do not hear and obey his message is that you do not belong to God.”

⁴⁸ His Jewish enemies replied to him, “We are certainly right in stating that you are a Samaritan—you are not really a true Jew at all!—and that a demon lives in you!” ⁴⁹ Jesus replied, “A demon does not live in me! I honor my Father, and you dishonor me! ⁵⁰ I do not try to persuade people to praise me. There is someone else who desires to give me what I deserve, and he is the one who will judge everything that I say and do. ⁵¹ I am telling you the truth: If anyone holds firm to my word and trusts in it as I gave it, that person will never die!”

⁵² Then his Jewish enemies said to him, “Now we are sure that a demon lives within you! Abraham and the prophets died long ago! Yet you say that anyone who holds firm to what you teach will not die! ⁵³ You are not greater than our father Abraham. He died and all the prophets died with him. So who do you think you are?” ⁵⁴ Jesus replied, “If I tried to get people to praise me, that would be worthless. It is my Father who praises me, my character and goodness, and yet he is the one of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’ ⁵⁵ Although you do not know him, I do know him. If I said that I did not know him, I would be a liar like you. I know him and I always obey what he says. ⁵⁶ Your father Abraham was happy when, as a prophet,

he looked forward and saw what I could do.”

⁵⁷ Then the Jewish leaders said to him, “You are not fifty years old yet! You have seen Abraham?” ⁵⁸ Jesus said to them, “I am telling you the truth, before Abraham was, I AM.” ⁵⁹ So they picked up stones to put him to death. However, Jesus hid himself, left the temple, and went somewhere else.

8:11 ^[1]The best ancient copies do not have John 7:35-8:11

Chapter 9

¹ As Jesus walked along, he saw a man who had been blind his whole life, since the day he was born. ² The disciples asked him, “Teacher, whose sin caused this man to be born blind? Was it this man himself who sinned, or was it his parents?” ³ Jesus replied, “It was not that either this man or his parents sinned. He was born blind so that today people may see the powerful work God would do in him. ⁴ We must do the works of the one who sent me while it is still day. Night is on the way and when it arrives, no one will be able to work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

⁶ When he said this, he spit on the ground. He made mud with his saliva, and applied it like a medicine to the man’s eyes. ⁷ Then Jesus said to him, “Go and wash in the pool of Siloam!” (The name of the pool means ‘sent’). So the man went and washed in the pool. When he came back, he was able to see. ⁸ The man’s neighbors and others who had seen him when he was begging said, “Is that not the man who used to sit here and beg?” ⁹ Some said, “He is the

one.” Others said, “No, but he just looks like that man.” However, the man himself said, “Yes, I am the man!” ¹⁰ So they said to him, “How is it that you are now able to see?” ¹¹ He replied, “The man called Jesus made some mud and used it like medicine and put it on my eyes. Then he told me to go to the pool of Siloam and wash. So I went there and washed, and then I could see for the first time.” ¹² They said to him, “Where is that man?” He said, “I do not know.”

¹³ Some of the people there took the man to a gathering of the Pharisees. ¹⁴ Now it was on the Sabbath day when Jesus did this miracle. ¹⁵ So the Pharisees asked the man again about how he was now able to see. He said to them, “The man put mud on my eyes and I washed, and now I see.” ¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, “We know this man Jesus is not from God because he does not keep the Sabbath day.” Others from that group asked, “If he were a sinner, how could he do such works of power that everyone sees?” So there was a difference of opinion among the Pharisees. ¹⁷ They asked the blind man again, “What do you say about him, since he is the one who restored your sight?” The man said, “He is a prophet.”

¹⁸ Now the Jews who were opposed to Jesus did not believe the man had been blind and then became able to see. So they sent someone to bring in the man’s parents so that they could be questioned also. ¹⁹ They asked his parents, “Is this your son? Do you say that he was blind from the day he was born? How, then, is he able to see?” ²⁰ His parents replied, “We know that this is our son. We know that he was blind when he was born. ²¹ Nevertheless, we do not know how he is now able to see. We also do not know who healed his eyes. Ask him, he is old enough to speak for himself.” ²² The Jews who were

against Jesus had previously agreed with one another that they would take anyone who declared that Jesus was the Messiah and ban him from the synagogue. ²³ That is why his parents said, "Ask him, he is old enough to speak for himself."

²⁴ So they called the man who had been blind, and they asked him to come before them a second time. When he got there, they said to him, "Swear to God that you will speak only the truth! We know that this man who healed you is a sinner and that he does not keep the law that Moses gave us." ²⁵ He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I do not know. One thing I do know is that I used to be blind, but now I see." ²⁶ So they said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he heal you so that you now see?" ²⁷ He answered them, "I have told you that already, but you did not believe me. Why do you want me to tell you again? Do you also really want to become his disciples?" ²⁸ Then they became angry and insulted him: "You are that man's disciple, but we are Moses' disciples!" ²⁹ We know that God spoke to Moses; but about this man, we do not even know where he comes from." ³⁰ The man replied, "That is very amazing! You do not know where he comes from, but he is the one who opened my eyes so that I can see!" ³¹ We know that God does not listen to the prayers of sinners, those who ignore his law, but he listens to people who worship him and who do what he wants. ³² Not since the beginning of the world has it been heard anywhere that someone was able to open the eyes of a man who was blind from birth!" ³³ If this man had not come from God, he could do nothing like that!" ³⁴ They replied to him, "You were born in sin and have lived your whole life entirely in sin! Do you think you are qualified to teach us?" Then they banned him from the synagogue.

³⁵ Jesus heard about what the Pharisees did to the man he healed, how they threw him out of the synagogue. So he went and searched for the man. When he found him, he said to him, "Do you believe in me, the Son of Man?" ³⁶ The man answered, "Sir, who is he? Tell me, so that I may believe in him." ³⁷ Jesus said to him, "You have seen him. He is the one who is speaking to you now." ³⁸ The man said, "Lord, I believe." Then he went down on his knees and worshiped him.

³⁹ Jesus said, "I have come into this world to judge the world so that those who do not see may see and so that those who see may become blind." ⁴⁰ Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard him say this, and they asked Jesus, "Are we also blind?" ⁴¹ Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt. However, because you now defend yourself and say, 'We see,' your guilt is staying with you."

Chapter 10

¹ "I am telling you the truth: The one who enters into the sheep pen, must always enter through the gate. If he climbs in any other way, he is not the one who cares for the sheep, but he is a thief and a criminal who steals the sheep. ² The man who enters the pen through the gate is the true shepherd, for he takes care of the sheep. ³ The hired man who guards the gate when the shepherd is away will open the gate for him when he comes. However, the sheep recognize only the shepherd's voice and only when he calls them by name. Then he leads them outside of the pen to feed them and to give them water. ⁴ After he has brought out all of his own sheep, he goes in front of them. His sheep are eager to follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ They will never follow a stranger

who calls out to them. They will run away from him because they do not recognize the stranger's voice."

⁶ Jesus used this illustration from the work of shepherds. Nevertheless, his disciples did not understand what he was telling them. ⁷ So Jesus spoke to them again, "I am telling you the truth: I am the gate through which all the sheep enter into the pen. ⁸ All who came before me, they were thieves and criminals who stole the sheep; but the sheep did not listen to them, and they would not follow them. ⁹ I myself am like that gate. If anyone enters through the gate and goes into the pen where the sheep are, he will be safe, and he will go out and find good pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and that life will be full to overflowing.

¹¹ I am like a good shepherd. The good shepherd will die in order to protect and to save his sheep. ¹² Someone pays the hired man money to watch over the sheep. He does not treat the sheep like they belong to him; he is just an employee doing a job. So when he sees a wolf coming to kill the sheep, he does not risk his life. He leaves the sheep and runs away so that it is possible for the wolf to attack the sheep, seizing some of them and scattering others. ¹³ The hired worker runs away because he is only working for the money. He does not care about what happens to the sheep. ¹⁴ I am, myself, the good shepherd. I know my own sheep, and my own sheep know me, ¹⁵ just as I know my Father, and my Father knows me. Because of that, I am willing to die for my sheep. ¹⁶ I have other sheep that do not belong to the same group of sheep that you do. I will cause them to listen to me also. They will listen to me, so there will eventually be only one flock of sheep under me, the only shepherd. ¹⁷ The reason my Father

loves me is that I will sacrifice my life. I will give up my life, and I will take it up to live again. ¹⁸ No one is causing me to lay down my life. I have chosen to sacrifice myself. I have authority to lay down my life and I have authority to take it up and to live again. This work is from my Father, and he has commanded me to do it."

¹⁹ After hearing these words Jesus had been speaking, the Jews were divided in their opinion of him. ²⁰ Many of them said, "A demon is controlling him and has caused him to become crazy. Do not waste time listening to him!" ²¹ Others said, "What he is saying is not something a man oppressed by a demon would ever say. No demon can open the eyes of a blind man!"

²² The time for the celebration called the Festival of Dedication had now come, the time when the Jewish people remembered when their ancestors purified the temple in Jerusalem and gave it to God again. It was in the winter. ²³ Jesus was walking in the temple courtyard in the place called Solomon's porch. ²⁴ The Jewish opponents of Jesus gathered around him and said, "How long will you keep us wondering about who you are? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly so that we can know." ²⁵ Jesus answered them, "I have told you, but you would not believe me. You know who I am because of the miracles and other things I do by my Father's name and his authority. Those things tell you all you need to know about me. ²⁶ You do not believe in me because you do not belong to me. You are sheep who belong to another shepherd. ²⁷ My sheep hear my voice. I know each one of them by name; they follow me and obey me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life. No one can ever destroy them, and no one will ever be able to steal them away from me. ²⁹ My Father gave them to me; he is greater than anyone, so no one is able to steal them away from him. ³⁰ I

and the Father are one.”

³¹ The enemies of Jesus again picked up stones to throw at him and to put him to death. ³² Jesus said to them, “You have seen me do many good works, things that my Father had told me to do. For which of them are you going to stone me?” ³³ The Jewish opponents replied, “We are wanting to take your life, not because you did any good work, but because you, just a man, are insulting God and are making yourself God!” ³⁴ Jesus replied to them, “In the scriptures it is written what God said to the rulers whom he had appointed: ‘I have said that you are like gods (with great honor and with power over many).’” ³⁵ God said that to those leaders when he appointed them. No one objected to that, and nothing that is in scripture can be shown to be false. ³⁶ I am the one whom my Father chose to send here into this world. So why are you angry with me for saying that I am equal with God when I said, ‘I am the Son of God’? ³⁷ If I were not doing the works that my Father told me to do, I would not expect you to believe in me. ³⁸ However, because I am doing these works, place your trust in what these works tell you about me even though you do not trust what I say. If you do that, then you will know and understand that my Father is in me and that I am in my Father.”

³⁹ After they heard that, they tried to seize Jesus again, but he got away from them one more time.

⁴⁰ Then Jesus went back across to the east side of the Jordan River. He went to the place where John the Baptizer had baptized many people at the beginning of his ministry. Jesus stayed there for several days. ⁴¹ Many people came to him. They were saying, “John the Baptizer never performed a miracle, but this man has performed many miracles! Everything that

John said about this man is true!” ⁴² Many people came to trust him; they put their trust in who he was and in what he would do for them.

Chapter 11

¹ A man named Lazarus fell very sick. He lived in the village of Bethany where Mary and Martha lived. ² This is the same Mary who later would pour perfume on the Lord to show her love and honor of him, and would wipe his feet with her hair. It was her brother Lazarus who was sick. ³ So the two sisters sent someone to tell Jesus about Lazarus; they said, “Lord, the one you love is ill.” ⁴ When Jesus heard about Lazarus’ illness, he said, “This illness will not end in the death of Lazarus. The purpose of this illness is so that people may see and know how great God is when he does wonderful things and so that I, the Son of God, also will show his great power.” ⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha, her sister Mary, and Lazarus. ⁶ Nevertheless, when Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, he delayed going to see him. He stayed where he was for two more days.

⁷ Then he said to disciples, “Let us go back to Judea.” ⁸ The disciples said, “Teacher, just a short while ago the Jews who oppose you wanted to murder you with stones, and now you want to go back there again!” ⁹ Jesus answered them, “You know there are twelve hours of light in a day, is that not true? The one who walks during the daytime will walk safely because he can see what is in the road. ¹⁰ However, when a person walks during the night, he may easily stumble because he cannot see.”

¹¹ After saying these things, he said to them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I will go there to wake him up.” ¹² The disciples said to him, “Lord,

if he has fallen asleep, he will get well.”¹³ Jesus was really speaking about Lazarus’ death, but the disciples thought that he was talking about the sleep that we all know gives us rest.¹⁴ Then he told them plainly, “Lazarus has died.”¹⁵ Jesus continued, “But, for your sakes, I am glad that I was not there when he died so that you may see why you can trust in me. Now it is time; let us go to him.”¹⁶ Then Thomas, who was called ‘The Twin,’ said to the rest of the disciples, “Let us also go with Jesus so that we may die with him.”

¹⁷ When Jesus arrived in Bethany, he found that Lazarus had already died and had been in the tomb for four days.¹⁸ Now Jerusalem was only about three kilometers from Bethany.¹⁹ Many Jews knew Lazarus and his family, and they came from Jerusalem to comfort Martha and Mary over their brother’s death.²⁰ When Martha heard someone say Jesus was nearby, she went out to the road to meet him. Mary did not get up but stayed in the house.²¹ When Martha saw Jesus, she said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”²² Yet, even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.”²³ Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”²⁴ Martha said to him, “I know that he will come alive again on the day when God raises all the dead on the last day.”²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the one who raises people from the dead; I am the one who gives them life. Whoever trusts in me, even if he dies, yet he will live again.”²⁶ All those who receive life joined to me and who trust in me—they will never die. Do you believe me?”²⁷ She said to him, “Yes, Lord! I trust what you say and I trust who you are, that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one God promised would come into the world.”

²⁸ After she said that, she returned to the

house and took Mary her sister aside privately and said to her, “The Teacher is here, and he is calling for you.”²⁹ When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went out to him.³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet come into the village; he was still at the place where Martha had met him.³¹ The people who had come to the house to comfort the sisters saw Mary get up quickly and go outside. So they followed her, thinking that she was going to the tomb where they had buried Lazarus in order to grieve for her brother there.

³² Mary came to the place where Jesus was; when she saw him, she fell down before him at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”³³ When Jesus saw her grieving and crying, and that the mourners who had come with her were also crying, he cried out in distress deep within his spirit, and he was very upset.³⁴ He said, “Where have you laid his body?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.”³⁵ Jesus wept.³⁶ So the Jews said, “See how much he loved Lazarus!”³⁷ However, some others said, “Did he not open the eyes of the blind man? Why could he not have kept this man from dying?”

³⁸ Jesus was physically shaken and emotionally upset when he came to the tomb. It was a cave, and the entrance had been covered by a large stone.³⁹ Jesus gave a command to those standing there, “Take away the stone.” However, Martha objected, “Lord, by this time there will be a putrid odor, for he has been dead for four days.”⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you the truth when I told you that if you trusted me, you would see who God is and you would know what God can do?”

⁴¹ So they took away the stone. Jesus looked up toward heaven and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me.”

⁴² I know that you always hear me. I said

this for the sake of the people who are standing here so that they might put their trust in you and have confidence in the fact that you sent me.” ⁴³ After he said that, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” ⁴⁴ The man who had died came out! His hands were still wrapped and his feet were still bound with linen strips of cloth, and there was a cloth wrapped around his face as well. Jesus said to them, “Take off the strips of cloth that bind him and untie him. Let him go.”

⁴⁵ As a result, many of the Jews who had come to see Mary and who had witnessed what Jesus did, put their trust in him. ⁴⁶ Nevertheless, some of the others went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. ⁴⁷ So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered all the members of the Jewish council together. They were saying to each other, “What are we going to do? This man is performing many miracles. ⁴⁸ If we allow him to keep doing them, everyone will trust in him and rebel against Rome. Then the Roman army will come and destroy both our temple and our nation!”

⁴⁹ One of them on the council was Caiaphas, the high priest for that year. He said to them, “You all know nothing! ⁵⁰ Do you not realize that it is better that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perishes?” ⁵¹ He said that, not because he thought of it himself. Instead, since he was the high priest that year, he was prophesying that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation. ⁵² But he was also prophesying that Jesus would die, not just for the Jewish nation only, but also so he could gather into one nation from all the children of God, those who live in other lands everywhere. ⁵³ So from that day forward, the council began to look for any way to arrest Jesus and put him to death.

⁵⁴ Because of that, Jesus no longer trav-

eled around publicly among his Jewish opponents. Instead, he left Jerusalem and, with the disciples, went to a town called Ephraim in an area near the wilderness and desert region. There he stayed with his disciples for a while.

⁵⁵ Now it was almost time for the Jewish Passover Celebration, and many worshipers went up from the country and the villages to Jerusalem. They would wash themselves in preparation, to make themselves clean according to the Jewish rules, so that they would be allowed to celebrate the Passover. ⁵⁶ The worshipers who came to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival were all looking for Jesus. When they came and stood in the temple, they said to one another, “What do you think? He will not come to the Passover, will he?” ⁵⁷ The Jewish chief priests and the Pharisees had issued orders that if anyone found out where Jesus was, they should report it to them, so that they could arrest him.

Chapter 12

¹ Jesus arrived in Bethany six days before the Passover Festival began. Bethany was the village where Lazarus lived, the man Jesus made alive again after he had died.

² There in Bethany, they gave a dinner to honor Jesus. Martha made preparations for the dinner, and Lazarus was among those who were sitting together and eating. ³ Then Mary took a bottle of expensive perfume (called nard) and, to honor Jesus, she poured it out on his feet and then wiped his feet with her hair. The fragrance of the perfume filled the entire house.

⁴ However, one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, (he was the one who broke the trust Jesus had in him, and soon he would give Jesus up to his enemies)—he objected and

said, ⁵ “We should have sold this perfume for three hundred days’ wages and given the money to the poor.” ⁶ He said this, not because he cared about the poor people, but because he was a thief. He kept charge of the bag that held their money, but he would take money for his own use whenever he wanted. ⁷ Then Jesus said, “Leave her alone! She bought this perfume for the day when I would die and they would bury me. ⁸ You will always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me.”

⁹ A large crowd of Jews in Jerusalem heard that Jesus was in Bethany, so they went there. They came not only because Jesus was there, but also to see Lazarus, whom Jesus had made alive. ¹⁰ Then the chief priests decided it was necessary to put Lazarus to death, as well, ¹¹ for it was because of him that many of the Jews were no longer believing in what the chief priests were teaching; instead, they were putting their trust in Jesus.

¹² The next day the large crowd that had come for the Passover Festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. ¹³ So they cut branches from palm trees and went out to welcome him as he came into the city. They were shouting, “Hosanna! Praise God! God bless the One who comes in the Name of the Lord! Welcome, King of Israel!” ¹⁴ When Jesus came near to Jerusalem, he found a young donkey and sat on it, riding into the city. By doing this, he fulfilled what had been written in scripture:

¹⁵ “Do not be afraid, you who live in Jerusalem.

Look! Your King is coming.

He is riding on a donkey’s colt!”

¹⁶ When this happened, his disciples did not understand that this was a fulfillment of prophecy. However, after Jesus had fin-

ished his work and had received again his full powers as God, they looked back and remembered what the prophets had written about him and what people had done to him.

¹⁷ The crowd that was following along with Jesus kept telling others what they had seen: That Jesus had called Lazarus out of the tomb and had made him alive again. ¹⁸ The other crowd of people, those who went out of the city gate to meet Jesus, did so because they heard he had done great things to show them his power. ¹⁹ So the Pharisees said to each other, “See! We are gaining no advantage here. Look! The whole world is following him!”

²⁰ Among those who went up to Jerusalem during the Passover Festival were some Greeks. ²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in the district of Galilee. They had something to ask him; they said, “Sir, would you introduce us to Jesus?” ²² So Philip reported this to Andrew, and they both went and told Jesus. ²³ Jesus answered Philip and Andrew, “It is time for God to show the people everything that I, the Son of Man, have done and to tell them all that I have said. ²⁴ I am telling you the truth: Unless a seed of wheat is planted in the earth and dies, it remains only one seed; but after it dies in the ground, then it will grow and produce a harvest of many seeds. ²⁵ Anyone who tries to live to please himself will fail, but anyone who does not live to please himself will keep his life forever. ²⁶ If anyone wants to serve me, he must also follow me because my servant must be where I am. The Father will honor everyone who serves me.

²⁷ Now my soul is greatly troubled. Should I say, ‘Father, save me from this time when I will suffer and die!’? No, for this is the very reason I came into this world. ²⁸ My Father, show how powerful you are in all you have said, in all you have done,

and in all you are!"

Then God spoke from heaven, "I have already displayed my nature, my words, and my works; and I will do it again!" ²⁹ The crowd that was there heard the voice of God, but some said it was just thunder. Others said an angel had spoken to Jesus. ³⁰ Jesus replied to them, "The voice you heard speaking was God's voice. However, he spoke not for my benefit, but for yours!" ³¹ Now is the time for God to judge the world. Now is the time when he will drive out Satan, the one who rules this world. ³² As for me, when people raise me high on a cross, I will draw everyone to myself." ³³ He said this to let the people know how he would die.

³⁴ Someone in the crowd answered him, "We understand from the scriptures that the Messiah will live forever. So why do you say that the Son of Man will die? Who is this 'Son of Man'?" ³⁵ Jesus answered, "My light will shine on you for just a little longer. Walk in the light while you have my light, or the darkness will overtake you. Those who walk in the darkness cannot see where they are going!" ³⁶ Trust in that light while you have the light; then you will belong to the light.

After he said those things, Jesus left them and hid from them. ³⁷ Although Jesus had done many miracles, most of the people did not believe what he had told them. ³⁸ This was to make come true what Isaiah the prophet had written long ago:

"Lord, who has believed anything that they have heard from us?

The Lord has shown us how he can powerfully rescue us!" ³⁹ Yet, they could not trust in him for the reason that Isaiah had written: ⁴⁰ "The Lord has made them so they cannot see,

and he has made them stubborn;

they cannot even see with their eyes,

If they could, they would understand;

they would repent and pray for me to forgive them.

For this reason, I cannot heal them!"

⁴¹ Isaiah wrote those words long ago because he understood that the Messiah would serve God powerfully.

⁴² Although this was true, many of the leaders of the Jewish people put their trust in Jesus. Nevertheless, they greatly feared that the Pharisees would ban them from the synagogues, so they did not speak out about trusting in Jesus. ⁴³ They preferred that other people praise and respect them rather than that God would praise them.

⁴⁴ Jesus shouted out to the crowd that had gathered, "Those who put their trust in me are not only putting their trust in me but also are putting their trust in the Father who sent me. ⁴⁵ When you see me, you are also seeing the one who sent me. ⁴⁶ I have come into the world as the light of the world; whoever puts his trust in me will not remain in the darkness.

⁴⁷ I do not judge those who listen to my words but refuse to obey me. I did not come into the world to condemn the world. ⁴⁸ Yet, there is something that will condemn those who reject me and do not follow my message. They are condemned by the message I have spoken to them. ⁴⁹ When I taught about God, I was not merely saying what I thought. The Father, who sent me, gave me clear instructions on what I should say and how I should say it. ⁵⁰ I know that the Father's most important instructions are the ones that teach people how to live forever, and I have said exactly what my Father has told me to say."

Chapter 13

¹ It was now the day before the Passover

Festival was to begin. Jesus knew it was time for him to leave this world and to return to his Father. He showed how much he loved those who were with him here in this world, and he loved them until the end of his life. ² Before Jesus and the disciples had their evening meal, the devil had already put the thought into the mind of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, that he would hand Jesus over to his enemies. ³ Yet Jesus knew that his Father had given him complete power and authority over everything. He also knew that he himself had come from God and would soon return to God. ⁴ Jesus got up from the dinner. He took off his outer clothing and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵ He poured out some water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them dry with the towel.

⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

⁷ Jesus replied to him, "You do not understand now what I am doing for you, but later you will understand." ⁸ Peter said, "You will never wash my feet!" Jesus replied to him, "If I do not wash you, then you have nothing to do with me." ⁹ So Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, wash not only my feet! Wash my hands and my head also!" ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "One who has taken a bath needs only to wash his feet. The rest of his body is already clean. You are clean, but not all of you." ¹¹ He knew who was going to hand him over. That is the reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

¹² After he finished washing their feet, he put his outer clothing on again. Then he sat down at his place again and said, "Do you understand what I have done for you?"

¹³ You call me 'teacher' and 'Lord. You are right to say this, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ If I, your teacher and Lord, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one an-

other's feet. ¹⁵ I have given you an example to follow in order that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶ I am telling you the truth: A servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who has sent him. ¹⁷ If you know these things, how fortunate you will be if you do them.

¹⁸ I am not saying this about all of you. I know the ones I have chosen. However, what is written in scripture must come true: 'The one who ate my food with me as a friend, he has turned against me and treated me like an enemy.'

¹⁹ I am telling you this now before he hands me over so that when it does happen, you may believe that I am God. ²⁰ I am telling you the truth: If you receive the one I send to you, you are also receiving me; and whoever receives me, is also receiving my Father, the one who sent me."

²¹ After Jesus said this, he was troubled within himself. He solemnly declared, "I am telling you the truth: One of you is going to hand me over to my enemies." ²² The disciples looked at one another. They were confused about which of them he was talking about. ²³ One of the disciples, John, the one whom Jesus especially loved, was at the table next to Jesus. ²⁴ Simon Peter motioned to John that he should ask Jesus which disciple he was talking about.

²⁵ So John leaned back against Jesus and asked him quietly, "Lord, who is it?" ²⁶ Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread after I dip it in the bowl." Then he dipped the bread and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.

²⁷ As soon as Judas took the piece of bread, Satan entered in to him and took control of him. Jesus said to him, "Whatever you need to do, do it quickly." ²⁸ No one else at the table knew why Jesus had said that to him. ²⁹ Some thought that because Judas had the money bag, Jesus was telling

him to go and buy some things needed for the Passover Festival. Others thought Jesus was telling Judas to give something to the poor. ³⁰ After receiving the bread, immediately Judas went out. It was night.

³¹ After Judas left, Jesus said, "Now God will make people know what I, the Son of Man, am doing. I, the Son of Man, will make people know what God is doing as well, and people will praise him for it. ³² Since I, the Son of Man, make God known to people and since I honor him, God will also honor me. God will do this immediately.

³³ Little children, I am with you just a little while longer. You will look for me; but, just as I told the Jews, and as I am now telling you, where I am going, you cannot come. ³⁴ I will give you this new command: You must love one another, just as I have loved you. ³⁵ If you love one another, all people will know that you are my disciples."

³⁶ Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus replied, "Where I am going, you cannot come with me now; but you will come later." ³⁷ Peter said, "Lord, why can I not come with you now? I would lay down my life for you!" ³⁸ Jesus answered, "Would you really lay down your life for me, Peter? I am telling you the truth: The rooster will not crow in the morning before you will say three times that you do not know me!"

Chapter 14

¹ "Do not be upset or anxious. You are trusting in God; trust also in me. ² Where my Father lives there are many places to live. If that were not true, I would have told you. I go there to prepare a place for you. ³ If I am going there to prepare a place for you, I will return and take you

to be with me, so that where I am, there you may be with me. ⁴ You know where I am going, and you know the way."

⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" ⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, I am the truth, and I am the life. No one can come to the Father and live with him unless he comes through me. ⁷ If you knew me, you would have known my Father also. From now on, you know him and you have seen him."

⁸ Philip said to Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be all we will ever want!" ⁹ Jesus said to him, "Philip, I have been with you so long, and still you do not know me. Those who have seen me, have seen my Father. So why do you say 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am joined to my Father and that my Father is joined to me? The things I have told you—I did not think of these things; rather, it is my Father who has sent me to tell you all of these things, for my Father is joined to me and works through me. ¹¹ Trust me because I have told you that I am joined to the Father and that the Father is joined to me, or else trust me because of all the signs and mighty acts you have seen me do. ¹² I am telling you the truth: Whoever trusts in me will also do the things that I do. He will do even greater works because I am going to be with the Father. ¹³ Whatever you ask in my name, that I will do. I will do this in order that everyone might honor the Father and that they might know the Father because of everything that I, his Son, do. ¹⁴ If you ask the Father for anything because you belong to me, I will do it.

¹⁵ If you love me, you will live as I have taught you. ¹⁶ Then I will ask the Father to give you another gift, and he will send you another Helper, one who will come alongside you to be with you forever. ¹⁷

He is the Spirit who tells the truth about God. The unbelieving people in this world will never welcome Him. The world cannot see him or know him. You know him because he lives with you and he will be joined to you. ¹⁸ I will not abandon you and leave you with no one to care for you; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Soon the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you will live. ²⁰ When you see me again, you will know that I am joined to the Father and that you are joined to me and I to you. ²¹ Everyone who has heard my commandments and obeys them, they are the ones who love me. And the ones who love me, my Father will love them, too; I will love them and I will reveal myself to them.”

²² Then Judas (not Iscariot, but the other disciple with the same name) spoke to Jesus. He said, “Lord, how will you reveal yourself just to us and not to the whole world?” ²³ Jesus replied to him, “This is how you can tell whether people love me: Whether they do what I have told you to do. Any people like this, my Father will love them. He and I will come to them and live with them. ²⁴ As for those who do not love me, they will not obey what I have told them to do. The things I have told you are not things that I have decided to say on my own; instead, they are things that my Father has sent me to tell you. ²⁵ I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ The Helper, the one who comes alongside to be with you—my Father will send him in my name. He will teach you everything that you need to know. He will also cause you to remember all the things that I have told you. ²⁷ As I leave you with peace, it is my peace that I am giving to you. I give you a kind of peace no one and nothing that belongs to this world can give you. So do not be upset or anxious; and do not be afraid.

²⁸ You heard me say to you that I am going away and will later come back to you. If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going back to the Father because the Father is greater than I am. ²⁹ I have told you these things now before they happen so that, when they do happen, you will continue to trust me. ³⁰ I will not be able to talk with you much longer because the ruler of this world is coming. However, he has no power over me, ³¹ and I will do what the Father has commanded me to do. This is so that the world will know forever that I love the Father. Come, let us go from here.”

Chapter 15

¹ “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² Every branch in me that does not grow fruit—my Father cuts it off and takes it away. As for every branch that gives good fruit, he makes it clean by pruning it so that it may produce even more fruit. ³ You are already pure because of the message I spoke to you. ⁴ Remain joined to me, and I will remain joined to you. As the branch cannot bear any fruit on its own, neither can you bear fruit unless you stay joined to me and depend upon me for everything.

⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain joined to me and I remain joined to you, you will bear much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing at all. ⁶ Everyone who does not stay joined to me and draw his life from me will be thrown away like a dead branch. Those branches are gathered together and thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you stay joined to me and live by my message, you can ask God for anything, and he will do it. ⁸ When you bear much fruit, it causes people to honor the Father. Then you are my disciples.

⁹ As the Father loved me, so I have loved you. Continue to allow me to love you. ¹⁰ If you obey what I tell you to do, you will continue to allow me to love you. You will be like me in this way: I obeyed what my Father required me to do, and because of my obedience, I have stayed in his love. That will be true of you, too. ¹¹ I told you these things so that my joy may be in you, and so that you may rejoice to the fullest extent. ¹² What I command you to do is this: Love each other in the way that I have loved you. ¹³ No one has greater love than a person who gives up his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you not only listen to my commands but also live by them. ¹⁵ I no longer call you my servants, for the servant does not understand what his master is doing. I now call you friends, for everything I heard from my Father I made it all known to you so that you also could understand it. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you for a reason, so that you should go out and bear much fruit and so that your fruit should last forever. As a result, everything you ask the Father in my name, he will do for you. ¹⁷ This is what I command you to do: Love one another.

¹⁸ If the world despises you, you should realize that it hated me first. ¹⁹ If you belonged to the unbelievers in this world, the world would love you, and you would love what they love and do what they do. But you do not belong to them; instead, I chose you to come out from among them. That is the reason the unbelievers in this world despise you. ²⁰ Remember when I taught you this: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ Since they have made me suffer, you can be sure they will make you suffer also. If any of them have received my teachings and followed them, they will also follow what you teach them. ²¹ The unbelievers in this world will do horrible things to you because you repre-

sent me and because they do not know my Father, who has sent me to you. ²² If I had not come and spoken God’s message to them, they would not have been guilty of rejecting me and my message. However, now I have come and told them God’s message, and they have no excuse for their sin. ²³ Whoever hates me also hates my Father. ²⁴ If I had not done those things among them, those things in which I showed my power, things that no one else has ever done, they would not have been guilty of sin. Yet now that they have seen me, they hate me, and they hate my Father, too. ²⁵ These words were written in their law and have now come true: ‘They hated me for no reason.’

²⁶ When the Helper comes, he is the one who will come from the Father and who will comfort you. He is the Spirit who tells the truth about God and me. He will tell everyone who I am, and he will show everyone all that I have done. ²⁷ You also must tell everyone what you know about me because you have been with me the whole time from the very first days when I began to teach the people and to do miracles.”

Chapter 16

¹ I told you these things so that you would not stumble or stop trusting in me because of the difficulties you must face. ² Difficult days are ahead. Your enemies will stop you from worshiping in the synagogues. However, something even worse will happen. The days are coming when people will put you to death and think that they are pleasing God. ³ They will do this because they have not known the Father or me. ⁴ I have told you these things so that at the time when these hardships come, you will remember that I warned you. I did

not tell you these things at the beginning because I was with you then.

⁵ "Now I am going back to the Father. He is the one who sent me. Yet none of you dares to ask me, 'Where are you going?'"

⁶ Because I have said these things to you, now sorrow has filled up your hearts. ⁷ I tell you the truth, it is good for you that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Helper who comforts you will not come. If I go away, I will send him to you. ⁸ When the Helper comes, he will convict them of the sins they have committed; he will show them that they do not reach God's standard of goodness; and he promises them that God will judge them because they did what God commanded them not to do. ⁹ Their guilt from sin comes because they could not put their trust in me. ¹⁰ Their failure to measure up to God's standard of goodness is confirmed because I am going back to my Father, and you will no longer see me. ¹¹ Their final accounting will come when God brings his punishment against them for their sin. This is shown by the punishment that Satan, the prince of this world, will receive because he fought against God.

¹² I have many more things I want to tell you. However, if I tell you now, you will not be able to live well knowing these things. ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will lead you into all the truth you need to know. He will not speak from his own authority, but whatever he hears he will tell you, and he will tell you ahead of time about things that will happen. ¹⁴ The Spirit will honor me by telling you who I am and showing you what I have done. He will explain to you everything he heard from me. ¹⁵ Everything my Father has belongs to me. That is why I said that the Spirit will take whatever he receives from me and will explain it to you.

¹⁶ In a little while, you will not see me.

Then after a little while, you will see me again." ¹⁷ So some of his disciples said to one another, "What does Jesus mean when he says to us, 'In a little while, you will not see me,' and 'after a little while, you will see me again' and what does he mean by 'because I am going back to my Father'?" ¹⁸ They kept asking, "What does he mean by saying, 'after a little while'? We do not understand what he is saying."

¹⁹ Jesus saw that they wanted to ask him more questions. So he said to the disciples, "Why are you asking each other what I meant? I said that in a little while, you would not see me; and then after a little while, you would see me again. ²⁰ I am telling you the truth: You will cry and grieve, but those who belong to this world will rejoice. You will go through great sadness, but your sadness will turn into joy. ²¹ This is like a woman who is suffering the pains of labor when giving birth. After her baby is born, she forgets her anguish because of the joy she has that her child has been born into the world. ²² You, like her, have sorrow now, but I will see you again and God will give you great joy, joy no one can take from you. ²³ On that day, you will have no more questions to ask me. I am telling you the truth: Whatever you ask the Father, he will give it to you when you ask because you are joined to me. ²⁴ Up until now, you have not asked for anything like that. Ask and you will receive it, and God will give you such joy that fills everything.

²⁵ I have been speaking these things using language of parables and riddles, but there will soon be a time when I will no longer use that kind of language. Instead, I will tell you all about my Father in language that you can clearly understand. ²⁶ At that time you will make your requests to God in my name and according to God's purposes. I will not have to ask the Father

to meet your needs, ²⁷ for the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have put your trust in me and because you know that I came from God. ²⁸ I came from the Father, and I entered this world. Now I am leaving this world, and I am going back to the Father.”

²⁹ Then his disciples said, “Finally! Now you are speaking plainly and not using figurative language. ³⁰ Now we understand that you know everything. There is no need to ask you questions. This is why we gave you our trust, and we know for certain that you came from God.”

³¹ Jesus replied to them, “Do you now finally put your trust in me? ³² Look! The time is coming when others will scatter you everywhere! Each one will go toward his own home, and you will leave me. However, I will not be alone because the Father is always with me. ³³ I have told you these things so you may have peace in me. In the world you have trials and sorrows, but be brave! I have conquered the world!”

Chapter 17

¹ After Jesus said these things, he looked up to the sky and said, “Father, it is time for you to announce to everyone and to tell them who I, your Son, am, and to show them all that I have done. Do this so that I, your Son, may reveal you to everyone who you really are, the great King who can do anything. ² Do this just as you have allowed me, your Son, to rule over all people. Father, you have done this in order that I might be able to them live forever—all whom you have given to me. ³ This is everlasting life: To know you, Father—you, who are the only true God, and to know me, Jesus the Messiah, the one whom you have sent into the world.

⁴ I have brought all kinds of people to you to show them all about you. I did this by finishing the work you gave me. ⁵ Father, give me honor by bringing me into your own presence, as we were before the time we created the world.

⁶ Those whom you chose from everyone in this world to belong to me—I have taught them who you really are and what you are like. They belonged to you and you have given them to me. They have believed in what you said to them, and they have obeyed it. ⁷ Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you.

⁸ I gave them the message that you gave me. They accepted it, and now they know for sure that I came from you, and they believe that you sent me. ⁹ I am praying for them. I am not praying for those who belong to this world, those who continue to oppose you. I am praying for those whom you gave me because they belong to you. ¹⁰ All I have belongs to you, and all you have is mine. They know who I am, and they sincerely tell the truth about who I am. ¹¹ I am not staying in the world any longer. However, they are staying in the world. I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them safe; keep them belonging to yourself by the same power that you gave to me so that they may be united together, just as we are. ¹² While I was with them, I kept them safe and watched over them by your own power. Not one of them was lost, except the one whom you had destined for destruction, as the scriptures foretold long ago.

¹³ Now I am coming to you, Father. I have said these things while I am here in the world so that I may give them my complete joy. ¹⁴ I have spoken your messages to them, and the world has hated them and would not listen to your message. The world hated them because, like me, they do not belong to this world, but they have

another home. ¹⁵ I am not asking for you to take them out of this world, but instead for you to protect them from the harm that the evil one can do to them. ¹⁶ They do not belong to this world, just as I do not. ¹⁷ Set them apart for yourself by teaching them the truth about yourself. Teach them what they need to know so that you can set them apart, for your messages are completely true. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. ¹⁹ I am giving myself completely to you for their sakes so that they can truly give themselves to you.

²⁰ "I am praying not only for these, but also I am praying for those who will trust in me when they hear their message. ²¹ I pray that they may all be united, just as you and I are united. Father, you are united to me, and I am to you—may they also be united to us. Do this so that the world will know you sent me. ²² I have shown them who I am, and they have seen what I have done. I have taught them this so that they may be united together, as you and I are united. ²³ I am united with them and you are united with me. I have done this so that they may be perfectly united together and so that the unbelievers may know that you sent me and that you love them, just as you love me.

²⁴ "Father, I want these whom you have given to me to be with me always where I am so that they can see the splendor and majesty you will give to me when I am with you. You do this because you have loved me from before the time we created the world.

²⁵ O Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these with me here know that you have sent me to them. ²⁶ I have made them know who you are. I will continue to do this so that you may love them like you love me and so that I may be united with them."

Chapter 18

¹ When Jesus finished his prayer, he went with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was a grove of olive trees, and they entered it.

² Judas, the one who was about to hand Jesus over to his enemies, knew where the place was because Jesus often went there with his disciples. ³ Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had ordered some soldiers and officers to go there with Judas. So they went to the garden with lanterns, torches, and weapons. ⁴ Jesus knew what was going to happen to him, so he went forward and asked them, "For whom are you looking?" ⁵ They replied to him, "Jesus the Nazarene." Jesus said to them, "I am that person." (Now Judas, the one who was handing him over, was standing with them.) ⁶ When Jesus said to them, "I am that person," they swiftly moved back and fell to the ground. ⁷ So he asked them again, "For whom are you looking?" They answered, "Jesus the Nazarene." ⁸ Jesus replied to them, "I told you that I am that person. Since I am the one you are looking for, let these other men go. ⁹ This happened in order to fulfill the words he had said when he was praying to his Father, "I did not lose even one of those you gave me."

¹⁰ Then Simon Peter drew out a short sword and struck the high priest's servant, a man named Malchus, and cut off his right ear. ¹¹ Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back into its sheath! Of course I will suffer in the way that my Father has planned for me to do."

¹² Then the group of soldiers, along with their captain and some of the temple guards, seized Jesus and tied him to prevent him from escaping. ¹³ Then they took him to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was the high priest that year.

¹⁴ It was Caiaphas who had advised other leaders that it would be better that one man should die for the people than that all the people should perish.

¹⁵ Simon Peter followed Jesus and so did another disciple. The other disciple was known to the high priest, so he had permission to enter the high priest's courtyard when the soldiers took Jesus. ¹⁶ Peter had to stop outside at the gate. So the other disciple went out again and spoke to the servant girl who was watching the gate, and she let Peter in. ¹⁷ That servant girl said to Peter, "You are one the disciples of the man whom they have arrested, are you not?" He said, "No, I am not." ¹⁸ It was cold, so the high priest's servants and temple guards made a charcoal fire and were standing and warming themselves around it. Peter was also there with them. He was standing and warming himself.

¹⁹ The high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and what he had been teaching them. ²⁰ Jesus replied, "I have spoken openly to everyone. I have always taught in the synagogues and in the temple, in the places where our people come together. I have said nothing in secret. ²¹ So why are you asking me these questions? Ask the people who heard what I taught them. They know what I said." ²² When Jesus said these things, one of the temple guards standing near him struck him hard with his hand. He said, "That is not the right way to answer the high priest." ²³ Jesus replied to him, "If I had said something wrong, tell me what it was. However, if what I said was right, you should not slap me!" ²⁴ Then Annas sent Jesus, who was still tied up, to Caiaphas the high priest.

²⁵ Simon Peter was still standing and warming himself. Another person said to him, "You are one of the disciples of the man whom they have arrested, are you not?" He said, "No, I am not." ²⁶ One of

the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, said to him, "Surely I saw you in the olive tree grove with the man they have arrested, did I not?" ²⁷ Peter again denied it, and immediately a rooster crowed.

²⁸ Then the soldiers led Jesus from Caiaphas' house to the headquarters of Pilate, the Roman governor. It was early morning. Pilate was not a Jew, so Jesus' accusers thought that if they entered his headquarters, they would defile themselves and be unable to celebrate the Passover Festival. So they did not go in. ²⁹ So Pilate came out to talk to them. He said, "Of what are you accusing this man?" ³⁰ "If this man were not a criminal, we would not have brought him to you!" they replied. ³¹ Then Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves, and judge him by your own law." Then the Jewish leaders said, "We want to execute him, but your Roman law prevents us from doing that." ³² They said this in order to make true what Jesus had said about the kind of death he was going to die.

³³ Pilate then went back inside his headquarters. He summoned Jesus and said to him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" ³⁴ Jesus replied, "Are you asking because you yourself want to know, or did others tell you to ask me this question?" ³⁵ Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew! Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done wrong?" ³⁶ Jesus replied, "My kingdom is not part of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting to keep me from being handed over to my Jewish opponents, but my kingdom is not of this world." ³⁷ Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus replied, "Yes. The reason I was born and came into this world was to tell people the truth about God. Everyone who loves the truth

listens to me.” ³⁸ Pilate asked him, “What is true?”

After Pilate asked that question, he went outside and talked to the Jewish leaders again. He said to them, “I find he has broken no law. ³⁹ However, you Jews have a custom where every year during the Passover Festival, you ask me to release one man who is in prison. So would you like for me to release to you the King of the Jews?” ⁴⁰ They shouted again, “No, do not release this man, but release Barabbas!” Now Barabbas was a revolutionary.

Chapter 19

¹ Then Pilate sent for Jesus. He had his soldiers beat him severely using whips. ² The soldiers also twisted together a crown and they put it on his head. They also put a purple robe on him. ³ They mocked him and said, “Greetings, King of the Jews!” and they struck him over and over again.

⁴ Pilate came outside again and said to the people, “Look, I am bringing him out to you so that you can know that I find no reason to punish him.” ⁵ So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, “Look, here is the man!” ⁶ When the chief priests and temple guards saw him, they shouted, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Take him yourselves and crucify him! As for me, I find no reason to punish him.” ⁷ The Jewish leaders replied to Pilate, “We have a certain law that says he ought to die because he claimed to be the Son of God.” ⁸ When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid. ⁹ He entered his headquarters once more and called the soldiers to bring Jesus back inside. Then he said to Jesus, “From where do you come?” However, Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰ So Pilate said to him, “Will

you not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you, and I also have authority to crucify you?” ¹¹ Jesus answered him, “You would have no authority over me at all, if God had not given it to you. So the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a worse sin.”

¹² From that moment on, Pilate kept trying to release Jesus. However, the Jewish leaders cried out, “If you release this man, you are no friend of Caesar! Anyone who makes himself a king, stands opposed to Caesar.” ¹³ When Pilate heard that, he brought Jesus out. Then Pilate sat down before him in the judgment seat, the place where he usually pronounced verdicts. This was called “The Stone Pavement,” and in Aramaic it was “Gabbatha.”

¹⁴ Now it was the day before the Passover Festival, the day of preparation. It was almost noontime when Pilate said to the Jews, “See, here is your king!” ¹⁵ They shouted, “Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Should I crucify your king?” The chief priests replied, “We have no king but Caesar!” ¹⁶ So Pilate handed Jesus over to them, and they took him away.

¹⁷ He went out, carrying his own cross by himself to the place called “The Place of a Skull,” which in Aramaic is called “Golgotha.” ¹⁸ There they crucified him, and at the same time they also nailed two other criminals to their crosses. One was on either side, with Jesus in the middle.

¹⁹ Pilate also told someone to write on a board a notice and fasten it to Jesus’ cross. It read, ‘Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.’ ²⁰ Many Jews read this sign, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in three languages: Aramaic, Latin, and Greek. ²¹ The chief priests went back to Pilate and said, “You should not have written, ‘King of the Jews’, but rather, this man

said, 'I am King of the Jews.'" ²² Pilate replied, "You must leave the sign exactly as I have written it."

²³ After the soldiers had put Jesus on the cross, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier. However, they kept his tunic separate. This tunic had been woven from top to bottom from one piece of cloth. ²⁴ So they said to each other, "Let us not tear it. Instead, let us decide who will keep it as one piece by casting lots for the one who will get it." This happened to make come true the scripture that said,

"They divided my clothes among them.

They cast lots for my clothing."

²⁵ The soldiers did those things.

Jesus' mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene were all standing near his cross. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother standing there and John, the disciple whom he especially loved, standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Mother, here is the one who will act like a son to you." ²⁷ And he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother!" So from that very moment, that disciple took her to live in his home.

²⁸ A little later, Jesus knew that everything that God sent him to do had now been done, and in order to make come true one final thing that the scriptures had foretold, he said, "I am thirsty!" ²⁹ A jar of sour wine stood there, so they took a short branch from a hyssop plant and put a sponge on it, and they dipped in the sour wine and held it up to Jesus' mouth. ³⁰ After Jesus drank the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and died.

³¹ This was the day of preparation for the Passover (and the next day was a very special Sabbath). It was against the law to allow dead bodies to remain on the

crosses on the Sabbath, so they went to Pilate and asked him to break the legs of the three men so that the men would die quickly and their bodies would be taken down. ³² So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and then of the other, the two men who had been crucified with Jesus. ³³ When they came to Jesus, they saw he was dead already. So they did not break his legs. ³⁴ Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, and right away blood and water poured out of his body. ³⁵ The one who saw this bears witness—his testimony is true, and he knows he is telling the truth—so that you may put your trust in Jesus. ³⁶ These things happened in order to fulfill what was written in scripture: "No one will break any of his bones."

³⁷ And they fulfilled another scripture that read: "They will look on the one whom they have pierced."

³⁸ After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple of Jesus, but a secret disciple because he was afraid of the Jews, went to Pilate and asked him if he might take away Jesus' body. Pilate gave Joseph permission, so he came and took away the body of Jesus. ³⁹ Nicodemus, who had once come to Jesus at night, also came and brought with him a mixture of myrrh and aloe spices to prepare the body for burial. The spices weighed about 33 kilograms. ⁴⁰ They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it in strips of linen cloth, and they packed the wrappings full with all the spices. ⁴¹ Now in the place where Jesus was crucified was a garden, and at the edge of the garden was a new tomb in which no one had been buried. ⁴² The Passover was about to begin that evening, and they chose this tomb because it was close at hand and because they could bury Jesus quickly. So they laid Jesus there.

Chapter 20

¹ Now on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb very early in the day, while it was still dark. She saw that someone had moved the stone away from the tomb. ² So she ran to Jerusalem, where Simon Peter and the other disciple—the one whom Jesus loved—were staying, and told them, “They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we do not know where they have put him!” ³ When they heard this, Peter and the other disciple rushed out to the tomb. ⁴ They were both running, but the other disciple was faster than Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent down and looked into the tomb; he saw the strips of linen lying there, but he hesitated to go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter, who was running behind him, arrived there, but he went inside the tomb. He, too, saw the strips of linen cloth lying there, ⁷ but he also saw the cloth cover that had been on Jesus’ head, folded and put aside, separate from the linen strips. ⁸ Then the other disciple also went inside; he saw these things and began to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead. ⁹ They still did not understand the scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead.

¹⁰ So the disciples went back to their homes. ¹¹ Mary was left standing just outside the tomb, weeping. As she wept, she bent down and looked into the tomb. ¹² She saw two angels dressed in white robes sitting on the very place where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head, the other at the feet. ¹³ They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have put him!” ¹⁴ After she said that, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was he. ¹⁵ He said to her, “Woman,

why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?” She thought the man speaking to her was the gardener, and she said to him, “Sir, if you carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will take him.” ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”). ¹⁷ Jesus said to her, “Do not touch me, for I have not yet gone up to heaven to be with my Father. Go to my disciples and tell them, ‘I am about to return to heaven to be with my Father and your Father, to the one who is my God and your God.’” ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went to the disciples and announced, “I have seen the Lord”—and she reported to them what Jesus had said to her.

¹⁹ On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors were locked, and the disciples were staying inside because they were afraid that the Jewish authorities might arrest them. Suddenly Jesus came and stood in the middle of their group; he said to them, “May God give you peace.” ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples had great joy when they saw the Lord! ²¹ Jesus said to them again, “May God give you peace. Just as the Father sent me, now I am sending you.” ²² After he said this, he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of anyone, God will forgive them. If you do not forgive another’s sins, they will be held against them.”

²⁴ Now Thomas, one of the twelve, who was called “The Twin,” was not with the other disciples when Jesus came to them. ²⁵ The other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” However, he said to them, “Unless I see the marks of the nails in his hands and put my fingers in the holes made by the nails, and unless I put my hand into the gaping wound on his side, I will never put my trust in him.”

²⁶ Eight days later, his disciples were again inside the house, and this time Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them, and he said to them all, “May God give you peace.” ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands, and put out your hand and place it in my side! Stop doubting that it is I; put your trust in me.” ²⁸ Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹ Jesus said to him, “Now you believe that I have risen because you see me. Yet God gives great happiness to those who have not seen me and still believe.”

³⁰ Now Jesus did many other works of power and miracles that proved who he is. The disciples witnessed them, but they were so numerous that I have not written them all down in this book. ³¹ Nevertheless, I have written these so that you may have complete confidence that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and so that by trusting in him, you may have eternal life in his name.

Chapter 21

¹ After that, Jesus appeared to the disciples by Lake Tiberias (also known as the Sea of Galilee). He made himself known in this way: ² Simon Peter, Thomas (called The Twin), Nathaniel of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee (James and John), and two other disciples, were together. ³ Simon Peter said to the others, “I am going fishing.” They said, “We will go with you.” They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. ⁴ In the morning as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Jesus said to them, “My friends, do you have any fish?” They said, “No.” ⁶ He said to them, “Throw your net

out off the right side of the boat and you will find some.” They cast it as he told them, and they caught so many fish in the net that they were unable to pull the net into the boat! ⁷ John, the disciple whom Jesus especially loved, said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard him say this, he tucked up his outer garment around himself (he had worn almost nothing while working), and jumped into the water. ⁸ The other disciples came to shore in the boat, pulling behind the net full of fish. They were not far from shore, only ninety meters away. ⁹ When they got to shore, they saw a charcoal fire ready and hot, with fish cooking on it, and there was some bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught!” ¹¹ Simon Peter got back in the boat and dragged the net to the shore, full of large fish. There were 153 of them. Even so, the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, “Come and eat breakfast!” None of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them. He did the same with the fish. ¹⁴ This was the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after God had brought him back from the dead.

¹⁵ When they finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these others love me?” Peter said to him, “Yes, Lord, you know I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.” ¹⁶ Jesus said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He replied, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Be a shepherd to my sheep.” ¹⁷ Jesus said to him a third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because Jesus asked him three times, “Do you love me?” Peter said, “Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.” ¹⁸ I am telling

you the truth: When you were young, you put your own clothes on and you walked about wherever you wanted to go. However, when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone will dress you and will lead you where you do not want to go.” ¹⁹ Jesus said this to indicate how Peter would die in order to honor God. Then Jesus said to him, “Follow me.”

²⁰ Peter turned around and saw John, the disciple whom Jesus especially loved following them. He was the one who had leaned close to Jesus at the table and said, “Lord, who is going to hand you over to your enemies?” ²¹ When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, “Lord, what is going to happen to this man?” ²² Jesus said to him, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, that is not your concern! You follow me.” ²³ So the report circulated among the brothers and sisters that this disciple was not going to die. Yet Jesus did not say that he would not die. He said only, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, that is not your concern!”

²⁴ I, John, am the disciple who is bearing witness about all these things, and I have written them down. We know that his testimony is true.

²⁵ Jesus did many other things, so many that if they were all written down, I suppose the whole world could not contain the books that would be written.

ACTS

Chapter 1

¹ Dear Theophilus,

In my first book that I wrote for you, I wrote about many of the things that Jesus did and taught ² until the day on which God took him up to heaven. Before he went to heaven, he told the apostles by the power of the Holy Spirit the things that he wanted them to know. ³ After he had suffered and died on the cross, he became alive again. As he appeared often during the next forty days, the apostles saw him many times. He proved to them in many ways that he was alive again. He talked with them about how God would rule the lives of people in his kingdom.

⁴ One time while he was with them, he told them, "Do not leave Jerusalem. Instead, wait here until my Father sends his Spirit to you, as he promised to do. You have heard me speak to you about that. ⁵ John baptized people in water, but after a few days God will baptize you in the Holy Spirit."

⁶ One day when the apostles met together with Jesus, they asked him, "Lord, will you now become the king of Israel?" ⁷ He replied to them, "You do not need to know the time periods and the days when that will happen. My Father alone has decided when that will happen. ⁸ But the Holy Spirit will make you strong when he comes to you. Then you will tell people about me in Jerusalem and in the regions of Judea, Samaria, and all over the world."

⁹ After he said that, he rose up into heaven, and a cloud kept them from seeing him any longer.

¹⁰ While the apostles were still staring toward the sky as he was going up, suddenly

two men wearing white clothes stood beside them. They were angels. ¹¹ One of them said, "You men from Galilee, you do not need to stand here any longer looking up at the sky! Some day this same Jesus, whom God took from you up to heaven, will come back to earth. He will return in the same manner as you just now saw him go when he went up to heaven."

¹² Then after the two angels left, the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which was a short distance from Jerusalem. ¹³ After they entered the city, they went into the upstairs room in the house where they were staying. Those who were there included Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, another James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of another man named James. ¹⁴ All these apostles began to pray together all the time. Others who prayed with them included the women who had been with Jesus, Mary who was Jesus' mother, and his younger brothers.

¹⁵ During those days Peter stood up among his fellow believers. There was a group of about 120 followers of Jesus at that place. He said, ¹⁶ "My brothers, there are words about Judas that King David wrote long ago. These words had to come true, and they did, because the Holy Spirit told David what to write. ¹⁷ Although Judas was an apostle like us, he guided the people who arrested Jesus and killed him."

¹⁸ Now this man earned money by doing this evil. With this money he bought a field. Then he fell there onto the ground, his body split wide open, and all his intestines fell out. ¹⁹ All the people who reside in Jerusalem heard about that, so they called that field according to their own Aramaic language, Akeldama, which means "Field of Blood," because it was where someone died.

²⁰ Peter also said, “I see that what happened to Judas is like what the Psalms says: ‘May his family line die out; may there be no one left in it at all.’ And it seems that these other words that David wrote also refer to Judas: ‘Let someone else take over his work as a leader.’”

²¹ “So it is necessary for us apostles to choose a man to replace Judas. He must be one who was with us all the time when the Lord Jesus was with us. ²² That is, from the time when John the Baptizer baptized Jesus until the day when Jesus left us and rose up to heaven. The man to replace Judas must be one who saw Jesus alive again after he died.”

²³ So the apostles and other believers suggested the names of two men. One man was Joseph Barsabbas, who also had the name Justus. The other man was Matthias. ²⁴⁻²⁵ Then they prayed: “Lord Jesus, Judas stopped being an apostle. He sinned and went to the place where he deserves to be. You know what every man thinks in his own heart, so please show us which of these two men you have chosen to take the place of Judas.” ²⁶ Then they cast lots to choose between the two of them, and the lot fell for Matthias, and he became an apostle along with the other eleven apostles.

Chapter 2

¹ On the day when the Jews were celebrating the Pentecost festival, the believers were all together in one place in Jerusalem. ² Suddenly they heard a noise coming from the sky that sounded like a strong wind. Everyone in the entire house where they were sitting heard the noise. ³ Then they saw what looked like flames of fire. These flames separated from one another, and one of them came down on

the head of each of the believers. ⁴ Then all of the believers were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak different languages, in the way that the Spirit made each one able to.

⁵ At that time many Jews were staying in Jerusalem to celebrate the Pentecost festival. They were Jewish people who always worshiped God. They had come from many different countries. ⁶ When they heard the loud noise like a wind, a crowd of them came together at the place where the believers were. The crowd was amazed because each of them was hearing one of the believers speaking in his own language. ⁷ They were completely amazed, and they said to each other, “All these men who are speaking have come from Galilee, so how can they know our languages?” ⁸ But all of us hear them speaking our own language that we learned from birth! ⁹ Some of us are from the regions of Parthia and Media and Elam, and others of us are from the regions of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia. ¹⁰ There are some people there from Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt, and the regions in Libya that are near the city of Cyrene. There are others of us who are here visiting Jerusalem from Rome. ¹¹ They include native Jews as well as non-Jews who believe what we Jews believe. And others of us are from the Island of Crete and from the region of Arabia. So how is it that these people are speaking our languages about the great things God has done?” ¹² The people were amazed and did not know what to think about what was happening. So they asked one another, “What does this mean?” ¹³ But some of them made fun of what they saw. They said, “These people are talking like this because they have drunk too much new wine!”

¹⁴ So Peter stood up with the other eleven

apostles and spoke loudly to the crowd of people; he said, "You men of Judea and you others who are staying in Jerusalem, listen to me, all of you, and I will explain to you what is happening! ¹⁵ Some of you think that we are drunk, but we are not drunk. It is only nine o'clock in the morning, and people here never get drunk at this time of the day! ¹⁶ Instead, what has happened to us is the miraculous thing that the prophet Joel wrote about long ago. He wrote:

God says, ¹⁷ 'During the last days, I will give my Holy Spirit to all people, and your sons and daughters will tell people my messages, and I will give visions to the young men and I will give dreams to the old men. ¹⁸ During those days I will give my Holy Spirit to my servants, so they can tell people my messages. ¹⁹ I will cause amazing things to happen in the sky, and I will do miracles on the earth to show that important and amazing things will happen. Here on the earth there will be blood, fire, and smoke everywhere. ²⁰ In the sky the sun will appear dark to people and the moon will appear red to them. Those things will happen before I, the Lord God, will come to judge everyone. ²¹ And I will save all those who call to me to help them.'

²² Peter continued speaking, "My fellow Israelites, listen to me! When Jesus from Nazareth lived among you, God proved to you that he had sent him by making him able to do many amazing miracles that showed that he was from God. You yourselves know that this is true. ²³ Even though you knew that, you handed this man Jesus over into the hands of his enemies. However, God had already planned for that, and he knew all about it. Then you urged men who do not obey God's law to kill Jesus. They did that by nailing him to a cross. ²⁴ He died, but God raised him

up again, because it was not possible for him to remain dead. God caused Jesus to become alive again."

²⁵ "Long ago King David wrote what the Messiah said,

I knew that you, Lord God, would always hear me. You are right beside me, so I will not be afraid of those who want to harm me. ²⁶ Because of that my heart was glad and I rejoiced; even though I will die one day, I know that you will always help me. ²⁷ You will not make me remain in the place where the dead are. You will not even let my body waste away, because I am devoted to you and always obey you. ²⁸ You have shown me how to become alive again. You will make me very happy because you will be with me forever."

²⁹ Peter continued, "My fellow Jews, I am sure that our forefather, King David, died, and that the people buried him. And the place where they buried his body is still here today. ³⁰ King David was a prophet and he knew that God promised to him that one of his descendants would become king. ³¹ A long time ago, David knew what God would do. He said that God would cause Jesus the Messiah to live again after he died. God would not allow him to remain in a grave, and he would not let his body waste away."

³² "After this man Jesus had died, God caused him to become alive again. All of us, his followers, know this because we saw him. ³³ God has greatly honored Jesus by placing him at his right hand to rule with him, his Father. He has given us the Holy Spirit, and that is what you are seeing and hearing here today. ³⁴ We know that David was not speaking about himself because David did not go up into heaven as Jesus did. Besides that, David himself said this about Jesus the Messiah:

The Lord God said to my Lord the Mes-

siah, 'Rule here at my right hand,'³⁵ while I completely defeat your enemies.'"

³⁶ Peter ended by saying, "So I want you and all other Israelites to know that God made Jesus both Lord and Messiah, this same Jesus whom you had nailed to a cross and killed."

³⁷ When the people heard what Peter and the other apostles said, they knew they had done wrong. The people said to them, "What should we do?"

³⁸ Peter answered them, "Each of you should turn away from your sinful behavior. If you now believe in Jesus we will baptize you. God will forgive your sins, and he will give you his Holy Spirit. ³⁹ God has promised to do this for you and your children, and for all others who believe in Jesus, even those who live far away from here. The Lord our God will give his Holy Spirit to everyone whom he calls to become his people!" ⁴⁰ Peter spoke much more and spoke strongly to them. He told them, "Ask God to save you so that he will not punish you when he punishes these evil people who have rejected Jesus!"

⁴¹ So the people who believed Peter's message were baptized. There were about three thousand of those who joined the group of believers that day. ⁴² They continually obeyed what the apostles taught. They met many times together with the other believers and they ate a meal and prayed together every day.

⁴³ All the people who were in Jerusalem respected and honored God very much because the apostles were doing many kinds of miraculous things. ⁴⁴ All of those who believed in Jesus believed the same things and regularly met together. They also kept sharing everything that they had with one another. ⁴⁵ From time to time some of them sold some of their land and some of the other things that they

owned, and they gave some of the money to others among them, according to what they needed. ⁴⁶ Every day they gathered in the temple area, and then they would have meals together in their homes. They were happy when they were eating together, and they shared what they had with one another. ⁴⁷ As they did so, they kept praising God, and all the other people in Jerusalem respected them. As those things were happening, every day the Lord Jesus increased the number of people who were being saved from the punishment of their sins.

Chapter 3

¹ One day Peter and John were going to the temple courtyard. It was three o'clock in the afternoon, at the time when people prayed there. ² There was a man there who had not been able to walk from the time he was born. He was sitting by the gate called Beautiful Gate, at the entrance to the temple area. People carried him there every day, so that he could ask those who were entering the temple courtyard to give him some money.

³ As Peter and John were about to enter the temple courtyard, he began to ask them to give him some money. ⁴ As Peter and John looked directly at him, Peter said to him, "Look at us!" ⁵ So he looked directly at them, expecting to get some money from them. ⁶ Then Peter said to him, "I do not have any money, but what I can do I will do for you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth you are healed. Get up and walk!" ⁷ Then Peter grasped the man's right hand and helped him to stand up. That moment the man's feet and ankles became strong. ⁸ He jumped up and began to walk! Then he entered the temple area with Peter and John, walking and leaping and praising God!

⁹ All the people in the temple saw him walking and praising God. ¹⁰ They recognized that he was the man who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate in the temple courtyard and ask people for money! So all the people there were greatly amazed at what had happened to him. ¹¹ As the man clung to Peter and John, all the people were so surprised that they did not know what to think! So they ran to them at the place in the temple courtyard that is called Solomon's Porch.

¹² When Peter saw the people, he said to them, "Fellow Israelites, you should not be surprised about what has happened to this man! Why do you look at us as though we had power by ourselves to make this man walk? ¹³ So I will tell you what is really happening. Our ancestors, including Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, worshiped God. And now God has greatly honored Jesus. Your leaders brought Jesus to the governor, Pilate, so that his soldiers would execute him. You were the ones who rejected Jesus in the presence of Pilate, after Pilate had decided that he should release Jesus. ¹⁴ Although Jesus was God's own Messiah of Israel, the Righteous One, you asked for a killer to be set free instead of him! ¹⁵ God considers that you killed Jesus, the one who gives people eternal life. But God has caused him to become alive again. We saw Jesus many times after he became alive again. ¹⁶ It is because this man trusts in Jesus that he is strong again and able to walk in front of you all."

¹⁷ "Now, my fellow countrymen, I know that you and your leaders killed Jesus because you did not know that he was the Messiah. ¹⁸ However, God predicted long ago that people would put Jesus to death. God told all the prophets to write what people would do to the Messiah. They wrote that the Messiah, whom God would send, would suffer and die. ¹⁹ So turn

away from your sinful lives and ask God to help you do what pleases him, in order that he may completely forgive you for your sins, and in order that he may strengthen you. ²⁰ If you do that, there will be times when you will know that the Lord God is helping you. And some day he will again send back to earth the Messiah, whom he has given to you. That person is Jesus. ²¹ Jesus will certainly stay in heaven until the time when God will cause all that he has created to become new. Long ago God promised to do that, and he chose holy prophets to tell that to people. ²² For example, the prophet Moses said this about the Messiah: 'The Lord your God will send a prophet like me from among you. You must listen to everything he says to you. ²³ Those who do not listen to that prophet and obey him will no longer belong to God's people, and God will destroy them.'" ²⁴ Peter continued, "All the prophets have told about what would happen during these days. Those prophets include Samuel and all the others who later also spoke about these events before they happened. ²⁵ When God strongly promised to bless our ancestors, he also surely promised to bless you. He said to Abraham about the Messiah, 'I will bless all the people groups on the earth as a result of what your descendant will do.'" ²⁶ Peter concluded, "So when God sent Jesus to the earth to serve him as Messiah, he sent him first to you Israelites to bless you, in order to stop you doing what is wicked."

Chapter 4

¹ Meanwhile, there were some priests in the temple courtyard. There was also the officer in charge of the temple guard, and some members of the Sadducee group. All these men came to Peter and John while

the two of them were speaking to the people.² These men were very angry because the two apostles were teaching the people about Jesus. What they were telling them was that God caused Jesus to become alive again after he had been killed.³ So these men arrested Peter and John and put them in jail. The Jewish council had to wait until the next day to question Peter and John, because it was already evening.⁴ However, many people who had heard Peter speak put their faith in Jesus. The number of men who believed in Jesus increased to about five thousand.

⁵ The next day the high priest called the other chief priests, the teachers of the Jewish laws, and the other members of the Jewish council, and they gathered together in one place in Jerusalem.⁶ Annas, the former high priest, was there. Also there were Caiaphas the new high priest, John and Alexander, and other men who were related to the high priest.⁷ They commanded guards to bring Peter and John into the room, and then they asked Peter and John, "Who gave you power to heal the man that could not walk?"

⁸ As the Holy Spirit gave Peter power, Peter said to them, "You fellow Israelites who rule us, and all of you other elders, listen to me!⁹ Today you are questioning us about a good deed we did for a man who could not walk, and you ask us how he became healed. So let me tell you and all other Israelites this:¹⁰ It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth that this man was healed, so that he is now able to stand before you. It was you who nailed Jesus to a cross and killed him, but God caused him to become alive again.

¹¹ Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the one of whom the scriptures speak:

"The stone that the builders threw away has become the most important stone in the building."¹² Only Jesus can save us,

for God has given no other man in the world to us who can save us from the guilt of our sins!"

¹³ The Jewish leaders realized that Peter and John were not afraid of them. They also learned that these two men were ordinary people who had not studied in schools. So the leaders were amazed. They knew that these men had spent time with Jesus.¹⁴ They also saw the man who had been healed standing there with the Peter and John, so they were not able to say anything against them.

¹⁵ The Jewish leaders told guards to take Peter, John, and the healed man outside of the room where they were meeting. After they did so, the leaders talked with each other about Peter and John.¹⁶ They said, "There is nothing that we can do to punish these two men! Everyone who is living in Jerusalem knows that they have done an amazing miracle, so we cannot tell people that it did not happen!"¹⁷ However, we must not allow other people to hear what they have been teaching about this Jesus. So we must tell these men that we will punish them if they continue to tell other people about the one who they say gave them the power to heal this man."¹⁸ So the Jewish leaders told the guards to bring the two apostles into the room again. After the guards had done so, they told them both that they should no longer speak or teach about Jesus to anyone.

¹⁹ But Peter and John said, "Would God think that it is right for us to obey you and not to obey him? We will let you decide what you think is right."²⁰ But as for us, we cannot obey you. We will not stop telling people about the things that we have seen Jesus do and what we have heard him teach."

²¹ Then the Jewish leaders again told Peter and John not to disobey them, but they decided not to punish them, because all

the people in Jerusalem were praising God about what had happened to the man that could not walk. ²² He was more than forty years old, and he was not able to walk since the day that he was born.

²³ After Peter and John left the council, they went to the other believers and told them everything that the chief priests and Jewish elders had said to them. ²⁴ When the believers heard this, they all agreed as they prayed to God together, "O Lord! You made the sky, the earth and the oceans, and everything in them. ²⁵ The Holy Spirit caused our ancestor, King David, who served you, to write these words:

'Why did the people groups of the world become angry

and the Israelite people plan uselessly against God?

²⁶ The kings in the world prepared to fight God's Ruler,

and the rulers joined with them

to oppose the Lord God and the one whom he had chosen to be the Messiah.'

²⁷ It is true! Both Herod and Pontius Pilate, together with the non-Jews and the Israelite people, came in this city against Jesus, whom you chose to serve you as the Messiah. ²⁸ You allowed them to do this because it was what you decided long ago would happen."

²⁹ "So now, Lord, listen to what they are saying about how they will punish us! Help us who serve you to speak about Jesus to everyone! ³⁰ Use your power to do great miracles of healing, signs and wonders in the name of your holy servant, Jesus!"

³¹ When the believers had finished praying, the place where they were meeting shook. The Holy Spirit gave them all power to boldly speak the words that God

told them to speak, and this is what they did.

³² The group of people who believed in Jesus were in complete agreement about what they thought and what they wanted. Not one of them said that he alone owned anything. Instead, they shared with one another everything that they had. ³³ The apostles continued to strongly tell others that God had caused the Lord Jesus to become alive again. And God was helping all the believers very much. ³⁴⁻³⁵ Some of the believers who owned land or houses sold their property. Then they would bring the money for what they sold and they would give it to the apostles. Then the apostles would give money to any believer who needed it. So all the believers had what they needed to live on.

³⁶ Now there was a man named Joseph, who belonged to the tribe of Levi, and who came from the Island of Cyprus. The apostles called him Barnabas; in the language of the Jews that name means a person who always encourages others. ³⁷ He sold a field and brought the money to the apostles for them to give to other believers.

Chapter 5

¹ Now there was one of the believers whose name was Ananias, and whose wife's name was Sapphira. He also sold some land. ² He kept for himself some of the money he had received for the land, and his wife knew that he had done that. Then he brought the rest of the money and presented it to the apostles.

³ Then Peter said, "Ananias, you let Satan completely control you so that you tried to deceive the Holy Spirit. Why did you do such a terrible thing? You have kept for yourself some of the money you received for selling the land. You did not give us

all of it. ⁴ Before you sold that land, you truly owned it. And after you sold it, the money was still yours. So why did you ever think about doing this wicked thing? You were not trying to deceive only us! No, you tried to deceive God himself!" ⁵ When Ananias heard these words, immediately he fell down dead. And all who heard about Ananias' death became terrified. ⁶ Some young men came forward, wrapped his body in a sheet, and carried it out and buried it.

⁷ About three hours later, his wife came in, but she did not know what had happened.

⁸ Then Peter showed her the money that Ananias had brought and asked her, "Tell me, is this the amount of money you two received for the land you sold?" She said, "Yes, that is what we received." ⁹ So Peter said to her, "You both did a terrible thing! You two agreed to try to deceive the Spirit of the Lord! Listen! Do you hear the footsteps of the men who buried your husband? They are right outside this door, and they will carry you out, too!" ¹⁰ Immediately Sapphira fell down dead at Peter's feet. Then the young men came in. When they saw that she was dead, too, they carried her body out and buried it beside her husband's body.

¹¹ All the believers in Jerusalem became greatly frightened because of what God had done to Ananias and Sapphira. And everyone else who heard about these things also became greatly frightened.

¹² God was enabling the apostles to do many amazing miracles that showed the truth of what they were preaching among the people. All the believers were meeting together regularly in the temple courtyard at the place called Solomon's Porch.

¹³ All of the other people who had not believed in Jesus were afraid to be with the believers. However, those people continued to greatly respect the believers. ¹⁴

Many more men and women started believing in the Lord Jesus, and they joined the group of believers. ¹⁵ As a result, people were bringing those who were sick into the streets and laying them on stretchers and mats, in order that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them and heal them. ¹⁶ Large crowds of people were also coming to the apostles from the towns near Jerusalem. They were bringing the sick and those who were being tormented by evil spirits, and God healed all of them.

¹⁷ Then the high priest and all who were with him—they were all members of the Sadducee group—became very jealous of the apostles. ¹⁸ So they commanded the temple guards to arrest the apostles and to put them in the public jail. ¹⁹ But during the night an angel from the Lord God opened the jail doors and brought the apostles outside. Then the angel said ²⁰ to the apostles, "Go to the temple courtyard, stand there, and tell the people all this message of eternal life." ²¹ After hearing this, the apostles entered the temple courtyard about dawn and began to teach the people again about Jesus. Meanwhile, the high priest and those who were with him summoned the other Jewish council members. Together they were all the leaders of Israel. After they had gathered together, they sent guards to the jail to bring in the apostles. ²² But when the guards arrived at the jail, they discovered that the apostles were not there. So they returned to the council and reported, ²³ "We saw that the jail doors were very securely locked, and the guards were standing at the doors. But when we opened the doors and went in to get those men, none of them was inside the jail." ²⁴ When the captain of the temple guards and the chief priests heard that, they became greatly confused, and they wondered where all these events would lead.

²⁵ Then someone came and reported to them, "Listen to this! Right now the men whom you put in jail are standing in the temple courtyard, and they are teaching the people!" ²⁶ So the captain of the temple guards went to the temple courtyard with the officers, and they brought the apostles back to the council room. But they did not treat them roughly, because they were afraid that the people would kill them by throwing stones at them.

²⁷ After the captain and his officers had brought the apostles to the council room, they commanded them to stand in front of the council members, and the high priest questioned them. ²⁸ He said to them, "We commanded you not to teach people about that man Jesus! But you have disobeyed us, and you have taught people all over Jerusalem about him! Furthermore, you are trying to make it seem that we are the ones who are guilty for that man's death!" ²⁹ But Peter, speaking for himself and the other apostles, replied, "We have to obey what God commands us to do, not what you people tell us to do!" ³⁰ You are the ones who killed Jesus by nailing him to a cross! But God, whom our ancestors worshiped, caused Jesus to become alive again after he died. ³¹ God has honored Jesus more than anyone. He has made him the one to save us and rule over us. He has allowed us Israelites to stop sinning, so that he might forgive us for our sins. ³² We tell people about these things that we know happened to Jesus. The Holy Spirit, whom God has sent to us who obey him, is also confirming that these things are true." ³³ When the council members heard this, they became very angry with the apostles, and they wanted to kill them.

³⁴ But there was a council member named Gamaliel. He was a member of the Pharisee group. He taught people the Jewish laws, and all the Jewish people respected

him. He stood up in the council and told the guards to take the apostles out of the room for a short time. ³⁵ After the guards had taken the apostles out, he said to the other council members, "Fellow Israelites, you must think carefully about what you want to do to these men. ³⁶ Some years ago a man named Theudas rebelled against the government. He told people that he was an important person, and about four hundred men joined him. But he was killed, and all those who had been accompanying him were scattered. So they were not able to do anything that they had planned. ³⁷ After that, during the time when they were writing down names of the people in order to tax them, a man named Judas from the region of Galilee rebelled and persuaded some people to follow him. But he was killed, too, and all those who had accompanied him went off in different directions. ³⁸ So now I say this to you: Do not harm these men! Release them! I say this because if the things that are happening now are just something that humans have planned, someone will stop them. They will fail. ³⁹ But if God has commanded them to do these things, you will not be able to stop them, because you will find out that you are working against God!" The other members of the council accepted what Gamaliel said. ⁴⁰ They told the temple guards to bring the apostles and beat them. So the guards brought them into the council room and beat them. Then the council members commanded them not to speak to people about Jesus any more, and they released the apostles.

⁴¹ So the apostles went out from the council. They were rejoicing because they knew God had honored them by letting people disgrace them because they were following Jesus. ⁴² Every day after that, the apostles went to the temple area and to various people's houses, and they continued teaching people and telling them

that Jesus is the Christ.

Chapter 6

¹ During that time, many more people were becoming believers. The non-native Jews began to complain about the native born Israelites, because the widows among them were not receiving their fair share of food every day.

² So, after the twelve apostles had heard what they were saying, they summoned all the other believers in Jerusalem to meet together. Then the apostles said to them, "We would not be doing right if we stopped preaching and teaching God's message in order to distribute food to people!" ³ So, fellow believers, carefully choose seven men from among you, men whom you know that the Spirit of God directs and who are very wise. Then we will instruct them to do this work. ⁴ As for us, we will keep on using our time to pray and to preach and teach the message about Jesus."

⁵ What the apostles recommended pleased all of the other believers. So they chose Stephen, a man who strongly believed in God and whom the Holy Spirit controlled completely. They also chose Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, who was from the city of Antioch. Nicolas had accepted the Jewish religion before he had believed in Jesus. ⁶ The believers brought these seven men to the apostles. Then the apostles prayed for those men and placed their hands on the heads of each one of them to cause them to do that work.

⁷ So the believers continued to tell many people the message from God. The number of people in Jerusalem who believed in Jesus was increasing greatly. Among them were many Jewish priests who were

following the message about how they should trust in Jesus.

⁸ God was giving Stephen power to do many amazing miracles among the people that showed that the message about Jesus was true. ⁹ However, some people opposed Stephen. They were Jews from a group that regularly met together in a synagogue that was called the Freedmen's Synagogue, and also people from the cities of Cyrene and Alexandria and from the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. They all began to argue with Stephen. ¹⁰ But they were not able to prove that what he said was wrong, because God's Spirit enabled him to speak very wisely.

¹¹ So they secretly persuaded some men to falsely accuse Stephen. Those men said, "We heard him say bad things about Moses and God." ¹² So they made the other Jewish people angry at Stephen, including the elders and the teachers of the Jewish laws. Then they all seized Stephen and took him to the Jewish council. ¹³ They also brought in some men and paid them money so they would give false testimony. They said, "This fellow keeps saying bad things about this holy temple and about the laws that Moses received from God. ¹⁴ What we mean is that we have heard him say that this Jesus from the town of Nazareth will destroy this temple and will tell us to obey different customs than Moses taught our ancestors."

¹⁵ All the people in the council room stared at Stephen and saw that his face resembled the face of an angel.

Chapter 7

¹ Then the high priest asked Stephen, "Are the things that these people are saying about you true?" ² Stephen replied, "Fellow Jews and respected leaders, please lis-

ten to me! The glorious God whom we worship appeared to our ancestor Abraham while he was still living in the region of Mesopotamia, before he moved to the city of Haran. ³ God said to him, 'Leave this land where you and your relatives are living, and go into the land which I will direct you to.' ⁴ So Abraham left that land, which was also called Chaldea, and he arrived in Haran and lived there. After his father died, God told him to move to this land in which you and I are now living.

⁵ At that time God did not give Abraham any land to own here, not even a small plot of this land. But God promised that he would later give this land to him and his descendants, and that it would always belong to them. However, at that time Abraham did not have any children who would inherit it.

⁶ Later God told Abraham, 'Your descendants will go and live in a foreign country. They will live there for four hundred years, and during that time their leaders will mistreat your descendants and force them to work as slaves. ⁷ 'But I will punish the people who make them work as slaves. After that, your descendants will leave that land, and they will come and worship me in this land.'

⁸ Then God commanded that every male in Abraham's household and all of his male descendants should be circumcised to show that they all belonged to God. Later Abraham's son, Isaac, was born, and when Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him. Later Isaac's son, Jacob, was born. Jacob was the father of the twelve men whom we Jews call the patriarchs, our forefathers.

⁹ You know that Jacob's older sons became jealous because their father favored their younger brother Joseph. So they sold him to merchants, who took him to Egypt, where he became a slave. But God

helped Joseph; ¹⁰ He protected him whenever people caused him to suffer. He enabled Joseph to be wise, and he caused Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, to think well of Joseph. So Pharaoh appointed him to rule over Egypt and to look after all of Pharaoh's property.

¹¹ While Joseph was doing that work, there was a time when there was very little food in Egypt and also in Canaan. People were suffering. At that time Jacob and his sons in Canaan also could not find enough food. ¹² When Jacob heard people report that there was grain that people could buy in Egypt, he sent Joseph's older brothers to go there to buy grain. They went and bought grain from Joseph, but they did not recognize him. Then they returned home. ¹³ When Joseph's brothers went to Egypt the second time, they again bought grain from Joseph. But this time he told them who he was. And so Pharaoh learned that Joseph's people were Hebrews and that those men who had come from Canaan were his brothers. ¹⁴ Then after Joseph sent his brothers back home, they told their father Jacob that Joseph wanted him and his entire family to come to Egypt. At that time Jacob's family consisted of seventy-five people. ¹⁵ So when Jacob heard that, he and all his family went to live in Egypt. Later on, Jacob died there, and our other ancestors, his sons, also died there. ¹⁶ Their bodies were brought back to our land and were buried in the tomb that Abraham had bought from Hamor's sons in the city of Shechem.

¹⁷ Our ancestors had become very numerous when it was almost time for God to rescue them from Egypt, as he had promised Abraham that he would do. ¹⁸ Another king had begun to rule in Egypt. He did not know that Joseph had greatly helped the people of Egypt, long before his own

time. ¹⁹ That king cruelly tried to get rid of our ancestors. He oppressed them and caused them to suffer greatly. He even commanded them to throw their newborn babies outside their homes so that they would die.

²⁰ During that time Moses was born, and God saw that he was a very beautiful child. So his parents secretly cared for him in their house for three months. ²¹ Then they had to put him outside the house, but Pharaoh's daughter found him and cared for him as though he were her own son. ²² Moses was taught all the learning that the people in Egypt knew, and when he grew up, he spoke and did things powerfully.

²³ One day when Moses was about forty years old, he decided that he would go and visit his relatives, the Israelites. ²⁴ He saw an Egyptian mistreating one of the Israelites. So he went over to help the Israelite man, and he avenged the Israelite man by killing the Egyptian. ²⁵ Moses thought that his fellow Israelites would understand that God had sent him to free them from being slaves. But they did not understand. ²⁶ The next day, Moses saw two Israelite men fighting each other. He tried to make them stop fighting by saying to them, 'Men, you two are fellow Israelites! Why are you hurting each other?' ²⁷ But the man who was injuring the other man pushed Moses away and said to him, 'No one appointed you ruler and judge over us! ²⁸ Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?' ²⁹ When Moses heard that, he fled from Egypt to Midian land. He lived there for some years. He got married, and he and his wife had two sons.

³⁰ One day forty years later, the Lord God appeared as an angel to Moses. He appeared in the flame of a bush that was burning in the desert near Mount Sinai.

³¹ When Moses saw it, he was amazed, be-

cause the bush was not burning up. As he went over to look more closely, he heard the Lord God say to him, ³² 'I am the God whom your ancestors worshiped. I am the God that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob worship.' Moses was so afraid that he began to shake. He was afraid to look at the bush any longer. ³³ Then the Lord God said to him, 'Take your sandals off to show that you honor me. Because I am here, the place where you are standing is especially mine. ³⁴ I have certainly seen how the people of Egypt are continually causing my people to suffer. I have heard my people when they groan because of it. So I have come down to rescue them from Egypt. Now get ready, because I am going to send you back to Egypt.'

³⁵ This Moses is the one who had tried to help our Israelite people, but whom they rejected by saying, 'No one appointed you ruler and judge!' Moses is the one whom God himself sent to rule them and to free them from being slaves. He is the one whom an angel in the bush commanded to do that. ³⁶ Moses is the one who led our ancestors out from Egypt. He did many kinds of miracles in Egypt in order to show that God was with him, at the Sea of Reeds, and during the forty years that the Israelite people lived in the wilderness. ³⁷ This Moses is the one who said to the Israelite people, 'God will cause another man from among your own people to be a prophet like me for you.' ³⁸ It was this man Moses who was among the Israelites who were together in the wilderness; he was with the angel who had spoken to him on Mount Sinai. It is Moses to whom God had the angel on Mount Sinai give him our laws, and he was the one who told our ancestors what the angel had said. He was the one who received from God words that tell us how to live eternally and passed them on to us.

³⁹ However, our ancestors did not want to obey Moses. Instead, they rejected him as their leader and wanted to return to Egypt. ⁴⁰ So they told his older brother Aaron, 'Make idols for us who will be our gods to lead us. As for that fellow Moses who led us out of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him!' ⁴¹ So they made an image that looked like a calf. Then they offered sacrifices to honor that idol, and they sang and danced because of what they themselves had made. ⁴² So God stopped correcting them. He abandoned them to worship the sun, moon and stars in the sky. This agrees with the words that one of the prophets wrote:

God said, 'You Israelite people, when you repeatedly killed animals and offered them as sacrifices during those forty years that you were in the wilderness, were you offering them to me? ⁴³ On the contrary, you carried with you from place to place the tent that contained the idol representing the god Molech that you worshiped. You also carried with you the image of the star called Rephan. Those were idols that you had made, and you worshiped them instead of me. So I will cause you to be taken away far from your homes to regions even farther than Babylon country.'

⁴⁴ "While our ancestors were in the desert, they worshiped God at the sacred tent that showed that he was there with them. They had made the tent exactly like God had commanded Moses to make it. It was exactly like the model that Moses had seen when he was up on the mountain. ⁴⁵ Later on, other ancestors of ours carried that tent with them when Joshua led them into this land. That was during the time that they took this land for themselves, when God forced the people who previously lived here to leave. So the Israelites were able to possess this land. The tent

remained in this land and was still here when King David ruled. ⁴⁶ David pleased God, and he asked God to let him build a house where he and all of our Israelite people could worship God. ⁴⁷ But instead, God told David's son Solomon to build a house where people could worship him."

⁴⁸ "However, we know that God is greater than everything, and he does not live in houses that people have made. It is like the prophet Isaiah wrote:

⁴⁹⁻⁵⁰ God said, "Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool. I myself have made everything both in heaven and on the earth. So you human beings cannot make a place good enough for me to live in!"

⁵¹ "You people are extremely stubborn toward him! You are exactly like your ancestors! You always resist the Holy Spirit, just as they did! ⁵² Your ancestors caused every prophet to suffer. They even killed those who long ago announced that the Christ would come, the one who always did what pleased God. And the Christ has come! He is the one whom you recently turned over to his enemies and insisted that they kill him! ⁵³ You are the people who have received God's laws. Those were laws that God caused angels to give to our ancestors. However, you have not obeyed them!"

⁵⁴ When the Jewish council members and others there heard all that Stephen said, they became very angry. They were grinding their teeth together because they were so angry at him!

⁵⁵ But the Holy Spirit completely controlled Stephen. He looked up into heaven and saw a dazzling light from God, and he saw Jesus standing at God's right side. ⁵⁶ "Look," he said, "I see heaven open, and I see the Son of Man standing at God's right side!"

⁵⁷ When the Jewish council members and others heard that, they shouted loudly. They put their hands over their ears so that they would not hear him, and immediately they all rushed at him. ⁵⁸ They dragged him outside the city of Jerusalem and started to throw stones at him. The people who were accusing him took off their outer garments in order to throw stones more easily, and they put their clothes on the ground next to a young man whose name was Saul, so that he could guard them. ⁵⁹ While they continued to throw stones at Stephen, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"

⁶⁰ Then Stephen fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not punish them for this sin!" After he had said this, he died.

Chapter 8

¹⁻² Then some men who revered God buried Stephen's body in a tomb, and they mourned greatly and loudly for him.

On that same day people started severely persecuting the believers who were living in Jerusalem. So most of the believers fled to other places throughout the provinces of Judea and Samaria. The apostles remained in Jerusalem. ³ While they were killing Stephen, Saul was there approving that they should kill Stephen. So Saul also began trying to destroy the group of believers. He entered houses one by one, he dragged away men and women who believed in Jesus, and then he put them into prison.

⁴ The believers who had left Jerusalem went to different places, where they continued preaching the message about Jesus.

⁵ One of those believers whose name was Philip went down from Jerusalem to a city in the district of Samaria. There he was telling the people that Jesus is the Christ. ⁶

Many people there heard Philip speak and saw the miraculous things that he was doing. So they all paid close attention to his words. ⁷ For example, Philip commanded evil spirits to come out of many people, and they came out screaming. Also, many people who were paralyzed and many others who were lame were healed. ⁸ So many people in that city greatly rejoiced.

⁹ There was a man in that city whose name was Simon. He had been practicing sorcery for a long time, and he amazed the people in the district of Samaria with his magic. He claimed he was "Simon the Great One!" ¹⁰ All the people there, both ordinary and important people, listened to him. They were saying, "This man is the Great Power of God." ¹¹ They continued to listen to him carefully, because for a long time he had astonished them by practicing sorcery. ¹² But then they believed Philip's message about the good news about when God would show himself as king and about Jesus Christ. The men and the women who believed in Jesus were baptized. ¹³ Simon himself believed Philip's message and was baptized. He began to constantly accompany Philip, and he was continually amazed by the great miracles he saw Philip doing, things that showed Philip was speaking the truth.

¹⁴ When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that many people throughout Samaria district had believed God's message, they sent Peter and John there. ¹⁵ When Peter and John arrived in Samaria, they prayed for those new believers to receive the Holy Spirit. ¹⁶ For it was clear that the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷ Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

¹⁸ Simon saw that the Spirit was given to

people as a result of the apostles placing their hands on them. So he offered to give money to the apostles, ¹⁹ saying, "Enable me also to do what you are doing, so that everyone on whom I place my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." ²⁰ But Peter said to him, "May you and your money be destroyed, because you tried to get God's gift with money! ²¹ You cannot work with us in what we are doing, because your heart is not right with God! ²² So stop thinking wickedly like that, and plead that the Lord, if he is willing, will forgive you for what you wickedly thought in your heart to do! ²³ Turn away from your evil ways, because I perceive that you are extremely envious of us, and you are a slave of your continual desire to do evil!" ²⁴ Then Simon answered, "Pray to the Lord that he will not do to me what you just said!"

²⁵ After Peter and John told people there what they knew personally about the Lord Jesus and declared to them the message of the Lord, they both returned to Jerusalem. Along the way they preached the good word about Jesus to people in the district of Samaria.

²⁶ One day an angel whom the Lord God had sent commanded Philip, "Get ready and go south along the road that extends from Jerusalem to the city of Gaza." That was a road in a desert area. ²⁷ So Philip got ready and went along that road. On the road he met a man from the land of Ethiopia. He was an important official who took care of all the funds for the queen of Ethiopia. In his language people called their queen Candace. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship God, ²⁸ and he was returning home and was seated riding in his chariot. As he was riding, he was reading aloud in the book of the prophet Isaiah.

²⁹ God's Spirit told Philip, "Go near to that chariot and keep walking close to it!" ³⁰ So

Philip ran to the chariot and heard the official reading what the prophet Isaiah had written. He asked the man, "Do you understand what you are reading?" ³¹ He answered Philip, "No! I cannot possibly understand it if there is no one to explain it to me!" Then the man said to Philip, "Please come up and sit beside me." ³² The part of the scriptures that the official was reading was this: "He is as calm as a sheep that people lead to the place where they are going to kill it, or as a lamb stands in silence while its wool is being cut off.

³³ He will be humiliated. He will not receive justice. No one will be able to tell about his descendants—for he will have no descendants—because they will take away his life on this earth."

³⁴ The official asked Philip concerning these words that he was reading, "Tell me, who was the prophet writing about? Was he writing about himself or about someone else?" ³⁵ So Philip replied to him; he began with that scripture passage, and he told him the good message about Jesus.

³⁶⁻³⁷ While they were traveling along the road, they came to a place where there was some water. Then the official said to Philip, "Look, there is some water! I would like you to baptize me, because I do not know of anything that would prevent me from being baptized." ³⁸ So the official told the driver to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the official went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. ³⁹ When they came up out of the water, suddenly God's Spirit took Philip away. The official never saw Philip again. But although he never saw Philip again, the official continued going along the road, very happy.

⁴⁰ Philip then realized that the Spirit had miraculously taken him to the town of Azotus. While he traveled around in that region, he continued proclaiming the mes-

sage about Jesus in all the towns between the cities of Azotus and Caesarea. And he was still proclaiming it when he finally arrived in Caesarea.

Chapter 9

¹ Meanwhile, Saul angrily continued to threaten to kill those who followed the Lord. He went to the high priest in Jerusalem² and requested him to write letters introducing him to the leaders of the Jewish synagogues in Damascus. The letters asked them to give Saul power to seize any man or woman who followed the way that Jesus had taught, and to take them as prisoners to Jerusalem so that the Jewish leaders could judge and punish them.

³ While Saul and those with him were traveling, they were approaching Damascus. Suddenly a brilliant light from heaven shone around Saul. ⁴ Immediately he fell down to the ground. Then he heard the voice of someone say to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you trying to hurt me?" ⁵ Saul asked him, "Lord, who are you?" He replied, "I am Jesus, whom you are hurting." ⁶ Now stand up and go into the city! Someone there will tell you what I want you to do." ⁷ The men who were traveling with Saul were so astonished that they could not say anything. They just stood there. They heard the Lord speak, but they did not see anyone. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could not see anything. So the men with him took him by the hand and led him into Damascus. ⁹ For the next three days Saul could not see anything, and he did not eat or drink anything.

¹⁰ In Damascus there was a follower of Jesus named Ananias. The Lord Jesus made him see a vision and said to him, "Ananias!" He replied, "Lord, I am listening."

¹¹ The Lord Jesus told him, "Go to Straight Street to the house that belongs to Judas. Ask someone there if you can talk to a man named Saul of Tarsus, because he is praying to me at this moment." ¹² Saul has seen a vision in which a man named Ananias entered the house where he was staying and put his hands on him in order that he might see again." ¹³ Ananias answered, "But Lord, many people have told me about this man! He has done many evil things to the people in Jerusalem who believe in you!" ¹⁴ The chief priests have given him power to come here to Damascus in order to arrest all those who believe in you!" ¹⁵ But the Lord Jesus told Ananias, "Go to Saul! Do what I say, because I have chosen him to serve me in order that he might speak about me both to non-Jewish people and their kings and to the Israelite people." ¹⁶ I myself will tell him that he must often suffer in order to tell people about me." ¹⁷ So Ananias went, and after he found the house where Saul was, he entered it. Then, as soon as he met Saul, he put his hands on him, and he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus himself commanded me to come to you. He is the same one who appeared to you while you were traveling along the road to Damascus. He sent me to you in order that you might see again and that you might be completely controlled by the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸ Instantly, things like fish scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he was able to see again. Then he stood up and was baptized. ¹⁹ After Saul ate some food, he became strong again. Saul stayed with the other believers in Damascus for several days.

²⁰ Right away he began to preach about Jesus in the Jewish synagogues. He told them that Jesus is the Son of God. ²¹ All the people who heard him preach were amazed. Some of them were saying, "We can hardly believe that this is the same man who pursued the believers

in Jerusalem and who has come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests in Jerusalem!” ²² But God enabled Saul to preach to many people even more convincingly. He was proving from the scriptures that Jesus is the Christ. So the Jewish leaders in Damascus could not think how to disprove what he said.

²³ Some time later, the Jewish leaders there plotted to kill him. ²⁴ During each day and night those Jews were continually watching the people passing through the city gates, in order that when they saw Saul they might kill him. However, someone told Saul what they planned to do. ²⁵ So some of those whom he had led to believe in Jesus took him one night to the high stone wall that surrounded the city. They used ropes to lower him in a large basket through an opening in the wall. In this way he escaped from Damascus.

²⁶ When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to meet with other believers. However, almost all of them continued to be afraid of him, because they did not believe that he had become a believer. ²⁷ But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He explained to the apostles how, while Saul was traveling along the road to Damascus, he had seen the Lord Jesus and how the Lord had spoken to him there. He also told them how Saul had preached boldly about Jesus to people in Damascus. ²⁸ So Saul began to meet with the apostles and other believers throughout Jerusalem, and he spoke boldly to people about the Lord Jesus.

²⁹ Saul was also speaking about Jesus with Jews who spoke Greek, and he was debating with them. But they were continually trying to think of a way to kill him. ³⁰ When the other believers heard that they were planning to kill him, some of them took Saul down to the city of Caesarea. There they put him on a ship going to Tar-

sus, his hometown.

³¹ So the groups of believers throughout the entire regions of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria lived peacefully because no one was persecuting them anymore. The Holy Spirit was strengthening them and encouraging them. They were continuing to honor the Lord Jesus, and the Holy Spirit was enabling many other people to become believers.

³² While Peter was traveling throughout those regions, once he went to the coastal plain to visit the believers who lived in the town of Lydda. ³³ There he met a man whose name was Aeneas. Aeneas had not been able to get up from his bed for eight years because he was paralyzed. ³⁴ Peter said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you! Get up and roll up your mat!” Right away Aeneas stood up. ³⁵ Most of the people who lived in Lydda and on Sharon Plain saw Aeneas after the Lord had healed him, so they believed in the Lord Jesus.

³⁶ In the town of Joppa there was a believer whose name was Tabitha. Her name in the Greek language was Dorcas. She was always doing good deeds for poor people by giving them things that they needed. ³⁷ During the time that Peter was in Lydda, she became sick and died. Some women there washed her body according to the Jewish custom. Then they covered her body with cloth and placed it in an upstairs room in her house.

³⁸ Lydda was near the city of Joppa, so when the disciples heard that Peter was still in Lydda, they sent two men to go to Peter. When they arrived where Peter was, they urged him, “Please come immediately with us to Joppa!” ³⁹ Peter got ready right away and went with them. When he arrived at the house in Joppa, they took him to the upstairs room where Dorcas’ body was lying. All the widows

there stood around him. They were crying and showing him the tunics and other garments that Dorcas had made for people while she was still alive. ⁴⁰ But Peter sent them all out of the room. Then he got down on his knees and prayed. Then, turning toward her body, he said, "Tabitha, stand up!" Immediately she opened her eyes and, when she saw Peter, she sat up. ⁴¹ He grasped one of her hands and helped her to stand up. After he had summoned the believers and especially the widows among them to come back in, he showed them that she was alive again. ⁴² Soon people everywhere in Joppa knew about that miracle, and as a result many people believed in the Lord Jesus. ⁴³ Peter stayed in Joppa many days with a man named Simon who made leather from animal skins.

Chapter 10

¹ There was a man who lived in the city of Caesarea whose name was Cornelius. He was an officer who commanded one hundred men in a large group of Roman soldiers from Italy. ² He always tried to do what would please God; he and his entire household were non-Jews who habitually worshiped God. He sometimes gave money to help poor Jewish people, and he prayed to God regularly.

³ One day at about three o'clock in the afternoon Cornelius saw a vision. He clearly saw an angel whom God had sent. He saw the angel coming into his room and saying to him, "Cornelius!" ⁴ Cornelius stared at the angel and became terrified. Then he asked fearfully, "Sir, what do you want?" The angel who was sent from God answered him, "You have pleased God because you have been praying regularly to him and you often give money to help

poor people. Those things have been like a memorial offering to God. ⁵ So now command some men to go to Joppa and tell them to bring back a man named Simon whose other name is Peter. ⁶ He is staying with a man, also named Simon, who makes leather. His house is near the ocean." ⁷ When the angel who spoke to Cornelius had gone, he summoned two of his household servants and a soldier who served him, one who also worshiped God. ⁸ He explained to them everything that the angel had said. Then he told them to go to city of Joppa to ask Peter to come to Caesarea.

⁹ About noon the next day those three men were traveling along the road and were coming near Joppa. As they were approaching Joppa, Peter went up on the flat housetop to pray. ¹⁰ He became hungry and wanted something to eat. While some people were preparing the food, Peter saw a vision. ¹¹ He saw the sky open and something like a large sheet being lowered to the ground, with its four corners raised up. ¹² Inside the sheet were all kinds of creatures. These included animals and birds that the Mosaic laws forbade Jews to eat. Some had four feet, others crawled on the ground, and others were wild birds. ¹³ Then he heard God say to him, "Peter, stand up, kill some of these and eat them!" ¹⁴ But Peter replied, "Lord, surely you do not really want me to do that since I have never eaten anything that our Jewish law says is unacceptable to you or something that we must not eat!" ¹⁵ Then Peter heard God talk to him a second time. He said, "I am God, so if I have made something acceptable to eat, do not say that it is not acceptable to eat!" ¹⁶ This happened three times. Immediately after that, the sheet with the animals and birds was then pulled back into the sky.

¹⁷ While Peter was trying to understand

what that vision meant, the men who had been sent by Cornelius arrived. They asked people how to get to Simon's house. So they found his house and were standing outside the gate. ¹⁸ They called and asked if a man named Simon, whose other name was Peter, was staying there. ¹⁹ While Peter was still trying to understand what the vision meant, God's Spirit said to him, "Listen! Three men are here who want to see you. ²⁰ So get up and go downstairs and go with them! Do not think that you should not go with them, because I have sent them here!" ²¹ So Peter went down to the men and said to them, "Greetings! I am the man you are looking for. Why have you come?" ²² They replied, "Cornelius, who is a Roman army officer, sent us here. He is a good man who worships God, and all of the Jewish people who know about him say that he is a very good man. An angel said to him, 'Tell some men to go to Joppa to see Simon Peter and bring him here, so that you can hear what he has to say.'" ²³ So Peter invited them into the house and told them that they should stay there that night.

The next day Peter got ready and went with the men. Several of the believers from Joppa also went with him. ²⁴ The day after that, they arrived in the city of Caesarea. Cornelius was waiting for them. He had also invited his relatives and close friends to come, so they were there in his house too. ²⁵ When Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and bowed low in front of him to worship him. ²⁶ But Peter grasped Cornelius by the hand and lifted him to his feet. He said, "Stand up! Do not bow down and worship me! I myself am only human, like you!"

²⁷ While he was talking to Cornelius, Peter and the others entered the house and saw that many people had gathered together there. ²⁸ Then Peter said to them, "You all

know that any of us Jews think we are disobeying our Jewish laws if we associate with those who are descendants of non-Jewish parents or if we even visit in their homes. However, God has shown me in a vision that I should not say anyone is so defiled and unclean that God would not accept him. ²⁹ So when you sent some men to ask me to come here, I came right away without objection. So, please tell me, why have you asked me to come here?"

³⁰ Cornelius replied, "About this time three days ago I was praying to God in my house, as I regularly do at three o'clock in the afternoon. Suddenly a man whose clothes shone brightly stood in front of me ³¹ and said, 'Cornelius, God has heard your prayer. He has also noticed that you have often given money to help poor people, and he is pleased with that. ³² So now, send messengers to go to the city of Joppa in order to ask Simon whose other name is Peter to come here. He is staying near the ocean in a house that belongs to another man named Simon, who makes leather.' ³³ So I immediately sent some men who asked you to come here, and I certainly thank you for coming. Now we all are gathered here, knowing that God is with us, in order to hear all the things that the Lord God has commanded you to say. So please speak to us."

³⁴ So Peter began to speak to them. He said, "Now I understand that it is true that God does not favor only certain groups of people. ³⁵ Instead, from every people group he accepts everyone who honors him and who does what pleases him. ³⁶ You know the message that God sent to us Israelites. He proclaimed to us the good news that he would cause people to have peace with him because of what Jesus Christ has done. This Jesus is not Lord only over us Israelites. He is also the Lord who rules over all people. ³⁷ You know

what he did throughout the land of Judea, beginning in Galilee. He began to do those things after John had been proclaiming to people that they should turn away from their sinful behavior before he baptized them. ³⁸ You know that God gave his Holy Spirit to Jesus, the man from the town of Nazareth, and gave him the power to do miracles. You also know how Jesus went to many places, always doing good deeds and healing people. He was healing all the people whom the devil was causing to suffer. Jesus was able to do those things because God was always helping him.”

³⁹ “We all saw the things Jesus did in Jerusalem and around every part of the country of Israel where he lived. His enemies killed him by nailing him to a wooden cross. ⁴⁰ Then God raised him back to life on the third day after he died, and he made sure that many people would see him alive after he was brought back to life. People were sure it was him who had died, and now they saw with their own eyes, and were fully convinced, that he was alive again. ⁴¹ At that time God did not let everyone see him, only those he selected to spend time with him and to eat a meal together in those first days just after God raised him back to life. ⁴² God commanded us to preach to the people and he told us to tell them that he appointed Jesus to be the judge of everyone one day, a day that is sure to come. He will judge all those who will still be living and all those who have died before that time. ⁴³ All the prophets who wrote about him long ago told the people about him. They wrote that if anyone believed in him, God could forgive whatever sins they have done, because of what this man, Jesus, had done for them.”

⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking those words, suddenly the Holy Spirit came down on all those people from other na-

tions who were listening to the message.

⁴⁵ The Jewish believers who had come with Peter from Joppa were amazed that God had generously given the Holy Spirit to people from all different nations, too.

⁴⁶ The Jewish believers knew that God had done that because they were hearing those people speaking languages that they had not learned and telling how great God is. Then Peter said ⁴⁷ to the other Jewish believers who were there, “God has given them the Holy Spirit just like he gave him to us Jewish believers, so surely all of you would agree that we should baptize these people!” ⁴⁸ Then Peter told those non-Jewish people that they should be baptized as believers in Jesus Christ. So they baptized all of them. After they were baptized, they requested that Peter stay with them several days. So Peter and the other Jewish believers did that.

Chapter 11

¹ The apostles and other believers who lived in various towns in the province of Judea heard people say that some non-Jewish people had also believed the message of God about Jesus. ² But there were some Jewish believers in Jerusalem who wanted all followers of Christ to be circumcized. When Peter returned from Caesarea to Jerusalem, they met with him and criticized him. ³ They said to him, “Not only was it wrong for you to visit in the homes of uncircumcized non-Jews, you even ate with them!”

⁴ So Peter began to explain exactly what had happened. ⁵ He said, “I was praying by myself in the city of Joppa, and in a trance I saw a vision. I saw that something like a large sheet was being lowered from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to where I was. ⁶ As I was look-

ing intently into it, I saw some tame animals and also some wild animals, reptiles, and wild birds. ⁷ Then I heard God commanding me, 'Peter, get up, kill and eat them!' ⁸ But I replied, 'Lord, you surely do not really want me to do that, because I have never eaten anything that our laws say that we must not eat!' ⁹ God spoke from heaven to me a second time, 'I am God, so if I have made something acceptable to eat, do not say it is unacceptable.' ¹⁰ This same thing happened two more times, and then the sheet with all those animals and birds was pulled up into heaven again.

¹¹ At that exact moment, three men who had been sent from Caesarea arrived at the house where I was staying. ¹² God's Spirit told me that I should not hesitate to go with them even though they were not Jews. Six Jewish believers also went with me to Caesarea, and then we went into that non-Jewish man's house. ¹³ He told us that he had seen an angel standing in his house. The angel told him, 'Tell some men to go to Joppa and bring back Simon whose other name is Peter. ¹⁴ He will tell you how you and everyone else in your house will be saved.' ¹⁵ As I started to speak, the Holy Spirit suddenly came down on them, just like he had first come on us during the Pentecost festival. ¹⁶ Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized you with water, but God will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷ God gave those non-Jews the same Holy Spirit that he had given to us after we had believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. So I could not possibly tell God that he did wrong when he gave them the Holy Spirit!"

¹⁸ After those Jewish believers heard what Peter said, they stopped criticizing him. Instead, they praised God, saying, "Then it is clear to us that God has also accepted

the non-Jews so that they will have eternal life, if they turn from their sinful behavior."

¹⁹ After Stephen died, many of the believers left Jerusalem and went to other places because they were suffering there in Jerusalem. Some of them went to Phoenicia, some went to the Island of Cyprus, and others went to Antioch, a city in Syria. In those places they were continually telling people the message about Jesus, but they told only other Jewish people. ²⁰ Some of the believers were men from the Island of Cyprus and Cyrene city in north Africa. They went to Antioch and were also telling non-Jewish people about the Lord Jesus. ²¹ The Lord God was powerfully enabling those believers to preach effectively. As a result, very many non-Jewish people believed their message and trusted in the Lord.

²² The group of believers in Jerusalem heard people say that many people in Antioch were believing in Jesus. So the leaders of the believers in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³ When he got there, he realized that God had acted kindly toward the believers. So he was very happy, and he was encouraging all of the believers to continue to trust completely in the Lord Jesus. ²⁴ Barnabas was a good man whom the Holy Spirit completely controlled, one who trusted God completely. Because of what Barnabas did, many people there believed in the Lord Jesus.

²⁵ Then Barnabas went to Tarsus city in Cilicia to look for Saul. ²⁶ After he found him, Barnabas brought him back to Antioch to help teach the believers. So during a whole year Barnabas and Saul met regularly with the church there and taught large numbers of people about Jesus. It was at Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians.

²⁷ During the time that Barnabas and Saul

were at Antioch, some believers who were prophets arrived there from Jerusalem.²⁸ One of them, whose name was Agabus, stood up in order to speak. God's Spirit enabled him to prophesy that there would soon be a famine in many countries. (This famine happened when Claudius was the Roman emperor.)²⁹ When the believers there heard what Agabus said, they decided that they would send money to help the believers who lived in Judea. Each of them decided to give as much money as he was able to give.³⁰ They sent the money with Barnabas and Saul to the leaders of the believers in Jerusalem. y

Chapter 12

¹ It was about this time that King Herod Agrippa sent soldiers to arrest some of the leaders of the group of believers in Jerusalem. The soldiers put them in prison. He did that because he wanted to make the believers suffer.² He commanded a soldier to cut off the head of the apostle James, the older brother of the apostle John. So the soldier did that.³ When Herod realized that he had pleased the leaders of the Jewish people, he commanded soldiers to arrest Peter, too. This happened during the festival when the Jewish people ate bread without yeast.⁴ After they arrested Peter, they put him in prison. They commanded four groups of soldiers to guard Peter. Each group had four soldiers. Herod wanted to bring Peter out of prison and judge him in front of the Jewish people after the Passover Festival was finished. He then planned to execute Peter.

⁵ So for several days Peter stayed in prison. But the other believers in their group in Jerusalem were praying earnestly to God that he would help Peter.⁶ The night

before Herod planned to bring Peter out from prison to have him executed publicly, Peter was sleeping in the prison between two soldiers, with two chains binding him. Two other soldiers were guarding the prison doors.⁷ Suddenly an angel from the Lord God stood beside Peter, and a bright light shone in his cell. The angel poked Peter in the side and woke him up and said, "Get up quickly!" While Peter was getting up, the chains fell off from his wrists. However, the soldiers were not aware of what was happening.⁸ Then the angel said to him, "Fasten your belt around you and put on your sandals!" So Peter did that. Then the angel told him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me!"⁹ So Peter put on his cloak and sandals and followed the angel out of the prison cell, but he had no idea that all this was really happening. He thought that he was dreaming.¹⁰ Peter and the angel walked by the soldiers who were guarding the two doors, but the soldiers did not see them. Then they came to the iron gate that led into the city. The gate opened by itself, and Peter and the angel walked out of the prison. After they had walked some distance along one street, the angel suddenly disappeared.¹¹ Then Peter finally realized that what had happened to him was not a vision, but that it had really happened. So he thought, "Now I really know that the Lord God sent an angel to help me. He rescued me from what Herod planned to do to me and also from all the things that the Jewish leaders expected would happen."

¹² When Peter realized that God had rescued him, he went to Mary's house. She was the mother of John whose other name was Mark. Many believers had assembled there, and they were praying that God would help Peter somehow.¹³ When Peter knocked at the outer entrance, a servant girl named Rhoda came to find out

who was outside the door. ¹⁴ When Peter answered her, she recognized his voice, but she was so happy and excited that she did not open the door! Instead, she ran back into the house. She announced to the other believers that Peter was standing outside the door. ¹⁵ But one of them said to her, "You are crazy!" But she continued saying that it was really true. They kept saying, "No, it cannot be Peter. It is probably his angel." ¹⁶ But Peter continued knocking on the door. So when someone finally opened the door, they saw that it was Peter, and they were completely amazed! ¹⁷ Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet. Then he told them exactly how the Lord God had led him out of the prison. He also said, "Tell James, the leader of our group, and our other fellow believers what has happened." Then Peter left and went away somewhere else.

¹⁸ The next morning the soldiers who had been guarding Peter became terribly upset, because they did not know what had happened to him. ¹⁹ Then Herod heard about it. So he commanded soldiers to search for Peter, but they did not find him. Then he questioned the soldiers who had been guarding Peter, and commanded them to be led away to be executed. Afterwards, Herod went from the province of Judea down to the city of Caesarea, where he stayed for some time.

²⁰ King Herod had been furiously angry with the people who lived in the cities of Tyre and Sidon. Then one day some men who represented them came together to the city of Caesarea in order to meet with Herod. They persuaded Blastus, who was one of Herod's important officials, to tell Herod that the people in their cities wanted to make peace with him. They wanted to be able to trade with the people that Herod ruled, because they needed to buy food from those regions. ²¹ On the

day that Herod had planned to meet with them, he put on very expensive clothes that showed that he was king. Then he sat on his throne and formally addressed all the people who had gathered there. ²² Those who were listening to him shouted repeatedly, "This man who is speaking is a god, not a man!" ²³ So, because Herod let the people praise him instead of praising God, immediately an angel from the Lord God caused Herod to become seriously ill. Many worms ate his intestines, and soon he died very painfully.

²⁴ The believers continued telling God's message to people in many places, and the number of people who believed in Jesus was continually increasing.

²⁵ When Barnabas and Saul finished delivering the money to help the Jewish believers in the province of Judea, they left Jerusalem and returned to the city of Antioch, in the province of Syria. They took John, whose other name was Mark, with them.

Chapter 13

¹ Among the group of believers in Antioch in the province of Syria there were prophets and those who taught people about Jesus. They were Barnabas; Simeon, who was also called Niger; Lucius, who from Cyrene; Manaen, who had grown up with King Herod Antipas; and Saul.

² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said to them, "Choose Barnabas and Saul to serve me and to go and do the work that I have chosen them to do!" ³ So they continued to fast and pray. Then they put their hands on Barnabas and Saul and prayed that God would help them. Then they sent them off to do what the Holy Spirit had commanded.

⁴ The Holy Spirit gave Barnabas and Saul instructions about where to go. So they went down from Antioch to the city of Seleucia by the sea. From there they went by ship to the city of Salamis on the Island of Cyprus. ⁵ While they were in Salamis, they went to the Jewish meeting places. There they proclaimed the message from God about Jesus. John Mark went with them and was helping them.

⁶ The three of them went across the entire island to the city of Paphos. There they met a magician whose name was Bar Jesus. He was a Jew who falsely claimed to be a prophet. ⁷ He was with the governor of the island, Sergius Paulus, who was an intelligent man. The governor sent someone to ask Barnabas and Saul to come to him because he wanted to hear the word of God. ⁸ However, the magician, whose name is translated Elymas in the Greek language, tried to stop them. He repeatedly tried to persuade the governor not to believe in Jesus. ⁹ Then Saul, who now called himself Paul, empowered by the Holy Spirit, looked intently at the magician and said, ¹⁰ "You are serving the devil, and you try to stop everything that is good! You are always lying to people and doing other evil things to them. You must stop saying that the truth about the Lord God is false! ¹¹ Right now the Lord God is going to punish you! You will become blind and you will not be able to see the sun for a while." At once he became blind, as though he were in a dark mist, and he groped about, searching for someone to hold him by the hand and lead him. ¹² When the governor saw what had happened to Elymas, he believed in Jesus. He was amazed by what Paul and Barnabas were teaching about the Lord Jesus.

¹³ After that, Paul and the men with him went by ship from Paphos to the city of Perga in the province of Pamphylia. At

Perga John Mark left them and returned to his home in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ Then Paul and Barnabas traveled by land from Perga and arrived in the city of Antioch in the district of Pisidia in the province of Galatia. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down. ¹⁵ Someone read aloud from what Moses had written in the books of the law. Next someone read from what the prophets had written. Then the leaders of the Jewish meeting place sent a message to Paul and Barnabas: "Fellow Jews, if one of you wants to speak to the people here to encourage them, please speak to us now."

¹⁶ So Paul stood up and motioned with his hand so that the people would listen to him. Then he said, "Fellow Israelites and you non-Jewish people who also worship God, please listen to me! ¹⁷ God, whom we Israelites worship, chose our ancestors to be his people, and he caused them to become very numerous while they were foreigners living in Egypt. Then God did powerful things in order to lead them out of slavery. ¹⁸ Even though they repeatedly disobeyed him, he endured their behavior for about forty years while they were in the wilderness. ¹⁹ He enabled the Israelites to conquer seven people groups who were then living in the region of Canaan, and he gave their land to the Israelites to possess forever. ²⁰ All of these things happened about 450 years after their ancestors had gone to Egypt."

"After that, God chose people to serve as judges and as leaders to rule the Israelite people. Those leaders continued to rule our people, and the prophet Samuel was the last judge to rule them. ²¹ Then, while Samuel was still their leader, the people demanded that he choose a king to rule them. So God chose Saul, the son of Kish, from the tribe of Benjamin, to be their king. He ruled them for forty years. ²² Af-

ter God had rejected Saul from being king, he chose David to be their king. God said about him, 'I have seen that David, son of Jesse, is exactly the kind of man who desires what I desire. He will do everything that I want him to do.'"

²³ "From among David's descendants, God brought one of them, Jesus, to us Israelite people to save us, just as he had promised David and our other ancestors that he would do. ²⁴ Before Jesus began his work, John the Baptizer preached to all of our Israelite people who came to him. He told them that they should turn away from their sinful behavior and ask God to forgive them. Then he would baptize them. ²⁵ When John was about to finish the work that God gave him to do, he was saying, 'Do you think that I am the Messiah whom God promised to send? No, I am not. But listen! The Messiah will soon come. He is so much greater than I am that I am not even important enough to take the sandals off of his feet.'"

²⁶ "Dear brothers, and all you who are descendants of Abraham, and you non-Jewish people among you who also worship God, please listen! It is to all of us that God has sent the message about how he saves people. ²⁷ The people living in Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus. They did not understand the messages of their own prophets even though the prophets were read aloud to them every Sabbath, and then what the prophets predicted long ago was made true when they condemned Jesus to death. ²⁸ Many people accused Jesus of doing wicked things, but even though they could not prove that he had done anything for which he deserved to die, they asked Pilate the governor to condemn Jesus to death. ²⁹ They did to Jesus all the things that the prophets long ago had written that the people would do to him. They

killed Jesus by nailing him to a cross. Then his body was taken down from the cross and placed in a tomb. ³⁰ However, God raised him from the dead. ³¹ For many days he repeatedly appeared to his followers who had come along with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. Those who saw him are telling the people about him now."

³² "Right now we are proclaiming to you this good message. We want to tell you that God has fulfilled what he promised to our Jewish ancestors! ³³ Now he has done this for us who are their descendants, and also for you who are not Jews, by making Jesus alive again. That is just like what David wrote in the second Psalm, when God was speaking about sending his Son,

'You are my Son,

today I have become your Father.'

³⁴ God has raised the Messiah from the dead and will never let him die again. God said to our Jewish ancestors, 'I will surely help you, as I promised David that I would do.' ³⁵ In another Psalm of David, he also says about the Messiah: 'You will not allow the body of your holy one to decay.' ³⁶ While David was living, he did what God wanted him to do. And when he died, his body was buried, as his ancestors' bodies had been buried, and his body decayed. So he could not have been speaking about himself in this Psalm. ³⁷ But Jesus was the one God raised from the dead, and his body did not decay."

³⁸ "Therefore, my fellow Israelites and other friends, it is important for you to know that God can forgive you for your sins as a result of what Jesus has done. He will even forgive you for those things that you could not be forgiven for by the laws that Moses wrote. ³⁹ All people who believe in Jesus are no longer guilty of any of the things that they have done that displeased God. ⁴⁰ So then be careful that

God does not judge you, as the prophets said that God would do! ⁴¹ The prophet wrote that God said:

‘You who ridicule me, you will certainly be astonished when you see what I am doing, and then you will be destroyed. You will be astonished because I will do something terrible to you while you are living. You would not believe that I would do that even though someone told you!’”

⁴² After Paul finished speaking and were going away, many of the people there asked them to return on the next Sabbath and say these things to them again.

⁴³ When the meeting was over, many of them began to follow Paul and Barnabas. These people were both Jews and non-Jews who worshiped God. Paul and Barnabas continued talking to them, and were urging them to continue to trust that God kindly forgives people’s sins because of what Jesus did.

⁴⁴ On the next Sabbath day, most of the people in Antioch came to the Jewish meeting place to hear Paul and Barnabas speak about the Lord Jesus. ⁴⁵ But the leaders of the Jews became extremely jealous when they saw the large crowds of people that were coming to hear Paul and Barnabas. So they began to contradict the things that Paul was saying and also to insult him. ⁴⁶ Then, speaking very boldly, Paul and Barnabas said to those Jewish leaders, “We had to speak the message from God about Jesus to you Jews first before we proclaim it to non-Jews, because God commanded us to do that. But you are rejecting God’s message. By doing that, you have shown that you are not worthy of eternal life. Therefore, we are leaving you, and now we will go to the non-Jewish people to tell them the message from God.

⁴⁷ We are doing this also because the Lord God has commanded us to do it. He said in the scriptures,

‘I have chosen you to reveal things about me to non-Jewish people that will be like a light to them. I have chosen you to tell people everywhere in the world the message that I want to save them.’”

⁴⁸ When the non-Jewish people heard those words, they began to rejoice, and they gave God praise for the message about Jesus. All of the non-Jewish people whom God had chosen for eternal life believed the message about the Lord Jesus. ⁴⁹ At that time, many of the believers traveled around throughout that region, spreading the message about the Lord Jesus everywhere they went.

⁵⁰ However, some leaders of the Jews talked to some important women who worshiped with them, as well as the most important men in the city. They persuaded them to try to stop Paul and Barnabas. So those non-Jewish people led many people against Paul and Barnabas, and they drove them out of their region.

⁵¹ As the two apostles were leaving, they shook the dust from their feet to show those leaders that God had rejected them and would punish them. Then they left the city of Antioch and went to the city of Iconium. ⁵² Meanwhile the believers continued to be filled with joy and with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 14

¹ At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish meeting place and spoke very powerfully about the Lord Jesus. As a result, many Jews and also non-Jews believed in Jesus. ² But some of the Jews refused to believe that message. They told the non-Jews not to believe it; they made some of the non-Jews angry toward the believers there. ³ So Paul and Barnabas spent a long time there speak-

ing boldly for the Lord, and the Lord Jesus enabled them to do many miracles. In this way he showed people the truth of the message that, even though we do not deserve it, the Lord saves us.

⁴ The people who lived in Iconium had two different opinions. Some agreed with the Jews. Others agreed with the apostles. ⁵ Then the non-Jewish people and the Jews who opposed Paul and Barnabas talked among themselves about how they could mistreat Paul and Barnabas. Some of the important men in that city agreed to help them. Together, they decided that they would kill Paul and Barnabas by throwing stones at them. ⁶ But Paul and Barnabas heard about their plan, so they quickly went away to the district of Lycaonia. They went to the cities of Lystra and Derbe in that district and to the surrounding area. ⁷ While they were in that area, they continually told the people the message about the Lord Jesus.

⁸ In Lystra, a man was sitting there who was crippled in his legs. When his mother gave birth to him, he had crippled legs, so he was never able to walk. ⁹ He listened as Paul was speaking about the Lord Jesus. Paul looked directly at him and could see in the man's face that he believed that the Lord Jesus could make him well. ¹⁰ So with a loud voice, Paul called out to him, "Stand up!" When the man heard that, he immediately jumped up and began to walk around.

¹¹ When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they thought that Paul and Barnabas were the gods that they worshiped. So they shouted excitedly in their own Lycaonian language, "Look! The gods have made themselves to look like people and have come down from the sky to help us!" ¹² They began to say that Barnabas was probably the chief god, whose name was Zeus. And they began to say that

Paul was Hermes, the messenger for the other gods. They thought that because Paul was the one who had been speaking. ¹³ Just outside the gates of the city there was a temple where the people worshiped Zeus. The priest who was there heard what Paul and Barnabas had done, so he came to the city gate, where many people had already gathered. He brought two bulls with wreaths of flowers around their necks. The priest and the crowd of people wanted to kill the bulls as part of a ceremony to worship Paul and Barnabas. ¹⁴ But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard about that, they were very upset, so they tore their own clothes. They rushed among the people, shouting, ¹⁵ "Men, you must not kill those bulls to worship us! We are not gods! We are just human beings with the same feelings as you! We have come to tell you some good news! We have come to tell you about the God who is all-powerful. He wants you to stop worshiping other gods, because they cannot help you. This true God made the heavens, the earth, the oceans, and everything in them. ¹⁶ In the past, all of you non-Jewish people worshiped whatever gods that you wanted to. God let you worship them, because you did not know him. ¹⁷ But he has shown us that he acts kindly toward us. He is the one who causes it to rain and causes crops to grow. He is the one who gives you plenty of food, and fills your hearts with joy." ¹⁸ The people heard what Paul said, but they still thought that they should sacrifice those bulls to worship Paul and Barnabas. But finally, the people decided not to do it.

¹⁹ However, some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and persuaded many of the people of Lystra that the message Paul had been telling them was not true. The people who believed what those Jews said became angry with Paul. They let the Jews throw stones at him until he fell down, un-

conscious. They all thought that he was dead, so they dragged him outside the city and left him lying there. ²⁰ But some of the believers in Lystra came and stood around Paul, where he was lying on the ground. And Paul became conscious! He stood up and went back into the city with the believers.

The next day, Paul and Barnabas left the city of Lystra and traveled to the city of Derbe. ²¹ They stayed there several days, and they kept telling the people the good message about Jesus. Many people became believers. After that, Paul and Barnabas started on their way back. They went again to Lystra. Then they went from there to Iconium, and then they went to the city of Antioch in the province of Pisidia. ²² In each place, they urged the believers to keep on trusting in the Lord Jesus. They told the believers, "We must suffer many hardships before God will rule over us forever." ²³ Paul and Barnabas chose leaders for each congregation. Before Paul and Barnabas left each place, they gathered the believers together and spent some time praying and fasting. Then Paul and Barnabas entrusted the leaders and other believers to the Lord Jesus, in whom they had believed, in order that he would care for them.

²⁴ After Paul and Barnabas had traveled through the district of Pisidia, they went south to the district of Pamphylia. ²⁵ In that district, they arrived at the town of Perga and preached God's message about the Lord Jesus to the people there. Then they went down to the seacoast at the town of Attalia. ²⁶ There they got on a ship and went back to the city of Antioch in the province of Syria. That was the place where Paul and Barnabas had been chosen to go to other places and preach, and where the believers had asked God to help

Paul and Barnabas in the work that they had now completed. ²⁷ When they arrived in the city of Antioch, they called the believers together. Then Paul and Barnabas told them all that God had helped them to do. Specifically, they told them how God had enabled many non-Jewish people to believe in Jesus. ²⁸ Then Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch with the other believers for a long time.

Chapter 15

¹ Then some Jewish believers went down from Judea province to Antioch. They started teaching the non-Jewish believers there, saying, "You must be circumcised to show that you belong to God, as Moses commanded in the laws that he received from God. If you do not do that, you will not be saved." ² Paul and Barnabas strongly disagreed with those Jews and started arguing with them. So the believers at Antioch appointed Paul and Barnabas and some of the other believers to go to Jerusalem, in order that they might discuss this matter with the apostles and other leaders.

³ After Paul, Barnabas, and the others were sent on their way by the believers in Antioch, they traveled through the provinces of Phoenicia and Samaria. When they stopped at different places along the way, they reported to the believers that many non-Jews had become believers. As a result, all the believers in those places rejoiced greatly. ⁴ When Paul, Barnabas, and the others arrived in Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the apostles, other elders, and the other believers in the group there. Then Paul and Barnabas reported the things that God had enabled them to do among non-Jewish people.

⁵ But some of the Jewish believers who belonged to the Pharisee sect stood up among the other believers and said to them, "The non-Jews who have believed in Jesus must be circumcised, and they must be told to obey the laws that God gave to Moses."

⁶ Then the apostles and the elders met together in order to talk about this matter. ⁷ After they had discussed it for a long time, Peter stood up and spoke to them. He said, "Fellow believers, you all know that a long time ago God chose me from among you other apostles, in order that I might tell the non-Jewish people also about God's love, and in order that they might believe in him. ⁸ God knows the hearts of all people. He showed me and others that he had accepted the non-Jews to be his people by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just like he had also done for us. ⁹ God made no distinction between us and them, because he made them clean inside simply as a result of their believing in the Lord Jesus. That is exactly how he has forgiven us. ¹⁰ Why do you want to force the non-Jewish believers to obey our Jewish rituals and laws? Doing that is like putting a heavy burden on them, because it forces them to obey laws that even our ancestors broke and that we Jews today have ever been able to keep! So then, stop making God angry by doing that! ¹¹ We know that God saves us Jews from our sins because of what the Lord Jesus did for us. God saves us Jews exactly like he saves those non-Jews who believe in the Lord Jesus."

¹² All the people there became silent after Peter had spoken. Then they all listened to Barnabas and Paul, as the two of them told about the many great miracles that God had enabled them to do among the non-Jewish people, miracles that showed that God had accepted the non-Jews.

¹³ When Barnabas and Paul had finished

speaking, James, the leader of the group of believers in Jerusalem, spoke to them. He said, "Fellow believers, listen to me. ¹⁴ Simon Peter has told you how God previously blessed the non-Jews. God did that by choosing from among them a people who would belong to himself. ¹⁵ The words that God spoke long ago, words that were written by one of the prophets, agree with that:

¹⁶ Later on I will return and I will choose a king from the descendants of David. It will be like someone who builds a house again after it has been torn down. ¹⁷ I will do this in order that all other people might try to know me, the Lord God. This will include even the non-Israelites whom I have called to belong to me. You can be certain that this will happen because I the Lord God have spoken these words. ¹⁸ I have done these things, and I have made my people know about them since long ago."

¹⁹ James continued to speak. He said, "Therefore I think that we should stop bothering the non-Jewish people who are turning away from their sins and turning to God. That is, we should stop demanding that they obey all our laws and rituals. ²⁰ Instead, we should write a letter to them, requiring only four things: They should not eat meat that people have offered to idols, they should not sleep with someone to whom they are not married, they should not eat meat from animals that have been killed by being strangled, and they should not eat the blood of animals. ²¹ In many cities, for a very long time people have been proclaiming the laws that Moses wrote, laws prohibiting those things. And every Sabbath those laws are read in the Jewish meeting places. So if the non-Jews want to know more about those laws, they can find out in our meeting houses."

²² The apostles and the other elders, along

with all the other believers in Jerusalem, accepted what James had said. Then they decided that they should choose men from among themselves and that they should send them, along with Paul and Barnabas, to Antioch, to let the believers there know what the leaders at Jerusalem had decided. So they chose Judas, who was also called Barsabbas, and Silas. These were both leaders among the believers at Jerusalem.

²³ Then they wrote the following letter that they asked Judas and Silas to take to the believers at Antioch: "We apostles and elders who are your fellow believers send our greetings to you as we write this to you non-Jewish believers who live in Antioch and other places in the provinces of Syria and Cilicia. ²⁴ People have told us that some men from among us went to you, although we had not sent them to you. We heard that they have troubled you by telling you things that confused your thinking. ²⁵ So after we met together here, we decided to choose some men and ask them to go to you, along with Barnabas and Paul, whom we love very much.

²⁶ Those two have put their lives in danger because they serve our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷ We have also sent Judas and Silas to you. They will tell you the same things that we are writing. ²⁸ It seemed right to the Holy Spirit and to us that you should not be required to obey a lot of burdensome Jewish laws. Instead, we only require you to obey the following instructions,

²⁹ You should not eat food that people have sacrificed to idols.

You should not eat blood from animals, and you should not eat meat from animals that people have killed by strangling them.

Also, you should not sleep with someone to whom you are not married.

If you avoid doing these things, you will be doing what is right. Farewell."

³⁰ The four men they selected went down from Jerusalem and came to Antioch. When all the believers there had assembled together, they gave the letter to them.

³¹ When the believers there read the letter, they rejoiced, because its message encouraged them. ³² Being prophets, Judas and Silas spoke a lot and encouraged the believers there, and helped them to trust more strongly in the Lord Jesus.

³³ After Judas and Silas had stayed there for some time and were ready to return to Jerusalem, the believers at Antioch wished them well, and then they left. ³⁴[1/

³⁵ However, Paul and Barnabas continued to stay in Antioch. While they were there, they, along with many others, were teaching people and preaching to them the message about the Lord Jesus.

³⁶ After some time Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the fellow believers in every city where we previously proclaimed the message about the Lord Jesus. In that way, we will know how well they are continuing to believe in the Lord Jesus." ³⁷ Barnabas agreed with Paul, and said that he wanted to take John, whose other name was Mark, along with them again. ³⁸ However, Paul told Barnabas that he thought that it would not be good to take Mark with them, because Mark had left them when they were previously in the region of Pamphylia, and had not continued to work with them.

³⁹ Paul and Barnabas strongly disagreed with each other about this matter, so they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark along with him. They got on a ship and went to the Island of Cyprus. ⁴⁰ Paul chose Silas, who had returned to Antioch, to work with him. The believers there prayed to the Lord God, asking him to graciously help Paul and Silas. Then the two of them departed from Antioch. ⁴¹ Paul continued traveling with Silas

through Syria and Cilicia provinces. In those places they were helping the groups of believers to trust strongly in the Lord Jesus.

15:34 ^[1]The best ancient copies omit verse 34 (see Acts 15:40). Vs. 34, *But Silas thought it would be best for him to stay there.*

Chapter 16

¹ Paul and Silas went to the cities of Derbe and Lystra and visited the believers there. A believer whose name was Timothy lived in Lystra. His mother was a Jewish believer, but his father was a Greek. ² The believers in Lystra and Iconium said good things about Timothy, ³ and Paul wanted to take Timothy with him when he went to other places, so he circumcised Timothy. He did that so that the Jews who lived in those places would accept Timothy, because they knew that his non-Jewish father had not circumcised him.

⁴ So Timothy went with Paul and Silas, and they traveled to many other towns. In each town they told the believers the rules that had been decided by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem.

⁵ They helped the believers in those towns to trust more strongly in the Lord Jesus, and every day more people became believers.

⁶ Paul and his companions were stopped from speaking the word in Asia by the Holy Spirit, so they went through the regions of Phrygia and Galatia. ⁷ They arrived at the border of the province of Mysia, and they wanted to go north into the province of Bithynia, but again the

Spirit of Jesus kept them from going there. ⁸ So they went through the province of Mysia and arrived at Troas, a city by the sea. ⁹ That night God gave Paul a vision in which he saw a man from the province of Macedonia. He was calling to Paul, saying, "Come to Macedonia and help us!" ¹⁰ After he saw the vision, we left for Macedonia, because we believed that God had called us to proclaim the good news with the people there.

¹¹ We got on a boat and sailed from Troas to Samothrace, and the next day went to the city of Neapolis. ¹² Then we left Neapolis and went to Philippi. It was a very important city in Macedonia, where many Roman citizens lived. We stayed in Philippi for many days.

¹³ On the Sabbath day we went outside the city gate down to the river. We had heard someone say that Jewish people gathered to pray there. When we arrived, we saw some women who had gathered to pray, so we sat down and began to tell them about Jesus. ¹⁴ A woman whose name was Lydia was one of the women who was listening to Paul. She was from the city of Thyatira, sold purple cloth, and worshiped God. The Lord God caused her to pay attention to the message that Paul spoke, and she believed it. ¹⁵ After Paul and Silas baptized Lydia and the others who lived in her house, she said to them, "If you believe I have been faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay there." After she said this, we stayed at her house.

¹⁶ Another day, while we were going to the place where people gathered to pray, we met a young woman who was a slave. An evil spirit was giving her power to tell the future about people. People paid money to the men who were her owners, in return for her telling them what would happen to them. ¹⁷ This young woman

followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men serve the God who is the greatest of all gods! They are telling you how God can save you." ¹⁸ She continued to do this for many days. Finally, Paul became angry, so he turned toward the young woman and spoke to the evil spirit that was in her. He said, "In the name of Jesus Christ, come out of her!" Right away the evil spirit left her. ¹⁹ And then her owners realized that she could no longer earn money for them because she could no longer predict what would happen to people, so they were angry. They grabbed Paul and Silas and took them to the public square where the rulers of the city were. ²⁰ The owners of the young woman brought them to the city rulers and told them, "These men are Jews, and they are greatly troubling the people in our city. ²¹ They are teaching that we should follow rules that our laws do not allow us Romans to obey!" ²² Many of the crowd joined those who were accusing Paul and Silas, and they started to beat them. Then the Roman rulers told soldiers to tear the shirts off Paul and Silas and to beat them with rods. ²³ So the soldiers beat Paul and Silas badly with rods. After that, they took them and put them into the prison. They told the jailer to make sure they did not get out. ²⁴ Because the officials had told him to do that, the jailer put Paul and Silas into the room that was farthest inside the prison. There, he made them sit down on the floor and stretch out their legs. Then he fastened their ankles in holes between two large pieces of wood, so that Paul and Silas could not move their legs.

²⁵ About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and praising God by singing songs. The other prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly there was a very strong earthquake that shook the jail. The earthquake caused all of the doors of the jail to open and all of the chains that fastened

the prisoners to fall off. ²⁷ The jailer woke up and saw that the doors of the jail were open by the earthquake. He thought that the prisoners had left the jail, so he pulled out his sword to kill himself, because he knew that the city rulers would kill him if the prisoners became free. ²⁸ Paul saw the jailer and shouted to him, "Do not kill yourself! We prisoners are all here!" ²⁹ The jailer shouted to someone to bring torches so he could see who was still in the prison. Shaking with fear, he fell down in front of Paul and Silas. ³⁰ Then he brought Paul and Silas out of the jail and asked: "Sirs, what do I need to do to be saved?" ³¹ They answered, "Trust in the Lord Jesus, and you and your household will be saved."

³² Then Paul and Silas spoke about the Lord Jesus to him and everyone in his household. ³³ Then the jailer washed their wounds, right at that time in the middle of the night. Then Paul and Silas baptized him and everyone in his household. ³⁴ Then the jailer took Paul and Silas into his house and gave them food to eat. He and all in his household were all very happy because they had believed in God.

³⁵ The next morning, the city rulers told some soldiers to go to the prison to say to the jailer, "Let those two prisoners go now!" ³⁶ When the jailer heard this, he went and told Paul, "The city rulers have told me to let you go. So you two can leave the prison now and go in peace!" ³⁷ But Paul said to the jailer, "The city rulers told men to beat us in front of a crowd, even though we are Roman citizens, and put us in prison. And now they want to send us away without telling anyone! We will not accept that! Those city rulers must come themselves and free us from prison." ³⁸ So the soldiers went and told the city rulers what Paul had said. When the city rulers heard that Paul and Silas were Roman cit-

izens, they were afraid because they had done the wrong thing.³⁹ So the city rulers came to Paul and Silas and told them that they were sorry for what they had done to them. The city rulers brought them out of the prison and asked them to leave the city.⁴⁰ After Paul and Silas left the prison, they went to Lydia's house. There they met with her and the other believers. They encouraged the believers to continue trusting in the Lord Jesus, and then the two apostles left the city of Philippi.

Chapter 17

¹ They traveled through the cities of Amphipolis and Apollonia and came to the city of Thessalonica. There was a Jewish meeting place there. ² On the sabbath Paul went to the meeting place as he usually did. For three weeks he went there on each sabbath day. He spoke to the people about how the scriptures said that Jesus would be the Christ. ³ He showed from the scriptures that the prophets wrote that the Messiah would have to die and come alive again. He said, "This man Jesus is the Christ. He died and became alive again, just like the prophets said he would." ⁴ Some of the Jews there believed what Paul had said and began to meet with Paul and Silas. There were also many non-Jewish people and important women who worshiped God who also believed the message about Jesus, and they also began to meet with Paul and Silas.

⁵ But some leaders of the Jews became angry because many people believed what Paul taught. So they went to the public square and persuaded some evil men to follow them. In this way, the leaders of the Jews gathered a crowd and caused them to make a lot of noise. Those Jews and others ran to the house of a man named

Jason where Paul and Silas were staying. They wanted to bring Paul and Silas outside to where the crowd of people were. ⁶ They discovered that Paul and Silas were not at the house, but they found Jason and grabbed him. They dragged him and some of the other believers who were with him to where the city rulers were. They said, "The men who have caused trouble everywhere in the world have come here also, ⁷ and this fellow Jason has asked them to stay at his house. They are acting against the emperor. They say that another person, whose name is Jesus, is the real king!" ⁸ When the crowd of people that had gathered and the city rulers heard that, they became very angry and excited. ⁹ The city rulers made Jason and the other believers pay a fine and told them that they would give the money back to them if Paul and Silas did not cause any more trouble. Then the city rulers let Jason and the other believers go.

¹⁰ So that same night, the believers sent Paul and Silas out of Thessalonica to the town of Berea. When Paul and Silas arrived there, they went to the Jewish meeting place. ¹¹ Most of the Jews in Thessalonica had not been willing to listen to God's message, but the Jews who lived in Berea were very willing to listen, so they listened closely to the message about Jesus. Every day they read the scriptures for themselves to find out if what Paul said about Jesus was true. ¹² Because of Paul's teaching, many of the Jewish people believed in Jesus, and also some of the important non-Jewish women and many non-Jewish men believed in him.

¹³ But then the Jews in Thessalonica heard that Paul was in Berea preaching the message from God about Jesus. So they went to Berea and said things to the people there that made them very angry with Paul. ¹⁴ Some of the believers in Berea

took Paul to the seacoast to go to another city. But Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea. ¹⁵ When Paul and the other men arrived at the coast, they got on a boat and went to the city of Athens. Then Paul said to the men who had come with him, "Tell Silas and Timothy to come to me here in Athens as soon as they can." Then those men left Athens and returned to Berea.

¹⁶ In Athens, Paul waited for Silas and Timothy to come. In the meantime, he walked around in the city. He became very distressed because there were many idols in the city. ¹⁷ So he went to the Jewish meeting place and talked about Jesus with the Jews, and also with the Greeks who had accepted what the Jews believe. He also went to the public square every day and talked to the people whom he met there.

¹⁸ Paul met some teachers who liked to talk about what people believe. People called some of them Epicureans, and they called others Stoics. They told Paul what they believed, and they asked him what he believed. Then some of them said to one another, "He is saying something about some strange gods." They said that because Paul was telling them that Jesus had died and then had become alive again.

¹⁹ So they took him to the place where the city leaders met. When they arrived there, they said to Paul, "Please tell us, what is this new message that you are teaching people?" ²⁰ You are teaching some things that we do not understand, so we want to know what they mean." ²¹ The people of Athens and also the people from other regions who lived there loved to talk about what was new to them.

²² Then Paul stood up in front of the people and said, "People of Athens, I see that you are very religious. ²³ I say that because, while I was walking along I saw the things that you worship, I even saw an altar that had these words that someone

had carved on it: THIS HONORS A GOD THAT WE DO NOT KNOW. So now I will tell you about that God whom you worship but you do not know.

²⁴ He is the God who made the world and everything in it. He rules over all beings in heaven and on earth, and he does not live in temples that people have built. ²⁵ He does not need to have anything made for him by people because he makes people live and breath, and he gives them everything they need.

²⁶ In the beginning, God created one couple, and from them God produced all the people groups that now live everywhere on the earth. He put each people group in its place for its time. ²⁷ He wanted people to realize that they need him. Then maybe they would look for him and find him. God wants us to look for him, although he is very close to each one of us. ²⁸ It is because of God that we live, move, and exist, as one of you has said, 'Because we are his children.'

²⁹ Therefore, because we are God's children, we should not think that God is like gold, silver, or stone, made into something by man. ³⁰ During the times when people did not know what God wanted them to do, he did not punish them for what they did. But now God commands all people everywhere to turn away from their evil deeds. ³¹ He tells us that on a certain day that he has chosen he is going to judge all of us justly by the man he has chosen, making sure we understand this by raising this man from the dead."

³² When the men heard Paul say that a man had become alive again after he had died, some of them laughed at him. But others asked him to come back and tell them about it another day. ³³ After they said that, Paul walked away. ³⁴ However, some of the people went with Paul and believed the message about Jesus. Among

those who believed in Jesus was a man named Dionysius who was a member of the council. Also, there were a woman named Damaris and some other people with them who believed.

Chapter 18

¹ After that, Paul left the city of Athens and went to the city of Corinth. ² There he met a Jew whose name was Aquila, who was from the region of Pontus. Aquila and his wife Priscilla had come a short time previously from the city of Rome, in Italy. They left Rome because Claudius, the Roman emperor, had ordered that all the Jews must leave Rome. ³ Aquila and Priscilla made tents to earn money. Paul also made tents, so he stayed with them, and they worked together. ⁴ Every Sabbath, Paul went to the Jewish meeting place, where he spoke to both Jews and non-Jews. He taught them about Jesus.

⁵ When Silas and Timothy came from the region of Macedonia, Paul was strongly moved by the Spirit to tell the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. ⁶ But the Jews began to turn against Paul and to say evil things about him. So he shook the dust from his clothes and he said to them, "If God punishes you, it is your responsibility, not mine! From now on I will talk to those who are not Jewish!" ⁷ So Paul left the Jewish meeting place and went into a house that was next to it, and preached there. Titius Justus, the owner of the house, was a non-Jewish man who worshiped God. ⁸ After that, the ruler of the Jewish meeting place, whose name was Crispus, and all of his family believed in the Lord. Many other people in Corinth heard about Crispus and his family, they also believed in Jesus and were baptized.

⁹ One night Paul had a vision in which the

Lord Jesus said to him, "Do not be afraid of the people who are against you, but keep talking about me, ¹⁰ because I will help you and no one will be able to hurt you here. Keep telling them about me, because there are many people in this city who belong to me." ¹¹ So Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching the people the message from God about Jesus.

¹² When Gallio became the Roman governor of the province of Achaia, the Jewish leaders got together and seized Paul. They took him before the governor and accused him, ¹³ saying, "This man is teaching people to worship God in ways that go against our Jewish laws." ¹⁴ When Paul was about to speak, Gallio said to the Jews, "If this man had broken our Roman laws, I would have listened to what you Jews want to tell me. ¹⁵ However, you are talking about words and names and your own Jewish laws, so you yourselves must talk to him about this. I will not judge these things!" ¹⁶ After Gallio had said that, he told some soldiers to take the Jewish leaders away from the court. ¹⁷ Then the people grabbed the leader of the Jews, Sosthenes. They beat him right there in front of the judge's seat. But Gallio did nothing about it.

¹⁸ Paul stayed with the believers in Corinth for many more days. Then he got on a ship with Priscilla and Aquila and sailed for the province of Syria. He got his hair cut off in Cenchrea because of a vow that he had made. ¹⁹ They arrived at the city of Ephesus, and Priscilla and Aquila stayed there.

Paul himself entered the Jewish meeting place and spoke to the Jews about Jesus. ²⁰ They asked him to stay longer, but he did not agree to stay. ²¹ But as he left, he told them, "I will come back, if God wants me to." Then he got on a ship and sailed

away from Ephesus.

Chapter 19

²² When the ship came to the city of Caesarea, Paul got off. He went up to Jerusalem and greeted the believers there. Then he went to the city of Antioch in the region of Syria.

²³ Paul spent some time with the believers there. Then he left Antioch and walked to many cities in the regions of Galatia and Phrygia. He urged the believers to believe more and more in the message from God about Jesus.

²⁴ While Paul was going through Galatia and Phrygia, a Jewish man named Apollos came to Ephesus. He was from the city of Alexandria and spoke very well about the scriptures. ²⁵ Other believers had taught Apollos how the Lord Jesus wanted people to live, and he enthusiastically taught those things to the people. However, he was not teaching everything about Jesus, because he only knew about the baptism of John the Baptizer. ²⁶ Apollos went to the Jewish meeting place, and he told the people there about the things that he had learned. When Priscilla and Aquila heard what he taught, they asked him to come to their home where they taught him more about Jesus.

²⁷ When Apollos decided that he would like to go to the region of Achaia, the believers in Ephesus told him that it would be good for him to do that. So they wrote a letter to the believers in Achaia saying that they should welcome Apollos. After he got there, he helped those whom God had kindly enabled to believe in Jesus. ²⁸ Apollos was talking very powerfully with the leaders of the Jews while many other people listened. By reading from the scriptures, he was able to show them that Jesus was the Messiah.

¹ While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul left Phrygia and Galatia and went through Asia, and he came back to Ephesus. He met some people who said that they were believers. ² He asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed God's message?" They answered, "No, we did not. We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." ³ So Paul asked, "So when you were baptized, what did you know?" They replied, "We believed what John the Baptizer taught." ⁴ Paul said, "John's baptism was a sign that people were turning to God and away from their evil thoughts and deeds. He also told them to believe in someone else, one who is coming after him, and that person is Jesus." ⁵ So when those men heard that, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ After that, Paul placed his hands on their heads one by one, and the power of the Holy Spirit came upon each of them. The Holy Spirit gave them power to speak in languages that they had not learned, and they also spoke messages that the Holy Spirit told them. ⁷ There were about twelve men whom Paul baptized and who received the Holy Spirit.

⁸ For three months after that, Paul entered the Jewish meeting place in Ephesus on each Sabbath and taught and persuaded people about Jesus and how God would show himself as king. ⁹ But some of the Jews would not believe the message and did not want to hear it any more. They said many bad things about what Paul was teaching. So Paul left them and took the believers with him to meet in the meeting place of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ For two years Paul taught people there. In this way, most of the Jews and non-Jews who lived in the region of Asia heard the message about the Lord Jesus.

¹¹ God also gave Paul the power to do miracles. ¹² If those who were sick could not come to Paul, pieces of cloth that Paul touched would be taken and placed on the sick people. As a result, the sick people would become well, and the evil spirits would leave them.

¹³ There were also some Jews who walked from town to town, and they commanded the evil spirits in those places to depart from people. Some of those Jews told the evil spirits to come out of people by saying "I command you to come out by the power of the Lord Jesus, the man whom Paul teaches about!" ¹⁴ There were seven men who were doing this. They were sons of a man named Sceva, a Jew, who called himself a chief priest. ¹⁵ But one day as they were doing that, the evil spirit did not come out of that person. Instead, the evil spirit said to them, "I know Jesus, and I know Paul, but no one has given you power to do anything to me!" ¹⁶ After saying that, suddenly the man who had the evil spirit jumped on the sons of Sceva. He knocked all of them down and hurt each of them. He tore off their clothes and wounded them. They became frightened and ran out of the house. ¹⁷ All the people who lived in Ephesus, both Jews and non-Jews, heard what had happened. They became afraid because they saw that the man with the evil spirit was very strong. At the same time, they honored the name of the Lord Jesus.

¹⁸ At that time, while other believers were listening, many believers told about the evil things that they had been doing. ¹⁹ Some of the people who were sorcerers took their scrolls that told how to work magic and burned them in a place where everyone could see them. When people added up how much the scrolls cost, it came to fifty thousand silver coins.

²⁰ In this way, many people heard the mes-

sage about the Lord Jesus and believed in him.

²¹ After Paul completed his work in Ephesus, the Spirit led him to decide to go to Jerusalem, but first he planned to go see the believers in the regions of Macedonia and Achaia. Paul said, "After I have been to Jerusalem, I will also go to Rome." ²² He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia. But Paul stayed in the city of Ephesus, in the province of Asia.

²³ Soon after that, people in Ephesus began to make a great amount of trouble because of Jesus and the teaching about him.

²⁴ There was a man there whose name was Demetrius. He made statues of the goddess Artemis (who is also known as Diana) out of silver. Demetrius made a lot of money for all the men who made and sold these idols.

²⁵ Demetrius called together the workmen who made the idols. He said to them, "Men, you know that we make a lot of money doing our work. ²⁶ You know that Paul has taught many people who live in Ephesus to no longer buy the statues that we make. Now even the people from many other towns in our province no longer want to buy what we make. Paul tells people that the gods that we worship are not gods and that we should not worship them. ²⁷ If people listen to him, they will stop our business. People will not think that they should come any longer to the temple of Artemis (also known as Diana) to worship her. People will no longer think that Artemis is great. Yet all the province of Asia and even the whole world worship her!" ²⁸ All the men there became angry at Paul when they heard what Demetrius said. They began to shout, "The goddess Artemis of the Ephesians is great!" ²⁹ Many of the people in the city became angry at Paul and began shouting. Some of the people took hold

of Gaius and Aristarchus, two men from Macedonia who traveled with Paul. Then the whole crowd of people ran, dragging those men along with them, to the city theater. ³⁰ Paul wanted to go into theater to talk to the people, but the other believers would not let him go there. ³¹ Some city rulers who were friends of Paul heard what was happening. They sent someone to tell Paul not to go into the theater.

³² The crowd of people in the theater kept shouting. Some shouted one thing, and some shouted something else. But most of them did not even know why they were meeting! ³³ One of the Jews there was named Alexander. Some of the Jews pushed him to the front of the crowd so that he could speak to the people. Alexander put his hands up trying to get the crowd to stop shouting. He wanted to tell them that the Jews did not cause the trouble. ³⁴ But many of the non-Jewish people knew that Alexander was a Jew and knew that the Jews did not worship the goddess Artemis. So the non-Jews shouted for two hours, "Great is the goddess Artemis of the Ephesians!"

³⁵ Then one of the city rulers made the crowd stop shouting. He said to them, "My fellow citizens, everyone in the world knows that the sacred image of our goddess Artemis fell down from heaven! ³⁶ Everyone knows that, and no one can say that these things are not true. So you should be quiet now. Do not do anything stupid. ³⁷ You should not have brought these two men here, because they have not done anything evil. They have not gone into our temples and taken things from there, and they have not spoken evil of our goddess. ³⁸ Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow workmen want to accuse anyone of doing anything bad, they should do it in the right way. There are courts that they can go to if they want

to, and there are judges who have been chosen by the government. You can accuse anyone there. ³⁹ But if you want to ask about anything else, you should ask for your rulers to take care of it when those rulers come together. ⁴⁰ This is not a good meeting! Take care of this trouble the right way because we do not want to go against the government. If the rulers asked me what you were all shouting about, I would not be able to give them a good answer." ⁴¹ That is what the city ruler said to the crowd. Then he told them all to go home, and they did go to their homes.

Chapter 20

¹ After the people at Ephesus had stopped rioting, Paul called the believers together. He urged them to continue to trust in the Lord Jesus. Soon after that, he told them "Goodbye" and left to go to the region of Macedonia. ² After he arrived there, he urged them to continue to trust in the Lord Jesus. Then he went to Greece. ³ He stayed in Greece for three months. Then he planned to return to Syria by ship, but he heard that some of the Jews there were planning to kill him as he traveled. So he decided to go by land, and he went again through Macedonia. ⁴ The men who were going to travel with him to Jerusalem were Sopater, the son of Pyrrhus, from the town of Berea; Aristarchus and Secundus, who were from the city of Thessalonica; Gaius, who was from the city of Derbe; Timothy, who was from the region of Galatia; and Tychicus and Trophimus, who were from the province of Asia. ⁵ Those seven men went ahead of Paul and me, Luke, by ship from Macedonia, so they got to the city of Troas before we did and waited for the two of us there. ⁶ But Paul and I traveled by land as far as the city

of Philippi. After the Jewish Festival of Bread made without Yeast, we got on a ship that was going to the city of Troas. After five days we arrived at Troas and met the other men who had traveled ahead of us. Then we all stayed in Troas for seven days.

⁷ On the first day of the week, we would gather together and we would share a meal together with the other believers. Paul spoke to the believers until midnight, because he was planning to leave Troas the next day. ⁸ Many oil lamps were burning in the upstairs room in which we had gathered. ⁹ A young man whose name was Eutychus was there. He was seated on the sill of an open window on the third story of the house. As Paul continued talking for a long time, Eutychus became sleepier and sleepier. Finally, he fell sound asleep. He fell out of the window down to the ground. Some of the believers went down immediately and picked him up. But he was dead. ¹⁰ Paul also went down. He lay down and stretched out on top of the young man and put his arms around him. Then he said to the people who were standing around, "Do not worry; he is alive again!" ¹¹ Paul went upstairs again and he prepared a meal and he ate it. Afterwards he talked with the believers until the sun came up. Then he left. ¹² The other people took the young man home, and were greatly comforted because he was alive again.

¹³ We then went to the ship. But Paul did not get on the ship with us in Troas, because he wanted to go more quickly overland to the town of Assos. The rest of us got on the ship and sailed for Assos. ¹⁴ We met Paul in Assos. He got on the ship with us, and we sailed to the city of Mitylene. ¹⁵ The day after we reached Mitylene, we sailed from there and arrived at a place near the Island of Chios. The day after

that, we sailed to the Island of Samos. The next day we left Samos and sailed to the city of Miletus. ¹⁶ Miletus was just south of the city of Ephesus. Paul did not want to stop at Ephesus because he did not want to spend time in Asia. If possible, he wanted to arrive in Jerusalem by the time of the Pentecost festival, and the time of that festival was near.

¹⁷ When the ship arrived at Miletus, Paul sent a messenger to Ephesus to ask the elders of the group of believers there to come to talk with him.

¹⁸ When the elders came to him, Paul said to them, "From the first day when I arrived here in the province of Asia until the day I left, you know how I acted among you the entire time that I was with you. ¹⁹ You know how I kept serving the Lord Jesus very humbly and how I sometimes wept. You also know how I suffered because the Jews who were not believers often tried to harm me. ²⁰ You also know that, when I preached God's message to you, I never left out anything that would help you. You know that I taught you God's message when many people were present, and I also went to your homes and taught you there. ²¹ I preached both to Jews and to non-Jews, telling them all that they must turn away from their sinful behavior and believe in our Lord Jesus."

²² "And now I am going to Jerusalem, because the Holy Spirit has clearly shown me that I must go there, and I must obey him. I do not know what will happen to me there. ²³ But I do know that in each city I have visited, the Holy Spirit has told me that in Jerusalem people will put me in prison and will cause me to suffer. ²⁴ But I do not care even if people kill me, if first I am able to finish the work that the Lord Jesus has told me to do. He called me to tell people the good message that God saves us by doing for us what we do not

deserve. ²⁵ I have preached to you the message about how God will show himself as king. But now I know that today is the last time that you fellow believers will see me. ²⁶ So I want you all to understand that if anyone who has heard me preach dies without trusting in Jesus, it is not my fault, ²⁷ because I told you everything that God has planned for us. ²⁸ You leaders must continue to believe and obey God's message. You must also help all the other believers for whom the Holy Spirit has given you to care for. Watch over yourselves and the group of the Lord's believers as a shepherd watches over his sheep. God bought them with the blood that flowed from his Son's body on the cross. ²⁹ I know very well that after I leave, people who teach lies will come among you and will do great harm to the believers. They will be like fierce wolves that kill the sheep. ³⁰ Even in your own group of leaders there will be some who will lie to other believers by teaching them the wrong things. They will teach those messages so that some people will believe them and will become their followers. ³¹ So watch out that none of you stops believing the true message about our Lord Jesus! Remember that day and night for three years I taught you that message and warned you with tears to be faithful to the Lord."

³² "Now as I leave you I ask God to protect you and to keep you believing the message that he saves us by doing for us what we do not deserve. If you continue believing the message that I told you, you will become strong, and God will give you forever the good things that he has promised to give to all of those who belong to him.

³³ As for myself, I never wanted anyone's money or fine clothing. ³⁴ You yourselves know that I have worked with my hands to earn the money that my friends and I needed. ³⁵ In everything that I did, I

showed you that we should work hard in order to have enough money to give some to those who are needy. We should remember that our Lord Jesus himself said, 'A person is happier when he gives to others than when he receives from them.'"

³⁶ When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all of the elders and prayed. ³⁷ They all cried a lot, and they hugged Paul and kissed him. ³⁸ They were very sad because he had said that they would never see him again. Then they all went with him to the ship.

Chapter 21

¹ After we said goodbye to the elders from Ephesus, we got on the ship and traveled on the water to the Island of Cos, where the ship stopped for the night. The next day we went in the ship from Cos to the Island of Rhodes, where the ship stopped again. The day after that we went to the town of Patara, where the ship stopped. ² At Patara we left that ship, and someone told us that there was a ship that would be going to the region of Phoenicia. So we got on that ship, and it left. ³ We traveled over the sea until we could see the Island of Cyprus. We passed to the south of the island and continued sailing until we arrived at the region of Phoenicia, in the province of Syria, at the city of Tyre. The ship was going to stay there several days because its workers had to unload the cargo.

⁴ Someone told us where the believers in Tyre lived, so we went and stayed with them for seven days. Because God's Spirit revealed to them that people would cause Paul to suffer in Jerusalem, they told Paul that he should not go there. ⁵ But when it was time for the ship to leave again, we prepared to continue on our way to

Jerusalem. When we left Tyre, all the men and their wives and children went with us to the edge of the sea. We all knelt down there on the sand and prayed. ⁶ After we all said goodbye, Paul and we his companions got on the ship, and the other believers returned to their own homes.

⁷ After we left Tyre, we continued on that ship to the city of Ptolemais. There were believers there, and we greeted them and stayed with them that night. ⁸ The next day we left Ptolemais and sailed to the city of Caesarea, where we stayed in the home of Philip, who spent his time telling others how to become followers of Jesus. He was one of the seven men whom the believers in Jerusalem had chosen to care for the widows. ⁹ He had four daughters who were not married. Each of them frequently spoke messages that the Holy Spirit had told them.

¹⁰ After we had been in Philip's house for several days, a believer whose name was Agabus came down from the district of Judea and arrived in Caesarea. He frequently spoke messages that the Holy Spirit had told him. ¹¹ Coming over to where we were, he took off Paul's belt. Then he tied his own feet and hands with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'The Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will tie up the hands and feet of the owner of this belt, like this, and they will put him in the hands of non-Jewish people as a prisoner.'" ¹² When the rest of us heard that, we and the other believers there asked Paul, "Please do not go up to Jerusalem!" ¹³ But Paul replied, "Please stop crying and trying to discourage me from going! Why are you crying and trying to discourage me from going? I am willing to go to prison and also to die in Jerusalem because I serve the Lord Jesus." ¹⁴ When we realized that he would go to Jerusalem, we did not try any longer to stop him. We said,

"May the Lord's will be done!"

¹⁵ After those days in Caesarea, we prepared our possessions and left to go by land up to Jerusalem. ¹⁶ Some of the believers from Caesarea also went with us. They took us to stay in the house of a man whose name was Mnason. He was from the Island of Cyprus, and he had believed in Jesus when people were first beginning to hear the message about him.

¹⁷ When we arrived in Jerusalem, a group of the believers greeted us happily. ¹⁸ The next day Paul and the rest of us went to speak with James, who was the leader of the church there. All of the other leaders of the church in Jerusalem were also there. ¹⁹ Paul greeted them, and then he told them all of the things that God had enabled him to do among the non-Jewish people. ²⁰ When they heard that, James and the other elders thanked God. Then one of them said to Paul, "Brother, you know that there are very many thousands of us Jewish people here who have believed in the Lord Jesus. Also, you know that we all continue very carefully to obey the laws that Moses gave us. ²¹ But our fellow Jewish believers have been told that when you are among non-Jews, you tell the Jewish believers who live there that they should stop obeying the laws of Moses. People say that you tell those Jewish believers not to circumcise their sons and not to practice our other customs. We do not believe that they are telling the truth about you. ²² But our fellow Jewish believers will hear that you have come, and they will be angry with you. So you need to do something to show them that what they heard about you is not true. ²³ So please do what we suggest to you. There are four men among us who have made a vow to God. ²⁴ Go with these men to the temple and do the ceremonies there necessary for you and

them to be able to worship in the temple. Then, when it is time for them to offer the sacrifices, pay for what they offer. After that, they can shave their heads to show that they have done what they said they would do. When people see you in the courts of the temple with those men, they will know that what they have been told about you is not true. Instead, all of them will know that you obey all our Jewish laws. ²⁵ As for the non-Jewish believers, we elders here in Jerusalem have talked about which of our laws they should obey, and we wrote them a letter, telling them what we decided. We wrote that they should not eat meat that people have offered as a sacrifice to any idol, that they should not eat blood from animals, and that they should not eat meat from animals that people have killed by strangling them. We also told them that they should not sleep with someone to whom they are not married.” ²⁶ So Paul agreed to do what they asked, and the next day he took the four men, and together they purified themselves. After that, Paul went to the temple courts and told the priest what day they would finish purifying themselves and when they would offer the animals as sacrifices for each of them.

²⁷ When the seven days for purifying themselves were nearly finished, Paul returned to the temple courtyard. Some Jews from Asia saw him there, and they were very angry at him. They called out to many other Jews who were in the temple courtyard to help them take hold of Paul. ²⁸ They shouted, “Fellow Israelites, come and help us to punish this man! This is the one who is teaching people wherever he goes that they should despise the Jewish people. He teaches people that they should no longer obey the laws of Moses nor respect this holy temple. He has even brought non-Jews here into the court of our temple, causing this place to

become polluted!” ²⁹ They said these because they had seen Paul walking around in Jerusalem with Trophimus, who was a non-Jew. Their laws did not permit non-Jews to be in the temple, and they thought that Paul had brought Trophimus into the temple courtyard that day. ³⁰ People all over the city heard that there was trouble at the temple courtyard, and they came running there. They caught Paul and dragged him outside of the temple area. The gates to the temple courtyard were shut, so that the people would not riot inside the temple area.

³¹ While they were trying to kill Paul, someone ran to the fortress near the temple and told the Roman commander that many people in Jerusalem were rioting at the temple. ³² The commander quickly took some officers and a large group of soldiers and ran to the temple area where the crowd was. When the crowd of people who were yelling and beating Paul saw the commander and the soldiers coming, they stopped beating him.

³³ The commander came to where Paul was and took hold of him. He commanded soldiers to fasten a chain to each of Paul’s arms. Then he asked the people in the crowd, “Who is this man, and what has he done?” ³⁴ Some of the many people there were shouting one thing, and some were shouting something else. Because they continued shouting so loudly, the commander could not understand what they were saying. So he commanded that Paul be taken into the fortress so that he could question him there. ³⁵ The soldiers led Paul to the steps of the fortress, but many people continued to follow them, trying to kill Paul. So the commander told the soldiers to carry Paul up the steps into the fortress. ³⁶ The crowd that followed kept shouting, “Kill him! Kill him!”

³⁷ As Paul was about to be taken into the

fortress, he said in Greek to the commander, "May I speak to you?" The commander said, "I am surprised that you can speak Greek!" ³⁸ I thought that you were that fellow from Egypt who wanted to rebel against the government not long ago, and who took four thousand violent men with him out into the desert, so that we could not catch him." ³⁹ Paul answered, "No, I am not! I am a Jew. I was born in Tarsus, which is an important city in the province of Cilicia. I request that you let me speak to the people." ⁴⁰ Then the commander permitted Paul to speak. So Paul stood on the steps and motioned with his hand for the crowd to be quiet. And after the people in the crowd became quiet, Paul spoke to them in their own Hebrew language.

Chapter 22

¹ Paul said, "Jewish elders and my fellow Jews, listen to me now while I speak to those who are accusing me!" ² When the crowd of people heard Paul speaking to them in their own Hebrew language, they became quiet and listened. Then Paul said to them, ³ "I am a Jew, as are all of you. I was born in the city of Tarsus, in the province of Cilicia, but I grew up here in Jerusalem. When I was young, I learned the laws that Moses gave to our ancestors. Gamaliel was my teacher. I obeyed those laws because I have wanted to obey God, and I am sure that all of you also obey those laws." ⁴ That is why I tried to arrest those who believed the message of God about Jesus. I looked for ways to kill them. Whenever I found men or women who believed the message, I had them thrown into jail. ⁵ The high priest knows this, and so do the other men who belong to our Jewish council. They gave me letters to take to their fellow Jews in the city of Dam-

ascus. Those letters gave me power to go there and arrest people who believed in Jesus. I was then to take them as prisoners to Jerusalem, so that they would be punished here.

⁶ So I went to Damascus. About noon, as I got near to Damascus, suddenly a bright light from the sky flashed all around me. ⁷ The light was so bright that I fell to the ground. Then I heard the voice of someone speaking to me from up in the sky, saying, 'Saul! Saul! Why do you do things to hurt me?' ⁸ I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' He replied, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth the one whom you are hurting.' ⁹ The men who were traveling with me saw the bright light, but they did not understand what the voice said. ¹⁰ Then I asked, 'Lord, what do you want me to do?' The Lord told me, 'Get up and go into Damascus. A man there will tell you all that I have planned for you to do.' ¹¹ After that, I could not see, because the bright light had caused me to become blind. So the men who were with me took me by the hand and led me to Damascus. ¹² A man whose name was Ananias came to see me. He was a man who honored God and obeyed the Jewish laws. All the Jews living in Damascus said good things about him. ¹³ He came and stood beside me and said to me, 'My friend Saul, see again!' Instantly I could see and I saw him standing beside me. ¹⁴ Then he said: 'The God whom we worship and whom our ancestors worshiped has chosen you and will show you what he wants you to do. He has shown you the righteous one, Jesus the Messiah, and you have heard him speak to you himself.' ¹⁵ He wants you to tell people everywhere what you have seen and heard from him. ¹⁶ So now do not delay! Stand up, let me baptize you, and pray to the Lord Jesus and ask God to forgive you for your sins!"

¹⁷ "Later, I returned to Jerusalem. One

day I went to the temple courtyard and while I was praying there, I saw a vision. ¹⁸ The Lord spoke to me, saying, 'Do not stay here! Leave Jerusalem now, because the people here will not believe what you tell them about me!' ¹⁹ But I said to him, 'Lord, they know that I went to many of our synagogues looking for people who believe in you. I was putting in jail those whom I found who believed in you, and I was even beating them. ²⁰ They remember that when Stephen was killed because he told people about you, I stood there watching and approving of what they were doing. I even guarded the outer clothes that those who were murdering him had thrown aside!' ²¹ But the Lord said to me, 'No, do not stay here! Leave Jerusalem, because I am going to send you far away from here to other people groups, the non-Jews!'"

²² The people listened to what Paul was saying until he talked about the Lord sending him to other people groups. Then they began shouting, "Kill him! He does not deserve to live any longer!" ²³ While they were shouting, they took off their outer garments and threw dust into the air, which showed how angry they were. ²⁴ So the leader commanded that Paul be taken into the prison. He told the soldiers that they should whip Paul in order to make him tell what he had done that made the Jews so angry. ²⁵ Then they stretched his arms out and tied them so that they could whip him on his back. But Paul said to the soldier near him, "You will be acting unlawfully if you whip me, a Roman citizen whom no one has put on trial and condemned!" ²⁶ When the officer heard that, he went to the commander and reported it to him. He said to the commander, "This man is a Roman citizen! Surely you would not command us to whip him!" ²⁷ The commander was surprised when he heard that. He himself went into the

prison and said to Paul, "Tell me, are you really a Roman citizen?" Paul answered, "Yes, I am." ²⁸ Then the commander said, "I am also a Roman citizen. I paid a lot of money to become a Roman citizen." Paul said, "But I was born a Roman citizen." ²⁹ The soldiers were about to whip Paul and to ask him questions about what he had done. But when they heard what Paul said, they left him. The commander also became afraid, because he knew that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had broken the law when he commanded the soldiers to tie up Paul's hands.

³⁰ The commander still wanted to know why the Jews were accusing Paul. So the next day he told the soldiers to take the chains off Paul. He also called the chief priests and the other council members to meet. Then he took Paul to where the council was meeting and told him to stand before them.

Chapter 23

¹ Paul looked at the Jewish council members and said: "My fellow Jews, all my life I have lived respecting our God, and I do not know of anything that I have done that I knew was wrong." ² When Ananias the high priest heard what Paul said, he told the men who were standing near Paul to hit him on the mouth. ³ Then Paul said to Ananias, "God will punish you for that, you hypocrite! You sit there and judge me, using the laws that God gave Moses. But you yourself disobey those laws, because you commanded me to be struck without having proved that I have done anything that is wrong!" ⁴ The men who were standing near Paul said to him, "You should not speak badly to God's servant, our high priest!" ⁵ Paul replied, "My fellow Jews, I am sorry that I said that. I did

not know that the man who told one of you to hit me is the high priest. If I had known that, I would not have talked badly about our high priest, because I know that it is written in our Jewish law, 'Do not speak evil of any of your rulers!'"

⁶ Paul knew that some of the council members were Sadducees and others were Pharisees. So he called out in the council hall, "My fellow Jews, I am a Pharisee, and all in my family were Pharisees, as well. I have been put on trial here because I am sure that one day God will cause those who have died to become alive again." ⁷ When he said that, the Pharisees and Sadducees started to argue with one another about whether or not people who have died will become alive again, and each of them were arguing with the other. ⁸ The Sadducees believe that after people die, they will not become alive again. They also believe that there are no angels and no other kinds of spirits. But the Pharisees believe all these things. ⁹ They began shouting at one another as they argued. Some of the teachers of the laws who were Pharisees stood up. One of them said, "We think that this man has done nothing wrong. Maybe an angel or some other spirit spoke to him and what he says is true." ¹⁰ Then the Pharisees and Sadducees became violent with one another. So the commander was afraid that they would tear Paul to pieces. He told soldiers to go down from the prison and take Paul away from the council members and bring him up into the barracks.

¹¹ That night, Paul saw the Lord Jesus come and stand near him. The Lord said to him, "Have courage! You have told people here in Jerusalem about me, and you must tell people in Rome about me too."

¹² The next morning some of the Jews who hated Paul met and talked about how to kill him. They told themselves that they

would not eat or drink anything until he was dead. They asked God to curse them if they did not do what they promised. ¹³ There were more than forty men who wanted to kill Paul. ¹⁴ They went to the chief priests and Jewish elders and told them, "God has heard us promise that we will not eat or drink anything until we have killed Paul. ¹⁵ So we request that you go to the commander and ask him, on behalf of the whole Jewish council, to bring Paul down to us. Tell the commander that you want to talk to Paul some more. We will be waiting to kill Paul while he is on the way here."

¹⁶ But the son of Paul's sister heard what they were planning to do, so he went into the fortress and told Paul. ¹⁷ When Paul heard that, he called one of the officers and said to him, "Please take this young man to the commander, because he needs to tell him something." ¹⁸ So the officer took the young man to the commander. The officer said to the commander, "The prisoner Paul called me and said, 'Please take this young man to the commander, because he needs to tell him something.'"

¹⁹ The commander took the young man by the hand, led him off by himself, and asked him, "What do you need to tell me?"

²⁰ He said, "There are some Jews who want to bring Paul before their council tomorrow. They will say that they want to ask him some more questions. But that is not true. ²¹ Do not do what they ask you to do, because there are more than forty Jewish men who will be hiding and waiting to kill Paul when he passes by on the way to the council. They even promised to God that they will not eat or drink anything until they have killed Paul. They are ready to do it, and right now they are waiting for you to agree to do what they are asking you to do." ²² The commander said to the young man, "Do not tell anyone that you have told me about their plan." Then he

sent the young man away.

²³ Then the commander called two of his officers and told them, "Get a group of two hundred soldiers ready to travel. Take along seventy soldiers riding horses, and two hundred other soldiers carrying spears. All of you must be ready to leave at nine o'clock tonight, to go down to the city of Caesarea." ²⁴ And take along horses for Paul to ride, and escort him to the palace of Governor Felix." ²⁵ Then the commander wrote a letter to send to the governor. This is what he wrote: ²⁶ "I am Claudius Lysias writing to you. You, Felix, are our governor whom we honor, and I send you my greetings. ²⁷ I have sent you this man, Paul, because certain Jews seized him and were about to kill him. But I heard someone tell me that he is a Roman citizen, so I and my soldiers went and rescued him. ²⁸ I wanted to know what those Jews were saying that he had done wrong, so I took him to their Jewish council. ²⁹ I listened while they asked this man questions and he answered them. The things they accused him about had to do with their Jewish laws. But Paul has not disobeyed any of our Roman laws. So our officials should not execute him or even put him in prison. ³⁰ Someone told me that some Jews were planning to kill this man, so I sent him to you, so that you may give him a fair trial there. I have also commanded the Jews who have accused him to go there to Caesarea and tell you what they are accusing him about. Goodbye."

³¹ So the soldiers did what the commander told them. They got Paul and took him with them during the night down to Antipatris. ³² The next day, the foot soldiers returned to Jerusalem, and the soldiers who rode horses went on with Paul. ³³ When they arrived in the city of Caesarea, they gave the letter to the governor, and they placed Paul before him. ³⁴ The gov-

ernor read the letter and then he said to Paul, "What province are you from?" Paul answered, "I am from Cilicia." ³⁵ Then the governor said, "When the people who have accused you arrive, I will listen to what each of you says and then I will judge your case." Then he commanded that Paul be guarded in the palace that King Herod the Great had built.

Chapter 24

¹ Five days later Ananias the high priest went down there from Jerusalem, along with some other Jewish elders and a speechmaker whose name was Tertullus. There they told the governor what Paul had done that they thought was wrong.

² The governor commanded Paul to be brought in. When Paul arrived, Tertullus began to accuse him. He said to the governor, "Honorable Governor Felix, during the many years that you have ruled us, we have lived well. By planning wisely, you have improved many things in this province. ³ Therefore, Governor Felix, we always thank you for everything that you have done for all of us, wherever you have done those things. ⁴ But, so that I will not take up too much of your time, I ask that you kindly listen to what I have to say.

⁵ We have observed that this man, wherever he goes, causes trouble with the Jews. He also leads the entire group whom people call the followers of the Nazarene. ⁶ He even tried to do things in the temple in Jerusalem that would pollute it, so we arrested him. ^[1] ⁷^[2] ⁸^[3] If you question him yourself, you will be able to learn that all these things about which we are accusing him are true. ⁹ Then the Jewish leaders there told the governor that what Tertullus had said was true.

¹⁰ Then the governor motioned with his hand to Paul that he should speak. So Paul

replied, and said, "Governor Felix, I know that you have judged this Jewish province for many years. Therefore I gladly defend myself. I know that you will listen to me and will judge me fairly. ¹¹ You know that it has not been more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship God. ¹² No one can say that they saw me arguing with anyone in the temple courts because I did not do that. No one can say that they saw me causing people to riot in any Jewish synagogue or causing trouble anywhere else in Jerusalem, because I did not do that. ¹³ So they cannot prove to you the things about which they are now accusing me. ¹⁴ But I admit to you that this is true: I do worship the God that our ancestors worshiped. It is true that I follow the way that Jesus taught us. I also believe everything that Moses wrote in the laws that God gave him and everything that the other prophets wrote in their books. ¹⁵ I believe, just like these men also believe, that some day God will cause everyone who has died to become alive again, both those who were good and those who were wicked. ¹⁶ Because I believe that day will come, I always try to do what pleases God and what other people think is right. ¹⁷ After I had been in other places for several years, I returned to Jerusalem to bring some money to my fellow Jews who are poor. ¹⁸ Some Jews from Asia saw me in the temple courts after I had completed the ritual that allows one to worship God. There was no crowd with me, and I was not causing people to riot. ¹⁹ But it was those Jews who caused the people to riot. They should be here in front of you to accuse me, if they think that I did something wrong. ²⁰ But if they do not want to do that, these Jewish men who are here should tell you what they think I did that was wrong when I defended myself in their council. ²¹ They might say that I did something wrong when I shouted,

'You are judging me today because I believe that God will cause all people who have died to become alive again.'

²² Felix already knew much about what people called the Way, and so he stopped the trial. He said to them, "Later, when Commander Lysias comes down here, I will decide this case." ²³ Then he told the officer who was guarding Paul to take Paul back to the prison and make sure that Paul was guarded all the time. But he said that Paul was not to be chained, and if his friends came to visit him, the officer should allow them to help Paul in any way that they wanted to.

²⁴ Several days later Felix came back with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jew, and called for Paul to speak with him. Felix listened to what Paul said to him about trusting in Jesus Christ. ²⁵ Paul talked to him about what God wants people to do in order to please him. He also explained how people should control how they act and that there would be a time when God will judge all people. Felix became afraid after hearing those things, so he said to Paul, "That is all I want to hear now. When I have time, I will ask you to come to me again." ²⁶ Felix was hoping that Paul would give him some money, so he sent for Paul to come to him many times. Paul talked with Felix many times, but he did not give Felix any money, and Felix did not tell his soldiers to release Paul from prison.

²⁷ When two years had passed, Porcius Festus became governor in place of Felix. Felix let Paul remain in prison because he wanted to please the Jewish leaders.

24:6 ^[1]the best ancient copies omit the second part of 24:6 *And we wanted to judge him according to our law*

24:7 ^[2]The best ancient copies omit vs 7, *But Lysias, the commander of the Roman fortress, came with his soldiers and took him away from us.*

24:8 ^[3]The best ancient copies omit the first part of vs 8, *sending us to you.*

Chapter 25

¹ Festus began to rule as governor of the province. Three days later, he left the city of Caesarea and went up to Jerusalem.

² There, the chief priests and other Jewish leaders stood before Festus and said that Paul had done things that were very wrong. ³ They urgently asked Festus to bring Paul to trial in Jerusalem. But they were really planning to attack him on the road and kill him. ⁴ Festus replied, "Paul is under guard in Caesarea, let him stay there. I myself will go down to Caesarea very soon." ⁵ "So," he said, "you should go there with me, those of you who are able to. If you have anything to accuse Paul of, you can do it there."

⁶ Festus remained in Jerusalem with the temple leaders eight or ten more days. Then he went back down to the city of Caesarea. The next day Festus commanded that Paul be brought to him, where he sat in the judge's seat. ⁷ After Paul was brought before the judge's seat, the Jewish leaders who had come down from Jerusalem gathered around him to accuse him of many serious charges, but they were not able to prove any of them. ⁸ Then Paul spoke for himself. He said, "I have done nothing against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against the emperor." ⁹ But Festus wanted to please the Jewish leaders, so he asked Paul, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem so I can judge you there about these things?" ¹⁰ Paul replied, "No, I am now standing before

you, who represent the Emperor. This is where I ought to be judged. I have done nothing wrong to the Jewish people, as you know very well. ¹¹ If I had done anything deserving of death, I would not refuse to die; but there is nothing that they accuse me of that deserves such a punishment. No one can condemn me just to satisfy them. I ask that Caesar himself judge me." ¹² After Festus conferred with his advisors, he said, "You have appealed to Caesar, and so to Caesar you shall go!"

¹³ After several days, King Herod Agrippa arrived at Caesarea, along with his sister Bernice. They had come to pay their respects to Festus. ¹⁴ King Agrippa and Bernice stayed many days in Caesarea. After some time had passed, Festus told Agrippa about Paul. He said, "There is a man here whom Felix kept in prison. ¹⁵ When I went to Jerusalem, the chief priests and the Jewish elders came before me and asked me to condemn him to death. ¹⁶ But I told them that when someone has been accused of a serious crime, it is not a custom for Romans to condemn a person immediately. Instead, we allow the accused man to stand face to face with his accusers and defend himself against what they say about him. ¹⁷ So when those Jews came here to Caesarea, I did not delay the trial at all. The day after they arrived, I sat in the judge's seat and ordered the guard to bring in the prisoner. ¹⁸ But when the Jewish leaders told me what the prisoner had done wrong, I did not think that anything they said was serious. ¹⁹ Instead, what they argued with him about were things in their own religion and about a man whose name was Jesus who had died, but whom Paul said was alive. ²⁰ I did not understand these matters, or how to find out the truth. So I asked Paul, 'Are you willing to go to Jerusalem, so I can judge you there about these things?' ²¹ But Paul asked for Caesar himself to judge

his case, so I ordered him to be kept under guard until I could send him to Casear.”

²² Then Agrippa said to Festus, “I myself would like to hear what this man has to say.” Festus answered, “I will arrange for you to hear him tomorrow.”

²³ The next day Agrippa and Bernice entered the hall of judgment, and all the other people were honoring them. Some Roman commanders and important men in Caesarea came with them. Then Festus commanded that the guards should bring Paul in. ²⁴ After Paul entered, Festus said, “King Agrippa and all the rest of you who are here, you see this man! Many leaders of the Jews, both in Jerusalem and here, asked me not to let him live any longer. ²⁵ But I found nothing that he had done to deserve death. Even so, he has asked Caesar to judge his case, so I have decided to send him to Rome. ²⁶ But I do not know what exactly I should write to the emperor about him. That is why I have brought him here to speak to you all, and especially to you, King Agrippa! I have done this so that you may question him. Then I may know what to write to the emperor. ²⁷ I think that it would be unreasonable to send a prisoner to the emperor in Rome without telling exactly what were the wrong things people say that he has done.”

Chapter 26

¹ Then Agrippa said to Paul, “We will now allow you to speak on your own behalf.” Then Paul stretched out his hand to show that he was about to speak. He said, ² “King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate that today that I can explain to you why the Jewish leaders are wrong when they say I have done evil things. ³ I am especially fortunate because you know all about the customs of us Jews and the ques-

tions that we argue about. So I ask you to listen patiently to me.”

⁴ “All my fellow Jews know about how I have conducted my life from the time I was a child. They know how I lived in the city where I was born and also later in Jerusalem. ⁵ They have known me from my very beginning, and they could tell you, if they wanted to, that since I was very young I obeyed the most rigid customs of our religion very carefully. I lived just like the other Pharisees. ⁶ Today I am on trial because I am confidently expecting that God will do what he promised to our ancestors. ⁷ Our twelve Jewish tribes are also confidently waiting for God to do for us what he promised, as they honor him and worship him, day and night. Honored king, I confidently expect that God will do what he promised, and they also believe that! But it is for what I expect God to do that they say I have done wrong. ⁸ Why would any of you think that God could not raise the dead?

⁹ There was a time in the past when I, too, was sure that I should do everything that I could to stop people from believing in Jesus from Nazareth town. ¹⁰ So that is what I did when I lived in Jerusalem. I shut up many of the believers in prison, as the chief priests there had given me power to do. And when their people killed believers, I voted in favor of that. ¹¹ I punished those Jewish people in every synagogue where I could find them. I would force them, with all my anger against them, to make them insult God and curse his name. I even went off to foreign cities to find them so I could do everything in my power to stop them.

¹² “The chief priests gave me power to arrest believers in Damascus, and that is where I went. But while I was on my way, ¹³ at about noon, I saw on the road a bright light in the sky. It was even brighter than

the sun! It shone all around me, and also around those who were traveling with me. ¹⁴ We all fell to the ground. Then I heard the voice of someone speaking to me in the Hebrew language. He said, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' ¹⁵ Then I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' He said, 'I am Jesus! I am the one you are fighting against. ¹⁶ But get up and stand on your feet! I have appeared to you in order to make you into a servant and a witness both of what you have seen of what you know about me now and what I will show you later. ¹⁷ I will protect you from the people and the non-Jews to whom I will send you, ¹⁸ in order to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of the enemy to God. In this way God will forgive their sins and give to them the things that all my people will have forever, the people who belong to me by faith.

¹⁹ "So, King Agrippa, I did what God told me in a vision to do. ²⁰ First, I spoke to the Jews in Damascus and those in Jerusalem, and in all the countryside of Judea, and to the non-Jews there also. I told them that they should stop sinning and ask God for help. I told them also that they should do those things that show that they have stopped sinning.

²¹ It is because I preached this message that some Jews seized me when I was in the temple courtyard and tried to kill me. ²² However, God has been helping me, so I have continued to proclaim these things to this very day. I have continued to tell both ordinary people and important people exactly what the prophets and Moses said would happen. ²³ They said that the Christ would suffer and die, that he would be the first to rise from the dead. They also said that he would proclaim, both to his own people and to the non-Jewish people,

that God is truly able to save them."

²⁴ Before Paul could say anything further, Festus shouted out in a loud voice: "Paul, you are crazy! You have studied too much, and it has made you insane!" ²⁵ But Paul answered, "Your Excellency Festus, I am not insane! On the contrary, what I am saying is true and quite sane! ²⁶ For King Agrippa knows the things that I have been talking about, and I can speak freely to him about them. I am sure that none of these things could have escaped his notice, because none of these things happened in secret." ²⁷ "King Agrippa, do you believe what the prophets wrote? I know that you believe those things." ²⁸ Then Agrippa answered Paul, "In just a short time you have almost persuaded me to become a Christian!" ²⁹ Paul replied, "Whether it takes a short time or a long time, it does not matter. I pray to God that you and also all of the others who are listening to me today will also become like me, except for these chains!" ³⁰ Then the king stood. The governor, Bernice, and all the others also got up ³¹ and left the room. After they left, they said to each other, "This man has done nothing deserving death or his chains." ³² Agrippa said to Festus, "If this man had not appealed to Caesar, he could have been released."

Chapter 27

¹ When the Governor decided that we should sail for Italy, he put Paul and some other prisoners into the control of an army captain whose name was Julius. He held the rank of centurion and was part of a large number of soldiers who were under the direct command of the emperor. ² We boarded a ship from the city of Adramyttium in Asia. The ship was about to sail to places on the coast of Asia. In this

way we went to sea. Aristarchus, from Thessalonica in Macedonia, went with us. ³ The next day we arrived at Sidon. Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him permission to go see his friends, who would care for him. ⁴ Then the ship set sail from there. We went along the coast of Cyprus, which was sheltered from the wind, because the wind was against us. ⁵ After that, we crossed over the sea close to the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia. The ship arrived at Myra, which is in Lycia. We got off the ship there. ⁶ In Myra, Julius found a ship that had come from Alexandria and would soon sail to Italy. So he arranged for us to go aboard that ship, and we left. ⁷ We sailed slowly for many days and came near to Cnidus, but we got there with difficulty, because the winds were against us. After that, the wind was very strong and did not allow the ship to move straight ahead westward. Instead, we sailed along the coast of the Island of Crete, where the wind was not blowing strongly, and we passed near Salmone, a piece of land sticking out into the water. ⁸ The wind was still strong, and it prevented the ship from moving ahead fast. So we moved slowly along the coast of Crete, and we arrived at a town that was called Fair Havens, near Lasea.

⁹ Much time passed, and it had now become dangerous to sail, because the Jewish fasting period had already passed and the sea would become very stormy. So Paul said to the men on the ship, ¹⁰ "Men, I see that if we sail now, it will be disastrous for us with much injury and loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives." ¹¹ But the Roman captain did not believe Paul. Instead, he believed what the pilot and the owner of the ship said, and he decided to do what they advised. ¹² The harbor was not a good place to remain during the winter, so most of the sailors advised going

to sea from there. They hoped that they could reach Phoenix and spend the winter there. Phoenix is a town in Crete. On it blow winds both from the northwest and southwest. ¹³ Because there was only a gentle wind blowing from the south, the ship's crew thought that they could travel like they wanted to. So they lifted the anchor up out of the sea, and the ship sailed close along the coastline of the island of Crete. ¹⁴ After a short time, however, a stormy wind blew down from the shore. It blew across the island from the north side and hit the ship. That wind is called Euroclydon, "the Northeast Wind." ¹⁵ It blew strongly against the front of the ship, and we could not sail against it. So the sailors let the wind move the ship in the direction that the wind was blowing. ¹⁶ The ship then sailed along the coast line of a small island named Cauda. We were able, with difficulty, to fasten the lifeboat securely to the ship. ¹⁷⁻¹⁸ After the sailors hoisted the lifeboat onto the ship, they used cables to reinforce the ship. They passed them under the ship's hull to strengthen the ship. The sailors were afraid that we would run aground on the sandbars called Syrtis, so they lowered the sea anchor and in this manner the wind drove us along. The wind and the waves continued to toss the ship about roughly, so on the next day the sailors began to throw things overboard. ¹⁹ On the third day of the storm, the sailors threw overboard most of the sails, ropes, and poles, in order to make the ship lighter. They did this with their own hands. ²⁰ The wind continued to blow very strongly for many days, and the sky was full of dark clouds day and night so that we could not see the sun or the stars. We had lost all hope that we would survive.

²¹ None of us on the ship had eaten for many days. Then one day, Paul stood up in front of us and said, "Friends, you should

have listened to me when I said that we should not set sail from Crete. ²² But now, I urge you, do not be afraid, because none of us will die. The storm will destroy the ship but not us. ²³ I know this, because last night God, the one to whom I belong and whom I serve, sent an angel who came and stood by me. ²⁴ The angel said to me, 'Paul, do not be afraid. You must go to Rome and stand before the emperor there so that he can judge you. I want you to know that God has granted to you that all those who are traveling by ship with you will also survive.' ²⁵ So cheer up, my friends, because I believe that God will make this happen, exactly as the angel told me. ²⁶ However, the ship will crash on some island, and we will go ashore there."

²⁷ On the fourteenth night after the storm had begun, the ship was still being blown across the Adriatic sea. About midnight, the sailors thought that the ship was getting close to land. ²⁸ So they lowered a rope to measure how deep the water was. When they pulled the rope up again, they measured it and saw that the water was forty meters deep. A little later, they measured again and found thirty meters. ²⁹ They were afraid that the ship might go onto some rocks, so they threw out four anchors from the ship's stern. Then they prayed that it would soon be dawn so that they could see where the ship was going. ³⁰ Some of the sailors were planning to escape from the ship, so they lowered the lifeboat into the sea. In order that no one would know what they planned to do, they pretended that they wanted to lower some anchors from the ship's front. ³¹ But Paul said to the army captain and the soldiers, "If the sailors do not stay in the ship, you have no hope of surviving." ³² So the soldiers cut the ropes and let the lifeboat fall into the water.

³³ Just before dawn, Paul urged everyone

on the ship to eat some food. He said, "For the past fourteen days you have been waiting and watching and not eating anything. ³⁴ So, now I urge you to eat some food. You must do this to live. Not even one hair from your heads will perish." ³⁵ After Paul had said that, while everyone was watching, he took some bread and thanked God for it. Then he broke the bread and began to eat some of it. ³⁶ Then they were all cheered up and ate some food. ³⁷ Altogether there were 276 of us on the ship. ³⁸ When everyone had eaten enough, they lightened the ship by throwing the rest of the wheat into the sea.

³⁹ At dawn we could see land, but the sailors did not know where we were. However, they could see a bay and a wide area of sand at the water's edge. They decided to try to run the ship up onto the beach. ⁴⁰ So they cast off the anchors and let them fall loose into the sea. At the same time, they untied the ropes that fastened the rudders, and they raised the front sail so that the wind would blow into it. They they steered the ship toward the shore. ⁴¹ But the ship sailed into turbulent waters and ran hard onto a sandbank that was just under the waves. The front of the ship stuck there and could not move, and big waves beat against the back of the ship, so that it began to break apart.

⁴² The soldiers had it in mind to kill all the prisoners so that none of them could swim away and escape. ⁴³ But army captain wanted to save Paul, so he stopped the soldiers from doing this. Instead, he commanded that everyone who could swim should jump into the water and swim to shore. ⁴⁴ Then he told the others to hold onto planks or other pieces from the ship and go toward the shore. We did what he said, and in that way all of us arrived safely on land.

Chapter 28

¹ After we had arrived safely on the shore, we learned that it was an island called Malta. ² The people who lived there gave to us better than the usual hospitality. They lit a fire and invited us to come and warm ourselves, because it was raining and it was cold. ³ When Paul collected some sticks of wood and put them on the fire, a poisonous snake came out from the fire to escape from the heat, and it bit Paul on his hand and stayed there. ⁴ The people from the island saw the creature dangling from Paul's hand, they said to each other, "Probably this man has murdered someone. Although he has escaped from being drowned in the sea, the god of justice will cause him to die." ⁵ But Paul simply shook the snake off into the fire, and nothing happened to him. ⁶ The people were expecting that Paul's body would soon swell up with a fever or that he would suddenly fall down and die. But after they had waited a long time, they saw that nothing was wrong with him. So the people changed what they were thinking and said to one another, "This man is not a murderer! He is a god!"

⁷ Now in a place near to where they were, there were some fields that belonged to a man whose name was Publius. He was the chief official on the island. He invited us to come and stay in his home. He took very good care of us for three days. ⁸ At that time Publius' father had fever and dysentery, and he was lying in bed. So Paul visited him and prayed for him. Then Paul placed his hands on him and healed him. ⁹ After Paul had done that, the other people on the island who were sick came to him, and he healed them, too. ¹⁰ They brought us gifts and showed in other ways that they greatly respected us. When we were ready to leave three months later,

they brought us food and other things that we would need on the ship.

¹¹ After we had stayed there three months, we got on a ship that was from Alexandria and that was going to Italy and sailed away. On the front of the ship there were carved images of the twin gods whose names were Castor and Pollux. ¹² When we arrived at the city of Syracuse, we stayed there three days. ¹³ Then we sailed and arrived at the city of Rhegium in Italy. The next day, the wind was blowing from the south, so in only two more days we reached the town of Puteoli. There we left the ship. ¹⁴ In Puteoli we met some fellow believers who wanted us to stay with them for seven days. After this, we finally arrived at Rome.

¹⁵ In Rome, some fellow believers had heard about us, so they came to meet us. Some of them met us at the town called The Market on Appian Road, and others met us at the town called The Three Inns. When Paul saw those believers, he thanked God and was encouraged. ¹⁶ After we arrived in Rome, Paul was permitted to live in a house by himself. But there was always a soldier there to guard him.

¹⁷ After Paul had been there three days, he sent a message to the Jewish leaders to come and talk with him. When they came to him, Paul said to them, "My dear brothers, although I have not opposed our people nor spoken against the customs of our ancestors, our leaders in Jerusalem seized me. But before they could kill me, a Roman commander rescued me and later sent me to the city of Caesarea for Roman authorities to put me on trial. ¹⁸ The Roman authorities questioned me and wanted to release me, because I had not done any bad thing for which I should be executed. ¹⁹ But when the Jewish leaders there spoke against the desire of the Romans to set me free, I had to request

that the emperor judge me here in Rome. But my reason for doing that was not that I wanted to accuse our leaders about anything. ²⁰ So I have requested you to come here so that I can tell you why I am a prisoner. It is because I believe in what the people of Israel confidently expect God will do for us.” ²¹ Then the Jewish leaders said, “We have not received any letters from our fellow Jews in Judea about you. Also, none of our fellow Jews who have arrived here from Judea has said anything bad about you. ²² But we want to hear what you think about this group that you belong to, because we know that in many places people are speaking against it.”

²³ So they decided that they would come back on another day to hear Paul speak to them. When that day arrived, even more people than before came to where Paul was staying. Paul told them about how God would rule everyone; he talked about how the law of Moses and the prophets foretold Jesus. Paul talked with all who would listen from morning until evening. ²⁴ Some of those Jews were persuaded to believe what Paul said about Jesus was true, but others did not believe that it was true. ²⁵ When they began to disagree with each other, and when they were about to leave, Paul had one more thing to say: “The Holy Spirit said the truth to your ancestors, when he spoke these words to Isaiah the prophet:

²⁶ Go to your people and say to them:

‘You hear with your ears, but you never understand what God is saying.

You see with your eyes but you never really see the things that God is doing. ²⁷ These people do not understand, because they have become stubborn.

their ears are almost deaf;

and they have closed their eyes because they do not want to see.

They do not want to hear with their ears or understand with their hearts, for then they would come back to me and I would heal them.

²⁸ Therefore, you should know that God is offering to save the non-Jews, and they will listen.” ²⁹^[1]

³⁰ For two whole years Paul stayed there in a house that he rented. Many people came to see him, and he received them all gladly and talked with them. ³¹ He preached and taught people about how God would show himself as king, and he taught them about the Lord Jesus Christ. He did that with great boldness, and no one tried to stop him.

28:29 ^[1] Acts 28:29 - the oldest and most accurate ancient copies of the book of Acts do not include the additional words found in Acts 28:29; and for that reason they are not included here.

ROMANS

Chapter 1

¹ I, Paul, who serve Christ Jesus, am writing this letter to all of you believers in the city of Rome. God chose me to be an apostle, and he appointed me in order that I should proclaim the good news that comes from him. ² Long before Jesus came to earth, God promised that he would reveal this good news by means of what his prophets wrote in the sacred scriptures. ³ This good news is about his Son. As to his Son's physical nature, he was born a descendant of King David. ⁴ As to his divine nature, it was powerfully shown that he is God's own Son. God showed this when his Holy Spirit caused him to become alive again after he died. He is Jesus Christ our Lord. ⁵ He has shown us great kindness and appointed us to be apostles. He did that in order that many among all the people groups would believe in him and obey him. ⁶ You believers who are living in Rome are included among those whom God has chosen to belong to Jesus Christ. ⁷ I am writing this letter to all of you in Rome whom God loves and whom he has chosen to become his people. I pray that God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord may continue to act kindly toward you and will continue to cause you to have peace.

⁸ As I begin this letter, I thank my God for all you believers in Rome. It is because of what Jesus Christ has done for us that I am able to do that. I thank him because people all over the Roman Empire are talking about how you are trusting in him. ⁹ God, whom I devotedly serve as I proclaim to people the good news concerning his Son, knows that I tell the truth when I say that I always mention you whenever I pray to

God. ¹⁰ I especially ask God that if he desires me to visit you, somehow at last I shall be able to do so. ¹¹ I pray this because I long to visit you to help you in order that you may trust and honor Christ more and more. ¹² I mean that I want us to encourage each other by telling each other how we trust in Jesus. ¹³ My fellow believers, many times I planned to visit you. I certainly want you to know that. But I have not been able to come to you because something has always stopped me. I have wanted to come in order that more people among you might trust in Jesus, just as in other places among the non-Jews. ¹⁴ I feel obliged to proclaim the good news to all non-Jewish people, to those who speak Greek and to those who do not, to people who are smart and to those who are unintelligent. ¹⁵ As a result, what I have eagerly desired is that I might proclaim this good news to you who are living in Rome also.

¹⁶ I very confidently proclaim the good news about what Christ has done, because this good news is the powerful way in which God saves those who trust in what Christ has done for them. Specifically, God first saves the Jews who believe the good news, and then he saves non-Jews. ¹⁷ By means of this good news God reveals how he puts people right with himself. This is like what a prophet wrote long ago in the scriptures: "Those whom God puts right with himself will live because they trust him."

¹⁸ God in heaven makes it clear that he is angry with all who show no respect for him and who do wicked things. He shows them that they deserve for him to punish them. Because they do wicked things, they also keep other people from knowing what is true about God.

¹⁹ All non-Jews can clearly know what God is like, because God himself has revealed

this to everyone. ²⁰ People cannot actually see with their eyes what God is like. But ever since he created the world, the things in it make us understand things about him—for example, he has always been able to do powerful things. Another example is that everyone knows that he is completely different from all that he has created. So no one is able to say truthfully, “We never knew about God.” ²¹ Although non-Jews knew what God is like, they did not honor him as God, nor did they thank him for what he had done. But instead, they began to think foolish things about him, and they were no longer able to understand what he wanted them to know about himself. ²² Although they claimed that they were wise, they became foolish, ²³ and they refused to admit that God is glorious and will never die. Instead, they made and worshiped idols that resembled people who will some day die, and then they made other idols that resembled birds and four-footed animals, and finally they made idols that resembled reptiles.

²⁴ So God allowed the non-Jews to do immoral sexual things that they strongly desired, things that they thought they had to do, because they wanted so much to do them. As a result, they began to dishonor each other’s bodies by their sexual actions. ²⁵ Also, they chose to worship false gods instead of admitting what is true about God. They worshiped things that God created instead of worshiping him, the one who created everything, the one whom we should all praise forever! Amen.

²⁶ So God allowed the non-Jews to do shameful sexual things that they strongly desired. As a result, many women began sleeping with other women—something that goes against nature. ²⁷ Similarly, many men abandoned their natural relationships with women. Instead, they

developed strong sexual desire for each other. They committed homosexual acts with other men, acts that were shameful. As a result, God has punished them by sicknesses in their bodies, which is the direct consequence of that kind of sin.

²⁸ Furthermore, because they decided that it was not worthwhile to know God, he allowed their own worthless thoughts to completely control them. As a result, they began doing evil things that no one should do. ²⁹ They strongly desire to do all kinds of unrighteous deeds and evil things to others and take things that belong to others and harm others in various ways. Many constantly envy other people and desire to murder people and to cause arguments and quarrels between people and deceive others and speak hatefully about others. ³⁰ Many say evil things about others and slander others. Many act especially hatefully toward God and violently toward others and treat others contemptuously and boast about themselves to others and invent new ways to do evil deeds. Many children disobey their parents. ³¹ Many act in other foolish ways that offend God and do not do what they promised others that they would do and do not even love their own family members and do not act mercifully toward other people. ³² Although they know that God has declared that those who do such things deserve to be killed, they not only do these kinds of evil things, but they also approve of others who do them.

Chapter 2

¹ You may say that God must punish people for doing what he hates. But when you say that, you are really saying that God should punish you because you also have lived the same kind of life. You did the

same things they have done. ² We know very well that God will judge and punish fairly people who do such evil deeds. ³ So you who say that God should punish others for doing evil deeds, although you do evil deeds yourself, you should certainly not think that you yourself will be able to escape from God when he begins to punish you! ⁴ And you should not say, "God is acting very tolerantly and patiently toward me, so I do not need to turn away from my sin." You should understand that God is patiently waiting for you to repent from your sins. ⁵ But instead, because you are stubborn and refuse to stop sinning, God will punish you even more severely. He will do that at the time when he shows that he is angry and judges all people fairly.

⁶ God will pay back everyone according to what they deserve for what they have done. ⁷ Specifically, some people keep doing good deeds, because they want God to honor them, and they want to live forever with him. God will reward them in this way. ⁸ But some people act in a selfish way and refuse to believe that what God says is true, and they do the things that God says are wrong. God will be very angry and will punish them severely. ⁹ He will cause everyone who habitually does evil deeds to suffer greatly and to have many troubles. This certainly will happen to the Jews who refuse to accept God's message, because God gave them the privilege to be his special people, but it will also happen to the non-Jews. ¹⁰ But God will praise, honor, and give a peaceful spirit to every person who habitually does good deeds. He will certainly do this for the Jews because he chose them as his special people, but he will also do it for the non-Jews. ¹¹ God will do this fairly, because he pays no attention to how important anyone is.

¹² Although non-Jews do not have the laws that God gave to Moses and still sin without having a law, God will bring them to ruin forever. And he will also punish all the Jews who have disobeyed his law, because he will judge them according to what the law says. ¹³ It is right for God to punish them because it is not those who know about God's laws that he makes righteous. Only those who have obeyed all of God's law, they are the only ones God makes righteous. ¹⁴ Whenever the non-Jews, who do not have the law of God, follow those laws because they obeyed them by the light of nature, they prove that they have a law within themselves, even though they never had the laws that God gave to Moses. ¹⁵ They show that they know in their own minds what God commands in his law, for each person in his very own conscience either accuses himself of bad behavior or defends himself. ¹⁶ God will punish them at the time when he will judge people according to what they have thought and done secretly. He will judge people by authorizing Christ Jesus to judge them. This is what I tell people when I preach the good news to them.

¹⁷ Now I have something to say to anyone of you Jews to whom I am writing: You trust that God will save you because you know the laws that he gave to Moses. You boast that you belong to God. ¹⁸ You know what God desires. Because you have been taught God's laws, you are able to know which things are right and to choose to do them. ¹⁹ You are certain that you are able to show God's truth to non-Jews, and that you can instruct those who know nothing about God. ²⁰ You are certain that you can instruct those who believe foolish things about God and those who are like children because they know nothing about him at all. You are certain about all this because you have the law that teaches you truly about God. ²¹ Since you claim that you

have all these advantages because you are a Jew, it is disgusting that you teach others but do not obey the laws yourself! You who preach that people should not steal things, it is disgusting that you yourself steal things! ²² You who command people not to sleep with someone to whom they are not married, it is disgusting that you commit adultery yourself! You who command others not to worship idols, it is disgusting that you do not avoid disgusting things. ²³ You who boast saying, "I have God's laws," it is disgusting that you disobey those same laws! As a result you are insulting God! ²⁴ You must not be like our ancestors, about whom were written these words in the scriptures: "The non-Jews speak evil about God because of the evil actions of you Jews."

²⁵ Any one of you who is circumcised to show that he belongs to God can benefit from that if he obeys the law that he gave to Moses. But if you, a circumcised person, disobey the law, God will consider you to be no better in God's sight than someone who is not circumcised. ²⁶ This means that God will certainly consider that even non-Jews who are not circumcised can become his people if they obey the things that he commanded in his laws. ²⁷ These people, who are not circumcised but who still obey God's laws, will declare that God is right when he punishes you, for you are circumcised but still break the law. ²⁸ It is not those who perform rituals for God who are true Jews, and it is not being circumcised in their bodies that causes God to accept them. ²⁹ On the contrary, we whom God has changed inwardly are the true Jews. God has accepted us and God's Spirit has changed our nature, not because we perform the rituals commanded by the law. Even if other people will not praise us, God will praise us.

Chapter 3

¹ Someone might say then, "If that is true, then it appears that there is no advantage to be a Jew over a non-Jew, and being circumcised does not benefit us Jews at all."

² But I tell you that being Jews has many benefits. First of all because it was to their ancestors that God spoke his words, words that show us who he is. ³ Does the Jews not being faithful mean that God will not bless as he promised that he would? ⁴ No, it certainly does not mean that! God always does what he has promised, even though people do not. All those who accuse God of not keeping his promises to us Jews are very mistaken. King David wrote about this: "So everyone must acknowledge that what you have said about them is true, and that you will always win the case when anyone accuses you of doing wrong."

⁵ So if God did not bless because we were wicked, can we say that he acted unfairly? That he was wrong to punish us out of anger? (I am speaking as ordinary humans speak.) ⁶ We should certainly not conclude that God should not judge, because if God did not judge, it could not possibly be right for him to judge the world! ⁷ But someone might answer, "The fact that God truly keeps his promises becomes very clear because for example, I told a lie and the result is that people praise God because he has mercy! So God should no longer say that I should be punished on account of my having sinned, since people are praising him because of it!" ⁸ If what you, Paul, say is true, then we might as well do evil things in order that good things like that will result!" Some people speak evil about me because they accuse me of speaking like this. God will punish people who say such things about me, and they will deserve for him to punish them!

⁹ Shall we conclude that God will treat us more favorably and will treat the non-Jews less favorably? We can certainly not conclude that! The Jews and also the non-Jews have sinned and so they deserve for God to punish them. ¹⁰ The following words that are written in the scriptures support this,

No person is righteous. There is not even one righteous person! ¹¹ There is no one who understands how to live properly. There is no one who seeks to know God!

¹² Absolutely everyone has turned away from God. God considers them depraved. There is no one who acts righteously; no, there is not even one!

¹³ What people say is foul, like the smell that comes from a grave that has been opened. By what people say, they deceive people.

By what they say they injure people, just like the poison of snakes injures people.

¹⁴ They are continually cursing others and saying cruel things.

¹⁵ They go quickly to murder people.

¹⁶ Wherever they go they ruin everything and make people miserable.

¹⁷ They have not known how to live peacefully with other people.

¹⁸ They absolutely refuse to honor God!

¹⁹ We know that whatever these laws command is to those who are required to obey. This means that Jews or non-Jews are not able to say anything contrary when God demands an answer for having sinned. ²⁰ It is not because people have done the things that God's laws require that God will erase the record of their sins because no one has done those things completely. In fact, the result of our knowing God's laws is that we know clearly that we have sinned.

²¹ When God declares us right with him it does not depend on our obeying the law that he gave Moses. It was written about in the laws and by the prophets that God forgives our sins by a different way. ²² God erases the record of our sins because we trust in what Jesus Christ has done for us. God does this for every person who trusts in Christ, because he considers that there is no difference between Jews and non-Jews. ²³ All people have done evil, and everyone has failed to accomplish the glorious goals that God set for them. ²⁴ Our record of sins has been erased by his acting kindly to forgive our sins, without our doing anything to earn it. Christ Jesus accomplished this by redeeming us. ²⁵ God showed that Christ turned away his anger by shedding his blood when he died, and we must believe in what he did for us. The sacrifice of Christ shows that God acted in a just manner. Otherwise, one might not have thought he was just, because he had overlooked sins that people had previously committed, for he is patient. ²⁶ God appointed Christ to die for us. By doing that, he now shows that he is just, and he shows that he is justly able to erase the record of sins for everyone who trusts in Jesus.

²⁷ It is not at all because we obey the laws of Moses that God erases the record of our sins. So there is no way that we can boast that God favors us because we obeyed those laws. Instead, it is because we believe in Christ that God erases the record of our sins. ²⁸ So it is clear that God makes someone right with himself if that person trusts in Christ—not if that person obeys the law. ²⁹ You who are Jews certainly should not think that you are the only ones whom God will accept! You certainly should realize that he will accept non-Jews, too. Of course, he will accept non-Jews, ³⁰ because, as you firmly believe, there is only one God. It is this

same God who will make Jews—who have been circumcised—right with himself because they trust in Christ, and it is also God who will make non-Jews—who have not been circumcised—right with himself, because they also trust in Christ. ³¹ If you say that God makes us right with himself because we trust in Christ, does that mean that the law is now useless? Certainly not. Instead, that law is truly valid.

Chapter 4

¹ Abraham is the revered ancestor of us Jews. So think about what we can learn from what happened to Abraham. ² If it was because of Abraham's doing good things that God put him right with himself, Abraham would then have had reason to boast about that to people, (but, even so, he would not have had any reason to boast to God about it). ³ Remember that in the scriptures it is written that Abraham believed what God promised to do for him, and that for this reason, God considered Abraham to be right with himself. ⁴ Now if we receive wages for work that we do, those wages are not considered to be a gift. Instead, they are considered to be what we have earned. Similarly, if we could do something to obligate God to be kind to us, then that would not be a gift. ⁵ But in reality, God makes right with himself people who did not honor him previously. Instead, they now trust in him, and God therefore considers them to be right with himself. ⁶ Similarly, it is as David wrote in the Psalms about anyone whom God considers to be right with himself without earning it:

⁷ "How fortunate are the people whose sins God has forgiven, whose sins he no longer looks at. ⁸ How fortunate are the people whose sins he no longer keeps a record of.

⁹ Being fortunate like this is not something that only we Jews can experience. No, it is also something that non-Jews can experience. We know this, because it is written in the scriptures that Abraham trusted in God, so God considered him to be right with himself. ¹⁰ Think about when God did this for Abraham. He did it before Abraham was circumcised, not after. ¹¹ God commanded that Abraham be circumcised many years after God had already accepted him. Circumcision was the mark that showed that Abraham already was right with God. So we can learn here that God considered Abraham to be the ancestor of everyone who trusts in him, even of those who are not circumcised. In this way, God considers all these people to be right with himself. ¹² Likewise, God considers Abraham to be the ancestor of all us who are true Jews, that is, all Jews who not only have the mark of circumcision on their bodies, but—much more importantly—who live like our ancestor Abraham did before he was circumcised, when he was simply trusting in God.

¹³ God promised Abraham and his descendants that they would possess the world. But when he promised that, it was not because Abraham was obeying any law. Instead, it was because Abraham believed that God would do what he promised. So God put Abraham right with himself. ¹⁴ If people possess the world because they obey God's law, then it is useless to trust in God for anything, and his promise means nothing. ¹⁵ Remember that in reality, God says in his law that he will punish anyone who does not perfectly obey it. Also remember, however, that for people who have no law, it is impossible to disobey it. ¹⁶ So it is because we trust in God that we will receive the things that he has promised to us as a gift, because he is very kind. He gives these things to everyone whom he regards as a true descendant of

Abraham—us Jewish believers, who have God’s law and trust him, and also those non-Jews who do not have God’s laws but who trust in him as Abraham did. For God regards Abraham as the true ancestor of all of us believers. ¹⁷ This is what God said to Abraham in the scriptures: “I will make you the ancestor of many ethnic groups.” Abraham received this directly from God who raises dead people to life and creates things out of nothing. ¹⁸ He trusted firmly in this promise of God, even though there was no physical reason for him to expect that he would have descendants because he and his wife were too old to bear children. God had promised Abraham that he would become the ancestor of many ethnic groups by saying, “Your descendents will be like the stars in the sky.” ¹⁹ He did not doubt that God would do what he promised, even though he knew that his body was not able to father a child (he was, after all, about one hundred years old), and he knew that Sarah had never had children, especially now, because she was so old. ²⁰ He did not doubt at all that God would do what he had promised. Instead, he trusted in God more strongly, and he thanked God for what God was going to do. ²¹ He was also convinced that God was able to do whatever he promised that he was going to do. ²² And that is the reason that God considered Abraham to be right with himself.

²³ The words in the scriptures, “God considered him to be right with himself because he trusted in him,” are not only about Abraham. ²⁴ They were also written about us, whom God would consider to be right with himself because we trust in him, the one who caused our Lord Jesus to become alive again after he died. ²⁵ God allowed men to execute Jesus because of our evil deeds. And God caused Jesus to live again because God wanted to put us right with him.

Chapter 5

¹ God has put us right with himself because we trust in our Lord Jesus Christ. So we are now at peace with God. ² Because of what Christ has done for us, it is as if God has opened up a door for us to go to where he will be kind to us. So we rejoice because we are confidently expecting that God will gladly share his greatness with us. ³ When we suffer because we are joined to Christ, we also rejoice because we know that when we are suffering, we are learning to endure things patiently. ⁴ And we know that when we endure suffering patiently, God approves of us. And when we know that God approves of us, we confidently expect that he will do great things for us. ⁵ And we are very confident that we will receive the things that we wait for, because God loves us very much. His Holy Spirit, whom he gave to us, causes us to understand how much God loves us.

⁶ When we were unable to save ourselves, it was Christ who, at the time that God chose, died for us people, although we were not honoring God at all. ⁷ Rarely will anyone die for another person, even if that person were righteous, although for a good person perhaps someone might be courageous enough to die. ⁸ Nevertheless, as for God, the way he showed us that he loves us is that Christ died for us while we were still rebelling against God. ⁹ So it is even more certain that Christ will save us from God’s anger about sin since we are right with God because Christ died for us and shed his blood for our sins. ¹⁰ Even when we were his enemies God made us to be his friends with because his Son died for us. Since Christ is alive again, it is even more certain that Christ will save us. ¹¹ And that is not all! Now we also rejoice because we have been made friends

with God, because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us.

¹² All people are sinful because Adam, the first man whom God created, sinned long ago. Because he sinned, he eventually died. So all people who have lived since then became sinners, and they all die. ¹³ People in the world sinned before God gave his law to Moses but there was no way to recognize sin against that law. ¹⁴ But we know that from the time when Adam lived until the time when Moses lived, all people sinned, and that they died as a consequence. Everyone died, even those who did not break a direct command from God as Adam did. Adam's sin affected all people, just like what Christ did, the one who came later, also affects all people. ¹⁵ But the gift that God gives is not like Adam's sin. Because Adam sinned, everybody dies. But because another single man, Jesus Christ, died for us all, God kindly offers us this gift of everlasting life, although we do not deserve it. ¹⁶ And there is another way in which God's gift is different from Adam's sin. Because Adam sinned, all people after him have sinned, and so God declared that all people deserve to be punished. But as a kind gift, God offers to put us right with himself. ¹⁷ All people die because of what one man, Adam, did. But now many of us experience that God has kindly given us a very great gift—which we do not deserve—and he has put us right with himself. It is also very certain that we will rule with Christ in heaven. This will happen because of what one man, Jesus Christ, did for us.

¹⁸ So, because one man, Adam, disobeyed God's law, all people deserve to be punished. Similarly, because one man, Jesus, acted righteously by obeying God while he lived and died, God offers to put everyone right with himself, for them to live forever. ¹⁹ It was because one person, Adam,

disobeyed God that many people became sinners. Similarly, it is because one person, Jesus, obeyed God when he died that he will put many right with himself. ²⁰ God gave his law to Moses in order that people might realize how greatly they had sinned; but as people sinned more, God continued to act even more kindly toward them in a way that they did not deserve. ²¹ He did that in order that, unlike people die because they sin, his kind gift might put them right with himself. Then they can live forever because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for them.

Chapter 6

¹ Someone might say in reply to what I have written that since God has acted kindly toward us, perhaps we should continue to sin in order that his kindness would be the greater. ² No, certainly not! We are like people who have died, who can no longer do anything evil. So we should not continue to sin. ³ When we were baptized in union with Christ Jesus, God viewed us as dying with Christ on his cross. Do you not know this? ⁴ So, when we were baptized, God viewed us also as being with Christ in his tomb. God the Father used his power to raise Christ from the dead; in the same way, he made it possible for us to live life in a new way. ⁵ Since God views us as joining with Christ when he died, he will also make us rise with him from the dead. ⁶ God views us sinners as having died on the cross with Christ, in order to put an end to our sinful nature. As a result, we no longer have to sin. ⁷ For whoever has died no longer has to sin. ⁸ Since God views us as having died together with Christ when he died, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ We know that since God enabled Christ to live again after he died, Christ will never die again.

Nothing will ever be able to make him die again. ¹⁰ When he died, he went free from our sinful world, and he will never die again; but because he lives again, he lives in order to serve God. ¹¹ In the same way, you must view yourselves as God views you: You are dead people, unable to sin any longer; but you are also living people, living to serve God and joined to Christ Jesus. ¹² So when you want to sin, do not allow yourselves to do what you want. Remember that your body will die one day. ¹³ Do not use any part of your body to do anything wicked. Instead, present yourselves to God as people who are now alive after belonging to the realm of the dead. Use every part of your body for God. Allow him to use you to do righteous things. ¹⁴ When you desire to sin, do not do it! The laws that God gave Moses did not enable you to stop sinning. But now God controls you and kindly helps you not to sin.

¹⁵ We might think from this that because the laws God gave Moses did not enable us to stop sinning and God is now treating us kindly anyway, that God permits us to continue sinning. Absolutely not! ¹⁶ If you offer to obey someone, you become his slaves. If you obey when you wish to sin, then you become the slaves of sin and die as a result. But if you obey God, then you become his slaves and, as a result, will do the right things that God wants you to do. ¹⁷ In the past you sinned in whatever way you wanted to sin—you were slaves of sin. But then you began to sincerely obey what Christ taught you. I thank God for that. ¹⁸ So now you do not have to sin any longer; sin is no longer your master. Instead, you are slaves of God, who is righteous. ¹⁹ I am writing to you in a way that ordinary people can understand. In the past you were slaves to your desires so you did all kinds of impure and evil things. But now act justly as God acts, so that he will set you apart for himself as his people.

²⁰ It is true that in the past, you behaved as people who were free from God's power and righteousness (because you did whatever your evil minds told you to do). You did not have to do things that were right. ²¹ But though you were like a slave to sin, God has set you free from sin and made you his servant. As a result you are being made holy, and the result of that is that you will live forever with him. ²² But now you do not have to sin any longer. You are no longer slaves like that. Instead, you have become slaves of God. In return, he has set you apart as his own people, and he will allow you to live forever, with him. ²³ All who do what their evil minds tells them to do receive payment, too, but that payment is death. They will be apart from God forever. But as for God, he pays no wages to his slaves at all. Instead, he gives us a free gift: He allows us to live forever with him, joined to Christ Jesus our Lord.

Chapter 7

¹ My fellow believers, you know about laws. So you certainly know that people have to obey laws only while they are alive. ² For example, a woman must be faithful to her husband as long as he is alive. But if her husband dies, she is does not have to act any longer as if she were married. The law releases her from the marriage. ³ So if she goes to another man while her husband is alive, she will be an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she no longer has to obey that law. Then if she marries another man, she will not be an adulteress. ⁴ In the same way, my brothers and sisters, when you died with Christ on his cross, the law of God could no longer control you. You were free to join Christ, so that you might honor God. You can do this because you are alive again. God has joined you to Christ, and he has

raised Christ from the dead. ⁵ When we were doing what our evil thoughts told us to do, when we learned God's law, we wanted to sin more and more. So we did evil things that would lead God to separate us from him forever. ⁶ But now God has freed us from having to obey law of Moses—it is as though we have died, and the law can no longer tell us what to do. God has done this for us so that we may worship him in a new way that the Spirit shows us, rather than in the old way that the law required.

⁷ Could we say that people want to sin more if they know God's laws? Then those laws themselves must be evil. No, of course not! The law is not evil! But it is true that I did not really know what sin was until I learned about it in the law. For example, I did not realize that it is evil to desire what is not yours until I learned that the law says, "You must not desire what is not yours." ⁸ And because of what that commandment stated, my sinful desire to have things that belong to others caused me to covet in many ways. But where there is no law, there is no sin. ⁹ Formerly, when I did not know what God's law required, I used to sin without worrying about what I was doing. But when I became aware that God had given us his law, I suddenly realized that I was sinning, ¹⁰ and I realized that I was apart from God. The law that was supposed to allow me to live forever, if I obeyed it, was leading me to die instead. ¹¹ When I wanted to sin, I thought that I would live forever if I obeyed the law enough. But I was mistaken: I thought I could keep sinning at the same time. In fact, God was going to separate me from him forever because I did not truly obey the law. ¹² So we know that the law that God gave to Moses is perfectly good. Everything that God commands us to do is also without fault, just, and good.

¹³ Could we say then that the law that God gave Moses, which is good, drove us away from God! Certainly it did not do that! But instead, the law, which is good, made me want to sin. I knew that as a result, I was far away from God. And also, because I learned what God had commanded, I knew that what I was doing was truly sinful.

¹⁴ We know that the law came from God and changes our attitude. But I am a person whose attitude tends toward sin. It is as though I had been forced to become a slave of my desire to sin — I had to do whatever my desires told me to do. ¹⁵ The things that I do, I often do not understand. That is, sometimes it is the good things that I want to do that I do not do. And sometimes it is the evil things that I detest that I do. ¹⁶ Since I do the evil things that I do not want to do, I agree that the law of God directs me in the right way. ¹⁷ So, it is not because I wish to sin that I sin. Instead, I sin because the desire to sin causes me to sin. ¹⁸ I know that when I follow my own attitude I can do nothing good. I know this because I want to do what is good, but I do not do what is good. ¹⁹ I do not do the good things that I want to do. Instead, it is evil things that I do not want to do that I do. ²⁰ When I do evil things that I do not want to do, it is not that really I do those things. Instead, my attitude that favors sin is making me sin. ²¹ I find, then, that what always happens is that when I want to do what is good, there is an evil desire present within me that prevents me from doing good. ²² In my new attitude I am very happy about the law of God. ²³ Nevertheless, I sense that there is a different power that is in my body. It is opposed to what with my mind I desire to do, and it makes me do what my old sinful attitude wants me to do. ²⁴ When I consider this, I feel that I am a very wretched person. I want someone

to set me free from the control of what my body desires, in order that I might not be separated from God. ²⁵ I thank God that it is by Jesus Christ our Lord that he sets us free from the control of what our bodies desire. So with our minds, I on the one hand want to obey God's law. But also, I often let our sinful desires control me because of my old sinful attitude.

Chapter 8

¹ So God will not condemn and punish those who are joined to Christ Jesus. ² God's Spirit causes us to live in a new way because we are joined to Christ Jesus. In this way, I no longer have to sin when I think about sinning, and I will no more be separated from God. ³ We tried to obey God's law in order to live with God, but it was useless to think that we could—we could not stop sinning. So God helped us instead: He sent his own Son into the world in order that his Son might atone for our sin. His Son came having a body that was like the body of us who sin. His Son came to offer himself as a sacrifice for our sin. When he did this, he also showed that our sins are truly wicked, and that anyone who sins deserves to be punished. ⁴ So we can now fulfill all that God required in his law. We do this, not by our acting the way our old evil attitude desires, but instead by living as God's Spirit desires us to live. ⁵ People who live by their evil attitudes think about pay attention to those attitudes. But people who live by what God's Spirit wants think about the things of the Spirit instead. ⁶ Those who think about and are concerned about what their evil attitude desires will not live forever. But those who want what God's Spirit desires will live forever and have peace. ⁷ Let me explain this. To the extent that people want what their evil at-

titude desires, they are acting contrary to God. They do not obey his law. In fact, they are not even able to obey his law. ⁸ The people who do what their evil attitude tells them cannot please God. ⁹ But we do not have to let our old evil nature control us. Instead, we can let God's Spirit control us, because he lives within us. If the Spirit who comes from Christ does not live in people, they do not belong to Christ. ¹⁰ But since Christ is living in you by his Spirit, God views your bodies as dead, so you no longer have to sin. And he views your spirits as alive, because he has put you right with himself. ¹¹ God caused Jesus to live again after he died. And because his Spirit lives in you, God will also make your bodies, which now are sure to die, live again. He caused Christ to live again after he died, and he will make you live again by causing his Spirit to do it.

¹² Therefore, my fellow believers, we are obligated live as the Spirit directs us. What we are not obligated to live as our old evil nature wants us to. ¹³ If you do what your old evil nature wants, you will surely not live forever with God. But if the Spirit stops you from doing those things, then you will live forever.

¹⁴ We who obey the Spirit of God are God's children. ¹⁵ This is because you have not received a spirit who makes you live in fear. You are not like slaves who fear their masters. On the contrary, God has give you his Spirit, and his Spirit has made us God's children. The Spirit now enables us to cry out to God, "You are my Father!" ¹⁶ The Spirit himself confirms what our spirits say, that we are God's children. ¹⁷ Because we are God's children, we also will one day receive what God has promised us. And we will receive this together with Christ. But we must suffer for doing good as Christ did, in order that God may honor us.

¹⁸ I think that what we suffer during the present time is not worth paying attention to, because the future splendor that God will reveal to us will be so great. ¹⁹ The things that God has created are very eagerly waiting for the time when he will reveal who his true children are. ²⁰ God caused the things that he created to be unable to achieve what he had intended. That was not because they wanted to fail. On the contrary, God made them that way because he was certain ²¹ that the things he created will one day no longer die, decay, and fall apart. He will free these things from that, in order that he can do the same wonderful things for these things that he will do for his children. ²² We know that until now it is as though all things that God created have been groaning together, and they want him to do those same wonderful things for them. But now it is just like a woman who is having the pains that come before she gives birth to a child. ²³ Not only do those things groan, but we ourselves also groan inwardly. We who have God's Spirit, who is like a partial gift we have received as we wait for everything that God will give us, we groan inwardly. We groan while we wait eagerly for the time when we will receive our full rights as God's adopted children. That will include his freeing our bodies from the things that hinder us on earth. He will do this by giving us new bodies. ²⁴ For God saved us because we had confidence in him. If we had now the things for which we have been waiting, we would not need to wait for them any longer. After all, if you possess something that you have been expecting to get, you certainly do not need to wait for it any longer. ²⁵ But because we keep waiting expectantly to receive what we do not yet have, we wait for it eagerly and patiently.

²⁶ Similarly, God's Spirit helps us when we are weak. We do not know what is

proper for us to pray. But God's Spirit knows; as he prays for us, he groans in a way that cannot be expressed in words. ²⁷ God, who examines our inner attitude and mind, understands what his Spirit desires. His Spirit prays for us who belong to God exactly as God wants him to pray.

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God, he works out all things that happen to them in a way that does us good. He does this for those whom he has chosen, because that was what he planned to do. ²⁹ God knew previously that we would believe in him. We are those who God also decided previously would have a character like his Son's character. The result is that Christ is God's firstborn Son, and those who are God's children are the many younger brothers of Jesus. ³⁰ And the ones God decided previously who would be like his Son, he also called them to be with him. And the ones he called to be with him, he also made them to be right with himself. And to the ones whom he has put right with himself, he also will give them honor.

³¹ So I will tell you what we must learn from all these things that God does for us. Because God is acting on our behalf, no one can win against us! ³² God did not spare even his very own Son. Instead, he turned him over to others to cruelly kill him in order that all we who believe in him may benefit from his dying for us. Because God did that, he will also certainly give us freely everything that we need to live for him. ³³ No one can accuse us before God of doing wrong, for he has chosen us to belong to him. He is the one who has put us right with himself. ³⁴ No one can condemn us any longer. Christ is the one who died for us—and more than that, he also was raised from the dead—and he is ruling with God in the place of honor, and he is the one who is pleading

for us. ³⁵ Absolutely no one and nothing can cause Christ to stop loving us! Even if someone afflicts us, or even someone harms us, or even if we have nothing to eat, or even if we do not have enough clothes, or even if we live in a dangerous situation, or even if someone will kill us. ³⁶ Such things may happen to us, just as it is written that David said to God, “Because we are your people, others repeatedly attempt to kill us. They consider that we are only people to be killed, like a butcher considers that sheep are only animals to be slaughtered.” ³⁷ But even though all these bad things happen to us, we win completely over these things because Christ, who loves us, helps us. ³⁸ I am completely convinced that neither anything from the realm of the dead, nor what happens to us while we live, nor angels, nor demons, nor present events, nor future events, nor powerful beings, ³⁹ nor powerful beings in the sky or below it, nor anything else that God has created can cause God to stop loving us. God showed us that he loves us by sending Jesus Christ our Lord to die for us.

Chapter 9

¹ Because I am joined to Christ, I will tell you the truth. I am not lying! My conscience confirms what I say because the Holy Spirit controls me. ² I tell you that I grieve very greatly and deeply about my fellow Israelites. ³ I personally would be willing to let God curse me and, keep me apart from Christ forever if that would help my fellow Israelites, my natural kinsmen, to believe in Christ. ⁴ They, like me, are Israelites. God chose them to be his children. It is to them that he showed how wonderful he is. It is with them that he made the covenants. It is to them that he gave the law. They are the ones who have

the worship of God. They are the ones to whom God promised many things. ⁵ It was our ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whom God chose to begin our nation. And, most importantly, it was from us Israelites that the Christ was born as a human being. He is God, the one who is worthy that we praise him forever! This is true!

⁶ God promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that their descendants would all inherit his blessings. But although most of my fellow Israelites have rejected Christ, that does not prove that God has failed to do the things that he promised. For it is not all people who are descended from Jacob and who call themselves the people of Israel whom God considers to be truly his people. ⁷ And it is also not all of Abraham’s natural descendants that God considers to be Abraham’s true descendants. Instead, God considers only some of them to be Abraham’s true descendants. This agrees with what he told Abraham: “It is Isaac, not any of your other sons, whom I will consider to be the true father of your descendants.” ⁸ What I mean is, not all of Abraham’s descendants are the people that God accepts as his own children. Instead, only the people that God had in mind when he promised to give Abraham descendants—it is these people whom he considers to be Abraham’s true descendants and his own children. ⁹ This is what God promised Abraham: “About this time next year I will come back to you, and Sarah your wife will bear a son.” God promised this, and he made it happen. ¹⁰ It was similar with Rebecca, the wife of Isaac, Abraham’s son, when Rebecca conceived twins. ¹¹ Before the twins, Jacob and Esau, were born, ¹² the children had not yet done anything good or bad, God said to Rebecca, “The older one will serve the younger one, contrary to normal custom.” God said this in order that we might know this: That when he plans to do some-

thing, he chooses the people because he wants to choose them, not because they have done anything for him. ¹³ It is just what God said in the scriptures: "I chose Jacob, the younger son. I rejected Esau, the older son."

¹⁴ Someone might ask me, "Is God unjust by choosing only certain people?" I would reply, "He is certainly not unjust!"

¹⁵ God told Moses, "I will pity and help anyone whom I choose!" ¹⁶ So God chooses people, not because they want God to choose them or because they try hard to please him. Instead, he chooses people because he himself has mercy on undeserving ones. ¹⁷ Moses recorded that God had told Pharaoh, "This is why I made you king of Egypt: It was so I might fight against you and everyone in the world will help others respect my reputation."

¹⁸ So we know that God kindly helps the ones he wants to act kindly toward. And we also know that he makes stubborn anyone who he wants to be stubborn, such as Pharaoh.

¹⁹ Maybe one of you will say to me, "Because God determines ahead of time everything that people do and no one can resist what God has wished, it is not right for God to punish those who sin." ²⁰ I would reply, "You are only a human being, so you have no right to criticize God! He is like a man who makes clay pots. A pot has no right to ask its maker, 'Why did you make me like this?'" ²¹ Instead, the potter certainly has the right to take a lump of clay and use part of it to make a beautiful pot that people will value highly—and then use the rest of the clay for a pot that someone will use every day. Certainly God has the same right. ²² Although God desires to show that he is angry about sin, and although he desires to make clear that he can powerfully punish people who have sinned, he tolerated very

patiently the people who caused him to be angry and who deserved to be destroyed. ²³ God has been patient in order that he might make clear how very wonderfully he acts toward those upon whom he has mercy, whom he prepared ahead of time in order that they might live with him. ²⁴ That means us whom he chose—not only us Jews, but also non-Jews. ²⁵ God has the right to choose from among both Jews and non-Jews, as the prophet Hosea wrote:

"Many people who were not my people—I will say they are my people."

Many people whom I did not love before, I will say that I now love them."

²⁶ And another prophet wrote: "Where God told them before, 'You are not my people,'

in those same places they are told that they will become children of the true God."

²⁷ Isaiah also exclaimed concerning the Israelites: "Even though the Israelites are so many that no one can count them, like sand particles beside the ocean, only a small part of them will be saved, ²⁸ because the Lord will punish completely and speedily the people who live in that land, as he said that he would do."

²⁹ Isaiah also wrote, "If the Lord of the heavenly armies had not mercifully allowed some of our descendants to survive, we would have become like the people of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, whom he completely destroyed."

³⁰ We must conclude this: Although the non-Jews were not trying to be holy, they discovered that God would put them right with himself if they trusted in Christ. ³¹ But the people of Israel did indeed try to be holy by obeying God's law, but they were not able to. ³² They were not able to, because they tried to do things to please God. They lost their balance when they

refused to trust God to forgive them by putting their trust in Christ. ³³ This is what a prophet said would happen: “Listen! I am placing in Israel one who is like a stone on which people will stumble. What he does will make people angry. Nevertheless, those who believe in him will not be ashamed.”

Chapter 10

¹ My fellow believers, what I greatly desire and what I pray to God earnestly for is that he will save my own people, the Jews.

² I declare truthfully about them that although they earnestly go after God, they do not understand how to go after him in the right way. ³ They do not know how God puts people right with himself. They want to put themselves right with God, so they do not accept what God wishes to do for them. ⁴ Christ has perfectly obeyed the law in order to put everyone who believes in him right with God. So the law is no longer necessary.

⁵ Moses wrote about people who tried to obey all of God’s laws: “It is the people who have done perfectly the things that the law requires who will live forever.” ⁶ But those whom God puts right with himself because they trust in Christ—to them Moses says, “No one should try to go to heaven,” that is, in order to bring Christ down to us. ⁷ Moses also says this to them: “No one should try to go down to where the dead are,” that is, in order to bring Christ back from the dead for us. ⁸ But instead, those who believe in Christ can say what Moses wrote: “You can find out about God’s message very easily. You can speak about it and think about it.” This is the message that we proclaim: People must believe in Christ. ⁹ This message is that if anyone of you confirms that Jesus

is Lord, and if you truly believe that God raised him from the dead, he will save you.

¹⁰ If people believe these things, God will put them right with himself. And for those who state publicly that Jesus is Lord—God will save them. ¹¹ It is written in the scriptures about the Christ, “Whoever believes in him will not be disappointed or ashamed.” ¹² In this way, God treats the Jews and the non-Jews the same. Because he is the same Lord for all people who believe in him, he greatly helps all who ask him to help them. ¹³ This is just like what the scriptures say: “The Lord God will save all those who ask him.”

¹⁴ Most people have certainly not believed in Christ, and some people might try to explain why they have not done so. They might say, “People certainly cannot ask Christ to help them if they have not first believed in him! And they certainly cannot believe in him if they have not heard about him! And they certainly cannot hear about him if someone does not preach to them about him!” ¹⁵ And those who could preach to them about Christ, certainly cannot do so if God does not send them. But if some believers preached to them, it would be just like the scriptures say: “It is wonderful when people come and bring good news!” ¹⁶ I would reply in this way to those who say such things: God has indeed sent people to preach the message about Christ. But not all the people of Israel have paid attention to the good news! It is like what Isaiah said when he felt very discouraged: “Lord, it seems as if hardly anyone believed what they heard us preach!” ¹⁷ So then, I tell you that people are believing in Christ because they hear about him, and people are hearing the message because others are preaching about Christ!

¹⁸ But if someone said to those people, “Of course the Israelites have heard this mes-

sage,” I would say, “Yes, indeed! It is like what the scriptures say:

“The people living all over the world have seen the creation, and what it proves about who God is—even the people living in the most remote places in the world have understood this!”

¹⁹ Furthermore, it is true that the Israelites really did hear this message. They understood it, too, but they refused to believe it. Remember that Moses was the first one to warn the people like this. He told them that God said, “You think that the non-Jewish nations are not real nations at all. But some of them will believe in me, and I will bless them. Then you will envy them and be angry at them, people who you do not think understand me.” ²⁰ Remember also that God said very boldly through Isaiah, “The non-Jews who did not try to know me will surely find me! I will surely reveal what I am like to those who did not ask for me!”

²¹ But God also speaks about the Israelites. He says, “For a long time I have held out my arms to the people who disobeyed and rebelled against me, in order to invite them to return to me.”

Chapter 11

¹ If I should ask, “Has God rejected his people the Jews?” The answer would be, “Certainly not! Remember that I also belong to the people of Israel. I am a descendant of Abraham, and I belong to the tribe of Benjamin, but God has not rejected me! ² No, God has not rejected his people, whom he chose long ago to be people whom he would bless in a special way. Remember that Elijah mistakenly complained to God about the people of Israel, as the scriptures say: ³ “Lord, they have killed the

rest of your prophets, and they have destroyed your altars. I am the only one who believes in you who remains alive, and now they are trying to kill me!” ⁴ God answered him like this: “You are not the only one left who is faithful to me. I have taken care to keep for myself seven thousand men in Israel, men who have not worshiped the false god Baal.” ⁵ So, similarly, there is also at this time a leftover group of us Jews who have become believers. God has chosen us to become believers only because he acts kindly toward us, in ways that we do not deserve. ⁶ Since it is because he acts kindly toward those whom he chooses, it is not because they have done good things that he has chosen them. If God chose people because they did good deeds, then he would not need to act kindly toward them.

⁷ Since God chose only some people of Israel, this makes us know that most of the Jews failed to get what they were looking for—(although the Jews whom God chose did get it). Most of the Jews remained unwilling to understand what God was telling them. ⁸ This is exactly what the prophet Isaiah had written about: “God caused them to be stubborn. They should be able to understand the truth about Christ, but they cannot. They should obey God when he speaks, but they do not. It is like that to this very day.” ⁹ The Jews remind me of what King David said, when he asked God to cause his enemies’ senses to be dull: “Make them stupid, like animals that fall into nets or traps! May they feel as safe as if they were at their banquets, but let those feasts be times when you will catch them, and they will sin, with the result that you will destroy them.

¹⁰ May they not see the danger when it comes to them. May you always make them suffer because of their troubles.”

¹¹ If I should ask, “When the Jews sinned

by not believing in Christ, did that mean they will always be apart from God?" I would reply, "No, they have certainly not separated themselves from God permanently! Instead, because they sinned, God is saving non-Jews in order to cause the Jews to envy the way he blesses non-Jews, so that they will ask Christ to save them."

¹² When the Jews rejected Christ, the result was that God abundantly blessed the other people in the world by offering them the opportunity to believe. And when the Jews failed spiritually, the result was that God abundantly blessed the non-Jews. Since that is true, think how wonderful it will be when the complete number of the Jews whom God has chosen will believe in Christ !

¹³ Now it is to you non-Jews that I am saying what follows. I am the one who is the apostle to non-Jews such as you, and I highly value this work that God appointed me to do. ¹⁴ But I also hope that by my labors I will make my fellow Jews jealous, with the result that some of them will believe and thus be saved. ¹⁵ God has rejected most of my fellow Jews because they refused to believe, with the result that he made peace between himself and other people in the world. If that is what happened after most of the Jews rejected Christ, think about the excellent things that will happen after they trust in him. It will be like they have risen from the realm of the dead! ¹⁶ Just like the whole lump of dough will belong to God if people offer to God the bread baked from the first part of it, so the Jews will belong to God because their ancestors belonged to God. And just like the branches of a tree will belong to God if the root belongs to God, so the descendants of our great Jewish ancestors who belonged to God will also some day belong to God.

¹⁷ God has rejected many of the Jews, like

people break off dead branches of a tree. And each of you non-Jews whom God has accepted is like a branch of a uncultivated olive tree that someone spliced into the trunk of a cultivated olive tree. God has caused you to benefit from how he blessed our first Jewish ancestors, just as branches benefit from the sap from the root of a cultivated olive tree. ¹⁸ However, you non-Jews must not despise the Jews whom God rejected, even though they are like the branches that someone breaks off from the tree! If you want to boast because of how God has saved you, remember this: Branches do not feed a root. Instead, the root feeds the branches. Similarly, God has helped you because of what you have received from the Jews! You have given the Jews nothing that helps them.

¹⁹ Maybe you will say to me, "God rejected the Jews like people break bad branches off a tree and throw them away, and he has done this in order that he might accept us non-Jews, just like people put branches of a wild olive tree into the trunk of a good tree." ²⁰ I would reply that this is true. However, it is because the Jews did not believe in Christ, God rejected them. As for you, it is only because you believe in Christ that you stand strong! So do not become proud, but instead be filled with awe! ²¹ Since God did not spare those unbelieving Jews, who grew up like a tree's natural branches that came from the root, then know, if you do not believe, he will not spare you either!

²² Note then, that God acts kindly, but he also acts severely. He has acted severely toward the Jews who have refused to trust in Christ. God has acted kindly toward you, but he will act severely if you do not keep trusting in Christ. ²³ And if the Jews believe in Christ, God will also put them back into the tree again, because God is able to do that. ²⁴ You non-Jews who were previously apart from God have benefited

from the ways in which God blessed the Jews. That is like taking branches that someone has cut from a wild olive tree—a tree that just grew without anyone planting it— and, contrary to what people usually do, splicing them into a cultivated olive tree. So God will much more readily receive back the Jews because they belonged to him before! That will be like putting the original branches that someone cut off, back into the olive tree to which they originally belonged!

²⁵ My non-Jewish fellow believers, I certainly want you to understand this secret truth, so that you do not think you know everything: Many people of Israel will continue to be stubborn until all the non-Jews whom God has chosen have believed in Jesus. ²⁶ And then God will save all of Israel. Then these words in the scriptures will become true:

“The one who sets his people free will come from where God is among the Jews. He will forgive the sins of the Israelite people.”

²⁷ And as God says,

“The covenant that I will make with them is one by which I will forgive their sins.”

²⁸ The Jews rejected the good news about Christ and now God treats them as his enemies. But that has helped you non-Jews. But because they are the people whom God chose, God still loves them because of what he promised to do for their ancestors. ²⁹ He still loves them, because he never changed his mind about what he has promised to give them, and about how he has called them to be his own people. ³⁰ You non-Jews once disobeyed God, but now he has acted mercifully toward you because the Jews disobeyed him. ³¹ Similarly, now they have disobeyed God. The result is that in the very same way in which he acted mercifully toward you, he

will act mercifully toward them again. ³² God has declared and proved that all people, both Jews and non-Jews, have been disobedient to him. He has declared that because he wants to act mercifully toward us all.

³³ I marvel how great are the wise things that God has done and what he has always known! No one can understand them or know them fully. ³⁴ I remember the scriptures that say, “No one has ever known what the Lord thinks. No one has ever been able to give him advice.” ³⁵ And, “No one has given anything to God in a way that God had to reward him.”

³⁶ God is the one who created all things. He is also the one who sustains all things. The reason that he created them was that they might praise him. May all people honor him forever! May it be so!

Chapter 12

¹ My fellow believers, since God has acted mercifully toward you in so many ways, I appeal to all of you that you present yourselves like a sacrifice that is alive, a sacrifice that you give to God alone and that pleases him. This is the only right way to worship him. ² Do not let unbelievers guide you in how you behave. Instead, let God change your way of thinking and make it new, in order that you may know what he wants you to do, so you may know how to act in ways that please him, the ways in which he himself acts.

³ Because God has kindly appointed me to be his apostle, which I did not deserve, I say this to every one of you: Do not think you are better than you really are. Instead, think about yourselves in a sensible way, a way that is the same as the way in which God has allowed you to trust in him. ⁴ Although a person has one body,

it consists of many parts. All of the parts are necessary for the body, but they do not all function the same way. ⁵ Similarly, we, although we are many, are united into one group because we are joined to Christ, and we belong to one another. So no one should act as though he is more important than the others! ⁶ Instead, since each one of us can do different things because God makes us different from each other, we should do them eagerly and cheerfully! Those of us to whom God gives messages for others should speak in a way that fits our trust in God. ⁷ Those whom God has enabled to serve others should do that. Those whom God has enabled to teach his truth should do that. ⁸ Those whom God has enabled to encourage others should do it wholeheartedly. Those whom God has enabled to give things to others, should do so without holding back. Those whom God has enabled to manage others should do it, and do it with care. Those whom God has enabled to help the needy should do it cheerfully.

⁹ The way you must love people is to love them sincerely! Hate what is evil! Continue to eagerly do what God considers to be good! ¹⁰ Love one another as members of the same family do; and in regard to honoring one another, you should be the first ones to do it! ¹¹ Do not be lazy. Instead, be eager to serve God! Be enthusiastic as you serve the Lord! ¹² Rejoice because you are confidently awaiting what God will do for you! When you suffer, be patient! Keep praying and never give up! ¹³ If any of God's people lacks anything, share with them what you have! Be creative in hosting others! ¹⁴ Ask God to be kind to those who persecute you because you believe in Jesus! Ask him to be kind to them; do not ask him to cause bad things to happen to them. ¹⁵ If they are joyful, you should rejoice with them! If they are sad, you should be sad with them! ¹⁶ De-

sire for others what you desire for yourselves. Do not be proud in how you think; instead, be friends with people who seem unimportant. Do not consider yourselves wise. ¹⁷ Do not do evil deeds to anyone who has done evil to you. Act in a way that all people will know is good! ¹⁸ Live peacefully with other people whenever it is possible, to the extent that you can control the situation.

¹⁹ My fellow believers whom I love, do not do evil in return when people do evil to you! Instead, allow God to punish them. The scriptures say, "I will pay back those who do evil. It is my right to pay them back," says the Lord." ²⁰ Instead of doing evil to those who have done evil to you, do as the scriptures teach: "If your enemies are hungry, feed them! If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. By doing that, you will cause them to feel the pain of shame and perhaps they will change their attitude toward you." ²¹ Do not let evil deeds that others have done to you overcome you. Instead, do for them better than what they have done to you!

Chapter 13

¹ Every believer must obey the government officials. Remember that God is the only one who gives officials their authority. Furthermore, those officials that exist are ones who have been appointed by God. ² So whoever resists the officials is resisting what God has established. Furthermore, those who resist officials will cause the officials to punish them. ³ I say this, because rulers do not cause people who do good deeds to be afraid. Instead, they cause people who do evil to be afraid. So if any of you do good, they will praise you instead of punishing you! ⁴ All officials exist in order to serve God, in order that they

may help each of you. If any of you does what is evil, of course you should be afraid of them. The officials exist to serve God by punishing those who do evil. ⁵ So, it is necessary for you to obey the officials, not only because they will punish you if you disobey them, but also because you know within yourselves that you should be subject to them! ⁶ It is for this reason that you also pay taxes, because the officials are ones who serve God as they continually do their work. ⁷ Give to all the officials what you are supposed to give to them! Pay taxes to those who require that you pay taxes. Pay duties on goods to those who require that you pay those duties. Respect those whom you ought to respect. Honor those whom you ought to honor.

⁸ Pay all of your debts when you are supposed to pay them. The only thing that is like a debt that you should never stop paying is to love one another. Whoever loves others has fulfilled all that God requires in his law. ⁹ There are many things that God has commanded in his law, such as do not commit adultery, do not murder anyone, do not steal, and do not desire anything that belongs to someone else. But we can sum up the meaning of all the law in this sentence: "Love your neighbor as you love yourself." ¹⁰ If you love everyone around you, you will harm no one. So whoever loves others fulfills all that God's law requires.

¹¹ Do what I have just told you, especially since you know how important is the time in which we are now living. You know that it is time for you to be fully alert and active, like people who have awakened from sleeping, because the time when Christ will finally deliver us from this world's sin and sorrow is near. That time is closer now than when we first believed in Christ. ¹² Our time to live in this world

is almost ended, like a night that is nearly ended. The time when Christ will return is near. So we must stop doing the wicked deeds that people like to do at night, and we must be doing the things that will help us resist evil, as soldiers who put on their armor in the daytime get ready to resist their enemies. ¹³ We must behave properly, as though the time when Christ will return were already here. We must not get drunk and do evil things with others. We must not commit any kind of sexual immorality or wild sensual behavior. We must not quarrel. We must not be jealous of other people. ¹⁴ On the contrary, we should be like the Lord Jesus Christ so that others will see what he is like. You should stop wanting to do the things that your old evil nature wants to do.

Chapter 14

¹ Accept those who are not sure whether God will permit them to do certain things some people think are wrong. But when you accept them, do not argue with them about what they think. These questions are only personal opinions. ² Some people believe that they may eat all kinds of food. Others believe that God does not want them to eat certain things, so they believe that they may eat only vegetables. ³ Anyone who thinks that it is all right to eat all kinds of food must not despise those who do not think that. Anyone who thinks it is not all right to eat all kinds of food must not condemn those who think differently, because God himself has accepted those people. ⁴ You are wrong when you evaluate somebody else's servant. We are all God's servants so God is the master of us all. He is the one who will decide whether those people have done wrong! No one should judge another in this regard, because he is able to keep them faith-

ful to him.

⁵ Some people regard certain days as more holy than other days. Other people regard all days as equally suitable for worshiping God. Each person should be fully convinced about such matters, thinking and deciding for himself and not for others. ⁶ As for those who believe that they should worship on a certain day of the week, it is to honor the Lord that they worship on that day. And as for those who think that it is all right to eat all kinds of food, it is to honor the Lord that they eat those foods, because they thank God for their food. As for those who abstain from eating certain kinds of food, it is to honor the Lord that they do not eat those foods, and they also thank God for the food that they do eat. So these people are not wrong, even though they think differently. ⁷ None of us should live merely to please ourselves, and none of us should think that when we die, it affects only us. ⁸ While we live, it is the Lord whom we belong to and should be trying to please, and not just ourselves. And when we die, it is the Lord whom we should be trying to please. So, while we live and also when we die, we should try to please the Lord, for we belong to him. ⁹ For Christ died and became alive again in order that he might be Lord whom all people should obey, both those alive and those who are dead.

¹⁰ It is disgraceful that you who obey certain rules say that God will punish your fellow believers who do not obey them. For God will judge each one of us. ¹¹ We know this because it is written in the scriptures:

“Everyone will bow down before me!

And everyone will praise me.”

¹² So we will each have to tell God what we have done and let him decide whether or not he approves of it.

¹³ Since it is God who will judge everyone, we must stop saying that God should punish some of our fellow believers! Instead, you must be determined to never cause another brother or sister to sin or to stop trusting Christ. ¹⁴ Because I am joined to the Lord Jesus, I am absolutely certain that there is nothing that by itself is wrong to eat. But if people think it is wrong to eat something, then for them it is wrong to eat it. So you should not encourage them to eat it. ¹⁵ If you eat food that a fellow believer thinks is wrong to eat, you might cause him to stop obeying God. You would no longer be loving him. Do not cause any fellow believer to stop trusting in Christ. After all, Christ died for him, too! ¹⁶ Similarly, do not do something that fellow believers would call bad, even if you think it is good. ¹⁷ When God rules how we live, we do not worry about what we eat and drink. Instead, we think about how what is the right way to obey him, have peace with each other, and rejoice because of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ Those who serve Christ by acting in such ways please God, and others will also respect them.

¹⁹ So we should always eagerly try to live in a way that will cause peace among fellow Christians, and we should try to do what will help each other to trust and obey Christ. ²⁰ Do not destroy how God has helped any believer just because you want to eat a certain kind of food. It is true that God allows us to eat every kind of food. But if you eat something that another believer thinks is wrong, then you are encouraging him to do what he thinks is wrong. ²¹ It is good neither to eat meat nor to drink wine, nor to do anything else at any time if it will cause one of your fellow believers to stop trusting in God. ²² Let God tell you what things are right for you to do, but do not try to force others to accept what you believe. And you will

please God if you have no doubts about your convictions about what is right and wrong to do. ²³ But some believers fear that God will not be pleased if they eat certain kinds of food. And indeed, he will say that they have done wrong, if they do not do what they believe to be right. If we do anything without being certain that God approves of it, we are sinning.

Chapter 15

¹ Those of us believers who are sure that God allows us to do many more things than other believers think he allows them to do—we should be patient with them and allow them to inconvenience us. This is more important than our pleasing ourselves. ² Each of us should do the things that please our fellow believers, and things that will help them, things that will encourage them to trust in Christ. ³ We should please our fellow believers, since Christ has set us an example. He did not do things to please himself. On the contrary, he tried to please God even when others insulted him. That was as the scriptures say: “When people insulted you, it was as though they were also insulting me.” ⁴ Remember that all the things written in the scriptures are there to teach us, so that we may become patient in hardship. In this way the scriptures will encourage us to expect that God will do for us everything that he has promised.

⁵ I pray that God give you patience and encouragement so that you all live in peace with each other, doing as Christ Jesus did. ⁶ If you do this, you all will be praising God together, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁷ So I say to all of you believers at Rome, accept each other. If you do that, people will praise God as they see you behave like

Christ. Accept each other just like Christ accepted you! ⁸ I want you to remember that Christ helped us Jews to know the truth about God. That is, he came to make come true everything that God had promised our ancestors that he would do. ⁹ But he also came to help the non-Jews, so they would praise God for his mercy. God’s mercy has produced what is written in the scriptures that David said to God: “So I will praise you among the non-Jews; I will sing and praise you.” ¹⁰ Moses also wrote, “You non-Jews, rejoice with us who are God’s people.” ¹¹ And David wrote in the scriptures, “Praise the Lord, all you non-Jews; may everyone praise him.” ¹² And Isaiah wrote in the scriptures, “There will be a descendant of King David who will rule over the non-Jews. They will confidently expect him to fulfill what he has promised.”

¹³ I pray that God cause you to be confidently expecting him to do what he has promised. I pray that he will cause you to be completely joyful and peaceful as you trust in him. The Holy Spirit will enable you to more and more confidently expect to receive what God has promised you.

¹⁴ My fellow believers, I myself am completely sure that you yourselves have acted toward others in a completely good way. You have done that because you have known completely all that God wants you to know and because you are able to teach each other. ¹⁵ However, I have written to you quite openly in this letter about some things in order to remind you about them. I have written this because God has made me an apostle, although I did not deserve this. ¹⁶ He did this in order that I should work for Jesus Christ among the non-Jews. God has appointed me to act like a priest as I proclaim his good news in order that he may accept the non-Jews who believe in Christ. They will

be like an offering that the Holy Spirit has set completely apart for God only.

¹⁷ It follows that, because of my relationship with Christ Jesus, I am happy about my work for God. ¹⁸ I will speak boldly only about the work that Christ has accomplished through me that non-Jews might pay attention to the message about Christ. These accomplishments came because of words and deeds ¹⁹ by showing signs and other things that convince people. I have done those things God's Spirit has enabled me. In this way I have traveled all the way around from Jerusalem to the province of Illyricum, and I have completed my work of proclaiming the message about Christ in those places. ²⁰ As I proclaim that message, I am always eagerly trying to proclaim it in places where people have not already heard about Christ. I do that in order that I might not be simply continuing the work that someone else already started. I do not want to be like a man who builds a house on someone else's foundation. ²¹ On the contrary, I teach non-Jews, so that what happens may be like what was written: "The people who have never heard any news about the Christ, they will see him. Those who have never heard of him will understand about him."

²² Because I have attempted to preach the message about Christ in places where they have not heard about him, I have been stopped many times from coming to visit you. ²³ But now there are no more places in these regions where people have not heard about Christ. Furthermore, for several years I have wanted to visit you. ²⁴ So I hope to go to Spain, and I hope that you will help me on my journey. And I would like to pause on my journey for a while in order to enjoy being with you. ²⁵ But I cannot visit you now, because I am about to go to Jerusalem in order to take money for God's people there. ²⁶ The believers

in the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia decided to contribute money to help the believers in Jerusalem, God's own people, who are poor. ²⁷ They themselves decided to do this, but truly they owe something to God's people in Jerusalem. The non-Jewish believers benefited spiritually from Jewish believers because they heard the message about Christ from them, so the non-Jews should also help the Jewish believers in Jerusalem by giving them material things. ²⁸ When I finish this task of delivering all this money that the believers in Macedonia and Achaia have given, I will leave Jerusalem and visit you in Rome while I am on my way to Spain. ²⁹ And I know that when I visit you, Christ will abundantly bless us.

³⁰ Because we belong to our Lord Jesus Christ and because the Spirit of God causes us to love each other, I urge you all that you help me by fervently praying to God for me. ³¹ Pray that God will protect me from the unbelieving Jews while I am in Judea. And pray that the believers in Jerusalem will be glad to receive the money that I am bringing them. ³² Pray these things in order that God may be pleased for me to come to you, and that I may be able to rest among you—and you rest with me—for a while. ³³ I pray that God, who causes us to have peace, will be with all of you and will help you. May it be so!

Chapter 16

¹ By means of this letter I am introducing and recommending to you our fellow believer Phoebe, who will be taking this letter to you. She is a servant in the assembly in the city of Cenchrea. ² I request that you receive her because you are all joined to the Lord. You should do that because

God's people ought to welcome their fellow believers. I am also requesting that you help her by giving her whatever she needs, because she has helped many people, including me.

³ Tell Priscilla and her husband Aquila that I send greetings to them. They worked with me for Christ Jesus, ⁴ and they were even willing to die for me. I thank them, and the non-Jewish congregations also thank them for saving my life. ⁵ Also tell the congregation that meets in their house that I send my greetings to them. Tell my dear friend Epaenetus the same thing. He is the first man in the province of Asia to believe in Christ. ⁶ Tell Mary, who has worked hard for Christ in order to help you, that I send my greetings to her. ⁷ Tell the same thing to Andronicus and his wife Junia, fellow Jews, who were in prison with me. They are well known among the apostles, and they became Christians before I did. ⁸ I also send my greetings to Ampliatus, who is a dear friend and is joined to the Lord. ⁹ I also send my greetings to Urbanus, who works for Christ with us, and to my dear friend Stachys. ¹⁰ I also send my greetings to Apelles, of whom Christ has approved because he successfully endured trials. Tell the believers who live in the house of Aristobulus that I send my greetings to them. ¹¹ Also tell Herodion, who is my fellow Jew, that I send my greetings to him. Tell the same thing to those who live in the house of Narcissus, those who belong to the Lord. ¹² Tell the same thing to Tryphaena and her sister Tryphosa, who work hard for the Lord. I also send my greetings to Persis. We all love her, and she has worked very hard for the Lord. ¹³ Tell Rufus, who is an outstanding Christian, that I send my greetings to him. Tell the same thing to his mother, who has treated me as though I were her son. ¹⁴ Tell Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the

fellow believers who meet with them that I am sending my greetings to them. ¹⁵ I also send my greetings to Philologus, to his wife Julia, to Nereus and his sister, and to Olympas, and to all God's people who meet with them. ¹⁶ Greet one another affectionately in a pure way, when you gather together. The believers in all the assemblies joined to Christ greet you.

¹⁷ My fellow believers, I tell you that you must be careful about the people who are causing divisions among you and who cause people to stop honoring God. Keep away from such people! ¹⁸ They do not serve our Lord Christ! On the contrary, they only want to satisfy their own desires. They deceive the people using smooth talk and praise so the people do not realize that these troublemakers are teaching false things. ¹⁹ Believers everywhere know that you have obeyed what Christ says in the good news. So I rejoice about you. But I also want you to be smart enough to recognize what is good and stay away from what is evil. ²⁰ If you do all these things, God, who gives us his peace, will soon smash the work of Satan because of your authority! I pray that our Lord Jesus will continue to act kindly toward you.

²¹ Timothy, who works with me, and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, who are my fellow Jews, want you to know that they are sending their greetings to you. ²² I, Tertius, one who belongs to the Lord, also want you to know that I am sending my greetings to you. I am writing down this letter as Paul tells me what to write. ²³⁻²⁴ I, Paul, am staying in the house of Gaius, and the whole assembly here meets in his house. He also wants you to know that he is sending his greetings to you. Erastus, who manages the city's money, sends his greetings to you also, along with our brother Quartus.

²⁵ Now to God, the one who is able to strengthen you spiritually by my proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ that God did not reveal in any age before our own time — ²⁶ but now God has made it known by means of what the scriptures said would happen — so that people in all the people groups in the world may believe in Christ and obey him. ²⁷ May God, who alone is wise, be praised forever, because of what Jesus Christ has done for us. May it be so!

1 CORINTHIANS

Chapter 1

¹ I, Paul, am writing this letter. Sosthenes, our fellow believer, is with me as I write this letter to you. God appointed me to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and God chose me to serve him. ² This letter is to the church of God in Corinth, to those whom Christ Jesus has set apart for God, with everyone else—everywhere—who calls on God to save them in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.

³ May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ love you and give you peace.

⁴ I thank my God every day for you because of the many costly gifts that Christ Jesus has given to you because he loves you. ⁵ Christ has given you so many things. He helped you in all your speaking and in all your knowledge. ⁶ You yourselves are the proof that these statements about Christ are true. ⁷ That is the reason you do not lack any gift from the Spirit of God while you wait for the day when God will make the Lord Jesus Christ known and will show him to everyone. ⁸ God will also make you strong so you can serve him to the very end, so you will bring no shame upon yourselves on the day that our Lord Jesus Christ returns to earth. ⁹ God is keeping his promise to do that. God called you, so you can know and love his Son, Jesus Christ, who is our Lord.

¹⁰ My brothers and sisters, I beg you by the authority of Jesus, that you come to an agreement and that you settle your disagreements, and that you no longer divide yourselves into groups. Learn to see things from the same point of view and to work together to accomplish the same task. ¹¹ Those in Chloe's house have re-

ported to me that there are divisions and disagreements among some of you. ¹² This is the problem. Each of you claims to have loyalty to one leader or another. One says, "I am loyal to Paul." Another says, "I am loyal to Apollos." Someone else says, "I am loyal to Peter." And the last one says, "But I am loyal to Christ." ¹³ But Christ does not divide his loyalty. Paul was not crucified for you. The person who baptized you did not baptize you in the name of Paul. ¹⁴ I thank God that I baptized only a few people there; among them I baptized Crispus and Gaius. ¹⁵ It would not be true that I baptized them in my name. ¹⁶ (Now I remember that I also baptized the household of Stephanas, but other than those people, I do not remember baptizing anyone else in Corinth.) ¹⁷ The most important work Christ sent me to do was to tell everyone the good news about him, not to baptize people. I did not proclaim the good news using human wisdom or clever words so instead I could use the power of the work of Christ dying on the cross.

¹⁸ For those who are dead to the things of God cannot understand him. Christ died for them on the cross, but this message is pointless to them. However, for those of us whom God has rescued and brought to life, this message allows God to powerfully work in us. ¹⁹ A prophet wrote in the scriptures:

"The wisdom of those who think they are wise,

I will destroy,

and I will make the brilliant plans of the intelligent

to be utter failures."

²⁰ Where are the wise people of this world? They did not understand anything about God. Neither did the scholars, nor those skilled in debate. For God

has shown that everything they call wisdom is really foolishness. ²¹ In the wisdom of God, unbelievers did not come to know God by their own wisdom. So God was pleased to use a message that they thought was foolish. That is message we proclaimed and it had power to save all who believe it. ²² The Jews wanted public displays of miraculous power before they would follow anyone. The Greeks are looking for wisdom through new and fresh ways of thinking about spiritual ideas. ²³ But we proclaim a message about Christ, who died on a cross. For the Jews this message about the cross of Christ is something they cannot receive because death on a cross brings a curse with it. To the Greeks it is too foolish to deserve their attention. ²⁴ But for us, we whom God called so we can know him, that message shows that God acted powerfully and wisely by sending Christ to die for us. The good news is not tied to any race or philosophy; in Christ there is no distinction between Jews and all the other nations and races on earth. ²⁵ For the things of God that appears foolish are really wiser than the most brilliant ideas human beings can imagine. And the things of God that appear weakest are stronger than the strongest and greatest human being who ever lived.

²⁶ Brothers and sisters, look at the kind of person you were when God called you. See how unimportant you were. You were not the wisest of people. You were not important enough for people to obey you. You had no important ancestors. ²⁷ Instead, God chose the things that made no sense to unbelievers so that they would stop praising themselves. God chose to use things that were weak to put to shame the things they believed were so strong. ²⁸ God chose what the unbelievers think is of no importance in order to show that the things they consider to be important have

no value. ²⁹ God did this so that no human being could have any reason to praise himself and he should offer God all praise instead. ³⁰ Because of what God has done, you are now joined to Christ Jesus, who has made clear to us how wise God is. He has put us right with God, he has set us apart for God, and he has rescued us and brought us to safety. ³¹ So, as the scriptures say:

“The one who praises himself should praise himself only in what the Lord has done for him.”

Chapter 2

¹ When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not make beautiful speeches, nor did I repeat to you the things that wise men said. I told you the hidden truths about God. ² I decided not to talk to you about anything other than Jesus Christ and his death on the cross. ³ You know how weak I was when I was with you. You know that fear filled my heart, and that you saw me trembling in terror. ⁴ But you heard my message, and you know that when I spoke to you I did not give carefully planned speeches. Instead, the Spirit of God showed you that I was speaking the truth because of the power of the miracles he did through me. ⁵ I taught this way so you might trust in God because of his power, and not because of anything having to do with human wisdom.

⁶ Now it is to those who trust fully in Christ that we speak. You now have wisdom, and that wisdom has nothing to do with the kings and governors in this life, all of whom will soon pass away. ⁷ No, we proclaim wisdom that God has kept hidden until now; that wisdom is the wise things God decided to do before he created the world, and he decided to do those things

so that he and other beings would someday honor us. ⁸ None of those who rule this world knew about God's wise plans. If they had understood them, they never would have nailed the Lord, the one who is so very great, to the cross. ⁹ But in the scriptures it says:

"The things that no one has seen,
that no one has heard,
and that no one could imagine—

these are what God has prepared for those who love him."

¹⁰ These are the very things that God has shown us by the Spirit. For the Spirit sees everything and he knows everything. He even knows the deepest and hidden secrets that only God knows about himself.

¹¹ No one except the spirit of the person knows what he is thinking. So it is that no one knows the hidden things of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² The Spirit that God gave us is not a spirit that comes from this world. We received the Spirit who comes from God. This Spirit helps us understand all the gifts God freely gives to us. ¹³ We teach these lessons that people schooled in the wisdom of this world cannot understand. These lessons are taught only by the Spirit of God. He helps us understand what these lessons mean. ¹⁴ The one who does not know God cannot accept these spiritual lessons. To him they sound like the lessons of fools. Even if he wanted to accept them, he would be unable to, because only people who have the wisdom that comes from God can understand these things. ¹⁵ The one who knows God evaluates all matters, but God will not accept their evaluation of him. ¹⁶ As one of our prophets wrote:

"It is impossible for anyone to know all that is in the mind of the Lord.

No one is able to teach God."

But we can know the very thoughts of Christ.

Chapter 3

¹ My brothers and sisters, when I was with you, you were not ready to hear the difficult truths about God. I could speak to you only as if you were little children who are joined to Christ. ² I taught you things that were easy to understand, as a mother feeds milk to her babies. You were not ready for solid food. And even now, you are not ready. ³ I say this because you are still acting as unbelievers even though you are Christians. I know you are not ready because many of you are jealous and quarreling with each other, and you are judging things just as if you were still unbelievers. ⁴ Some of you say you are following what I, Paul, have taught; others say they are following what Apollos has taught. You are acting the way unbelievers act.

⁵ Compared to the great work that God has done in your lives, Apollos is not important. Neither is Paul important. We are both servants, and we serve the same God in the ways that he has assigned to us. ⁶ Even though I was the first to plant the seed of God's word in you, it was Apollos who made sure you grew in faith. But it was God alone who can give spiritual growth to you. ⁷ Let me say it again: The ones who plant the seeds and water them, we do not matter in the least. God is the one who gives the growth. You are like a garden that he has planted. ⁸ The one who plants and the one who waters are working in the same job, and each one individually will receive a wage as a reward. The reward is the amount he is paid measured by how hard each one worked. ⁹ We are working together with God and we

both belong to God. But as for you, God is growing you in his field. It is as if he were constructing a building out of you.

¹⁰ God generously gave me the skills so I can do this task for him. I worked among you like an expert builder with great care. But after me, someone else will build on what I began. Everyone builds on what others did before. But each one must be careful how they build. ¹¹ For no other foundation can be laid other than the one that has already been set in place. That foundation is Jesus Christ. ¹² We are like builders who choose what to put on top of that foundation. Builders can choose to use valuable materials like gold, silver, and precious stones, or they can choose to use worthless materials like wood, hay, and straw. ¹³ God will judge our work and put on display what each of us has done for him. He will send fire to test the work we have done. That fire will prove the quality of the work that we did for him. ¹⁴ If what a person builds survives the fire that tests what he built, he will receive a reward for his work, ¹⁵ But if the fire burns up all his work, he will lose all his reward, but God can still save him, even though the flames completely devour everything he did.

¹⁶ Surely you know that you are the dwelling place where God lives, that you are his temple. Surely you know that the Spirit of God lives inside of you. ¹⁷ God promises that he will destroy anyone who attempts to destroy his temple. This is because his temple belongs to him alone. And he protects you by the same promise because you are now his temple and you belong to him alone!

¹⁸ Be on guard that you do not deceive yourselves. If any of you thinks he has great wisdom that unbelievers will admire, he should be careful. He would be far better off if he leaves alone all the things that unbelievers want, even if they

consider him a fool for doing so. When he leaves those things alone, he will begin to learn what is true wisdom. ¹⁹ What the world considers to be great wisdom is really foolishness to God. For scripture says,

“God catches the wise in their own foolish plans.”

²⁰ And again scripture teaches,

“The Lord overhears all the planning of the wise, and he knows that in the end, they will lose everything.”

²¹ So stop boasting about how good one Christian leader is or how good another Christian leader is. For God has given you all things. ²² God gave you Paul, and he gave you Apollos, and Peter. And God gave you this world, and your life, and his victory over death. And God gives you everything that exists and everything that will exist in the future—they are all yours; ²³ and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.

Chapter 4

¹ A person should consider us as servants of Christ, and as those to whom God entrusted the hidden truths in the good news. ² We must faithfully do the work that God has given us to do because he trusts us to do it. ³ If a human being, or even a court of law, judges my life, I think little about it. I do not consider it worthwhile to judge myself. ⁴ I am not aware of anyone who accuses me of doing wrong. But that does not mean that I am innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. ⁵ So then, you should not judge anything before it is time. The Lord will do that when he returns. He is the one who can bring to light everything that is hidden even in total darkness, and he can make a right judgment because he knows what each person truly thinks. When he comes, everyone

will receive whatever honor they deserve from the Lord.

⁶ Now, brothers and sisters, the rule we follow is “Do not go beyond what they have written in the scriptures.” Apollos and I live by it. For your sakes we teach only in this way so you can learn from us. It keeps you from being too proud about the people who are teaching it to you, whether it is I or Apollos. ⁷ There is no difference between you and any other believer. All of you have received everything as a gift. None of you is better than any other. None of you should boast like you are different from all the rest. We are all just the same.

⁸ But you act as if you have everything you want! You live as if you were rich! And you live as if you were reigning kings and queens—even without our help. Well, I wish you really had become kings and queens, for then we could have ruled with you! ⁹ But in reality, it seems that God has put us apostles on display at the end of a line of prisoners being paraded after a battle. We are like men who have been sentenced to death; we have been put on display for the whole world to see, both angels and human beings. ¹⁰ Others think of us apostles as fools because we live for Christ, and yet you see yourselves as wise people. We appear weak, but you seem to be the strong ones! You praise and honor yourselves, but we apostles are the ones whom other people hate. ¹¹ Up to this present time we apostles go around hungry and thirsty. We have been so poor we could not afford our own clothing. Officials have brutally beaten us again and again. We have no place to call our home. ¹² We work hard with our hands to make a living. When others curse us, we bless them in return. When others make us suffer, we endure it. ¹³ When people tell lies about us, we answer by being kind

to them. And yet, they treat us like the garbage of the world and like the filth that people want to throw into a garbage heap.

¹⁴ I am not trying to shame you, but I want to correct you as a loving parent would correct a child. ¹⁵ If you had ten thousand teachers telling you about Christ, you would still have only one spiritual father. I became your father in Christ when you believed the good news that I preached to you. ¹⁶ So I urge you to follow my example. ¹⁷ That is why I sent Timothy to you. I love him, and he is my faithful child. He will remind you of how I live as I am joined to Christ. I teach the same things everywhere we go and in every church we visit.

¹⁸ Some of you have become proud. You live as though I might not come back to you soon. ¹⁹ But if the Lord wants me to come, I will come to you soon. Then I will learn not only how these arrogant people talk, but I will find out whether they have God’s power in them. ²⁰ God’s kingdom is not about what you say; it is about God’s power. ²¹ What would you want me to do? Should I come to punish you with harsh discipline, or should I come so you can see how much I love you by how gentle I am to you?

Chapter 5

¹ People have told us that there is someone in your church who is living in sexual immorality, a kind of immorality that even the unbelievers do not allow. A man has a lover who is his father’s wife. ² You have been so arrogant! Rather you should have wept over this sin, for this harms the whole church. You must put this man out of your church. ³ I am not with you physically, but I am very concerned for you all,

and I am with you in my spirit. And I have already judged the one who did this, just as if I were with you. ⁴ When you gather together for worship under the authority of the Lord Jesus—and I am worshipping with you in spirit—⁵ you should turn this man over to Satan out into the world, so that his physical body might be destroyed, so that God may save his spirit on the day of the Lord's return.

⁶ It is not good that you are praising yourselves. Surely you know that evil is like yeast: A little yeast makes the whole loaf rise. ⁷ Sin is like that yeast. You must clean out the old yeast and throw it away so that it cannot infect the whole batch of dough. You are like an unleavened batch of dough. As in the Passover Festival, the yeast must be kept away from the bread. For Christ is our Passover lamb: He became the sacrifice for us. ⁸ So let us celebrate the Passover Festival, and let us follow all the rules of purification. We must throw out the old yeast, which stands for disobedience and wickedness, and we must celebrate the festival by obeying God and speaking truth to each other. If we do that, we will be like the bread that has no yeast.

⁹ I wrote to you, that you must not keep company with sexually immoral people. ¹⁰ Of course, I did not mean that you should not associate with unbelievers who are immoral, or who selfishly desire many things, or who trick and cheat to take from others, or who worship idols. You would have to leave this world to avoid all people like that. ¹¹ Instead, I mean that you are not to be close friends with a fellow believer who is living in sexual immorality. We must include other sins, such as greed, or idolatry, or one who is abusive in the way he talks to others, or a drunkard, or a swindler. You must not even eat with these people who claim to trust in Christ, yet they do these terri-

ble things. ¹² For I have no obligation to judge those who are outside the church of Christ. Your duty is to judge those who are in it. ¹³ God is the one who will judge those who are outside the church. The scriptures command us,

“You must take away the evil person who is among you!”

Chapter 6

¹ When you have a dispute with another believer, you should not have the audacity to take that matter before a civil judge who is not a believer. Take the matter to fellow believers, whom God has set apart for himself. ² You should know that we who belong to God will judge the world. If you will judge the world one day, you should be able to settle matters that are less important. ³ You should know that you will judge angels! Certainly you are able to judge matters in this life. ⁴ And if you can settle matters that are important in this life, you should not find it necessary to hand off disputes between Christians to be settled by unbelievers. ⁵ I say this to show how you have disgraced yourselves. There certainly must be someone in the church who is sensible enough to settle these disputes when these sort of cases come up between Christian brothers and sisters. ⁶ But instead, some believers among you accuse other believers in a civil court and you allow a judge who is an unbeliever to settle the matter!

⁷ When you have any disputes between one another it means that you have not done what you should have done. Allow a brother or sister to take advantage of you rather than you take them to court. ⁸ Instead, you have wronged and cheated others, and the ones you cheated are your own brothers and sisters.

⁹ Surely you understand that the wicked will not come under God's rule. Do not believe them when they tell you otherwise. The truth is that the sexually immoral, those who worship anything or anyone other than God, those who break their marriage vows, those who engage in perverse acts of so-called worship involving sex, and those who engage in the practice of homosexuality, ¹⁰ those who steal, the ones who are greedy for more, those who get drunk, those who tell lies about others, and those who trick and cheat to steal from others—these will never come under God's rule. ¹¹ Some of you used to do these things. But God has made you clean from your sins, he has set you apart for himself, and he has made you right with himself. He has done all this through the power of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of our God.

¹² Some say this: "I am free to do anything I want, because I am joined to Christ." Yes, but because something is permitted does not mean it is good for me. "I am free to do anything I want"—but I will not allow anything to become my master. ¹³ People also say, "Food is made for a person's body to digest, and a person's body is made to digest food"—but God will soon do away with both food and the body's normal functions. Of course, they are really talking about sleeping with people. However, God did not make our bodies so we could be sexually immoral. But the body is to serve the Lord, and the Lord will provide for the body. ¹⁴ God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will also raise us up by his power to live again.

¹⁵ You should know that your bodies are joined to Christ. Should you take away that which is a part of Christ and join it together with a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶ You understand that anyone who sleeps with a prostitute becomes united with her. It

is like the scriptures say about marriage: "The two will become one." ¹⁷ And those who are joined to the Lord become one spirit with him.

¹⁸ So when you want to commit a sexual sin, run away from it as quickly as you can! People say, "Every sin that a person commits is committed outside the body"—except that when one sins sexually, he sins against his own body. ¹⁹ You should know that your body is a dwelling place, a temple of the Holy Spirit within you. God gave you his Spirit and now you no longer belong to yourself. Instead, you belong to God. ²⁰ God purchased you with the price of his Son's life. Therefore honor God in all you do in your human body.

Chapter 7

¹ You wrote to me some questions about how married believers should live. Here is my answer. There may be times in which it is good to abstain from sleeping together in marriage. ² But people are tempted very often to be sexually immoral. So each husband should have his own wife, and each wife should have her own husband. ³ And each married believer should have the right to sleep with his or her spouse. ⁴ For the husband gives control of his body to his wife. And the wife gives control of her body to her husband. ⁵ So do not deprive one another of sleeping together, unless you both agree to abstain from it for a short period of time, so that you may pray. But after that time is over, come together again. Do not allow Satan to tempt you because you cannot control yourself.

⁶ I am not commanding you to get married, but I will compromise because I know that many of you are married or will wish to marry. ⁷ My example is before you: I am

single, and sometimes I wish that each of you were single in order to serve God. But God gives many different gifts to his children; he makes some able to be married, and others to remain single.

⁸ To those of you who have never married and those whose husbands have died, I say that it would be good if you continue to be single, like me. ⁹ But if it is hard for you to control yourself, you should get married. It is better for you to marry than to suffer from strong sexual desires.

¹⁰ The Lord gives his own commands to you who are married: "The wife should not separate from her husband." ¹¹ (But if she separates from her husband, she should not marry again, or else she should make peace with her husband.) And, "the husband should not divorce his wife."

¹² And I have this to say—and this is my advice, not the Lord's command—to you who have a wife who is not a believer: If she is content to stay with you, do not divorce her. ¹³ And if you are a woman with a husband who does not believe, and if he is content to stay with you, do not divorce him. ¹⁴ The unbelieving husband is set apart in a special way because the wife trusts in God. It is the same for an unbelieving woman with a husband who trusts in God. It is the same for your children: They are set apart in a special way to God, because one parent believes in Christ.

¹⁵ However, if the unbelieving spouse wants to leave you, you should let that person go. In this situation, the vow you took when you married is no longer binding on you. God has called us to peace. ¹⁶ You do not know how God may work through the life you live before your unbelieving spouse. And you do not know whether your life may become a means by which God might save your husband or your wife.

¹⁷ We must live the life the Lord has assigned us to live, and to obey the call God gave us. This is the principle in all the churches. ¹⁸ If you were circumcised before you became a Christian, you should not try to remove the marks of that circumcision. If you were not circumcised when God saved you, you should not let anyone circumcise you. ¹⁹ Circumcision or uncircumcision—these are not important to us. But what is important is that we obey what God commands us to do. ²⁰ So continue to live and work as you did when God called you to trust in Christ. ²¹ If you were a slave when God saved you, do not worry about it. Of course, if you have the chance to gain your freedom, take advantage of the opportunity. ²² This is because anyone who the Lord calls a slave is a free person because of the Lord. In the same way, you become God's slave when he calls you, even if you were never a slave to anyone. ²³ God bought you with the price of his Son; your freedom is precious. So do not become slaves of humans. ²⁴ Brothers and sisters in Christ, whatever you were when God called you, whether you were slave or free, remain in that same position.

²⁵ Regarding the question about those who have never married, I will give my views, but I have no specific commandment from the Lord on this question. But you can have confidence in my reply because God has been kind to me and enabled me to be someone whom people can trust. ²⁶ Therefore, because of the difficult times that seem to be coming upon us all, I think it is good for you to remain as you were when God called you. ²⁷ To you who are married, I say this: Do not seek to be freed from your vow. As for you who are not married, do not try to find a wife. ²⁸ But to the men who are single, I say, if you marry, you have committed no sin. I give the same advice to the single women: If

you get married, you have committed no sin. However, if you marry, you will have many worldly troubles, and I would spare you those kind of troubles.

²⁹ This is what I mean about the time in which we are living, brothers and sisters: We have a short amount of time left. From now on those who are married will have to live as though they were not married, because of all the trouble that is coming.

³⁰ Those who are filled with grief should not cry. Those who are rejoicing over some wonderful event should have no joy on their faces. Those who have spent money to buy something should take no delight in it; they should live as if they owned nothing. ³¹ And those who deal with the things of the world should not involve themselves completely with them. For this world system is about to crumble into nothing.

³² I want you to be free from things to worry about. As you see, the unmarried man is concerned about the matters that are important to the Lord. He wants to serve the Lord and do what he wants. ³³ But the man who is married must also concern himself for the ordinary matters of the world as well as serving and pleasing his wife. ³⁴ So married men can only do some of the things they need to do. It is the same with widows and young ladies who have not married: As believing women, they are concerned to spend their time serving the Lord with their entire selves, with their physical abilities and with their spirit. But married women are concerned about the day-to-day matters of the world—such as how to please their husbands. ³⁵ I tell you this to help you. I am not trying to control you. If you follow my advice, you will find it easier to serve the Lord without worrying about things that married people worry about.

³⁶ If a man has promised to marry a

woman, but if he finds he is not treating her with respect because she is becoming too old to marry, he should get married. This is not a sin. ³⁷ But if he has decided that he does not desire to marry at the present time, and if he is in control of the situation, he makes a good decision not to marry. ³⁸ So the one who marries his fiancée does a good thing and does not sin; and the one who chooses not to marry also chooses something even better.

³⁹ A woman must remain with her husband as long as he lives; if her husband dies, she is free to marry whomever she wishes, but she must marry only someone who has faith in the Lord. ⁴⁰ However, it is my judgment that a widow will be happier if she does not marry again. And I think that I, too, have the Spirit of God.

Chapter 8

¹ Now, about the question you asked regarding eating food that was offered to idols: We know that people say, “We all have knowledge.” But if you think you know a lot, you can become very proud of yourself. If, however, when you love others, you help them grow strong in their faith. ² The truth is that if someone assumes he knows something, he has not yet learned the humbleness he needs to know.

³ When you love God, God knows you.

⁴ Now about eating food sacrificed to idols: Let us begin with this principle: Just as some say, “Idols in this world do not actually exist,” and, as Moses taught, “There is only one God.” So idols are not real gods; they are not living gods at all. ⁵ But I know that some people say that many gods and lords exist in the heavens or on the earth—after all, there are many supernatural beings who have real power. ⁶ Yet even so, we say,

"There is one God, the Father,

from him come all things, and for him we live.

And there is only one Lord, Jesus Christ;

he made everything there is, and he is the one who gives us life."

⁷ But not everyone knows this. Some worshiped an idol in earlier times, and, now, if they eat food sacrificed to an idol, they worry that they are still worshiping a god. They are torn between two opinions, and they are weak in their faith in Christ, so they feel they are honoring an idol when they eat food that has been offered to it. ⁸ We know that the food we eat does not make us better or worse before God. ⁹ But what is important is your brothers and sisters in Christ. You are free to eat that food, but you should not cause people to fall down in their faith because you have the freedom to eat it. ¹⁰ You know that idols were never alive, nor were they gods at all. But if brothers and sisters who do not know the difference between right and wrong see you eating in an idol's temple, they would think you were encouraging them to turn back to their idolatry. ¹¹ As a result, if your weaker brother or sister sees you eat meat offered to idols because you have freedom in your mind to eat that food but they did not have the same freedom—you by acting as a free person could destroy your fellow believer for whom Christ died. ¹² So, you sin against your weaker brothers and sisters when you encourage them to do something that their sense of right and wrong tells them not to do. This is sinning against Christ. ¹³ Therefore, if my brother or sister are unable to serve God well because they have seen me eat something, I will never eat meat again! I do not want to do anything that causes them to fall.

Chapter 9

¹ To people who criticize how I work, I reply like this: I am an apostle. I have seen Jesus our Lord. I am free. You are the result of the work I did—you are my workmanship. ² Even if some others do not think I am a true apostle, I am a true apostle to you. By the Lord's stamp of approval, you are the proof that I am a true apostle.

³ I answer those who say that I am not a true apostle by not using money that you believers give me for payment for my service. ⁴ Of course we have the right to live on such money. ⁵ We certainly have the right to travel with a believing wife, like the other apostles do—like the Lord's brother and Cephas. ⁶ No one made a rule that only Barnabas and I must work to support ourselves. ⁷ No soldiers serves in the army at his own expense. No one plants a vineyard without being able to eat the grapes or drink the wine. No one shepherds a flock and without drinking some of the milk that comes from the animals.

⁸ This is common sense. But the law says this as well. ⁹ For the law of Moses says, "When an ox is treading out the grain, do not stop it from eating some of it." There is more that God is concerned about in this law. ¹⁰ This law is about us. Moses is saying that those who work in any job should benefit from the fruit of that work, just like the ox eating the grain on which he is treading. ¹¹ If we have sown the seed of the good news to you, is it too much for us to receive money from you in our support? ¹² Others received this kind of help from you, and we have certainly proven that we deserve it even more than they do.

However, we have not accepted anything from you, even though we were entitled to it. Instead, we endure all kinds of hardships so that we do not make it more dif-

difficult for people to believe in the good news about Christ. ¹³ Certainly you know that those who helped carry out the sacrifices offered to God in the temple received some of those offerings for their own needs. They received some of the food offered to God. ¹⁴ In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who proclaim the good news are to receive their living wages from the good news. They receive part of what is given to God for their needs.

¹⁵ But I have not demanded any of these things for myself. And that is not why I am writing this to you now. I boast that I never demand these things from you, and I would have to stop boasting of you were to pay me, so I would rather die than have you pay me. ¹⁶ If I proclaim the good news, I am not doing anything for which I should boast. I feel obliged to preach the good news. I would grieve with many tears if I could not do what God called me to do. ¹⁷ When I preach the good news because I want to, I have a great reward. But even if I only preached because someone forced me to preach, I would still have to preach, because God trusted me to do this work for him. ¹⁸ So what is the reward that God gives me? It is that when I preach the good news, I offer it without anyone paying me for it. Instead, I offer it for free so that I can do it without receiving the payment the Lord would allow me to take.

¹⁹ I am not obligated to anyone, but I am a servant to everyone, so that I might persuade more and more people to trust in Christ. ²⁰ When working with Jewish people, I become like a Jew, so that I may win them to Christ. To those who were living under the law I lived as they lived, in order that those living under the law may trust in Christ as I trust in him. I lived as they lived, even though I am not living my life by the law's demands. ²¹ When I am

with those who are non-Jews, those who live apart from the law of Moses, I became like them (though I myself am not outside God's law, and I am obedient to the law of Christ), so that I can persuade those apart from the law to trust in Christ. ²² To those who are weak about rules and laws, I lived as they did, so I could persuade them to trust in Christ. I have lived under rules and with many life-styles and with all kinds of people so that in any way God chooses to work, God will rescue some of them. ²³ I do all this so I may proclaim the good news about Christ, so that I will also experience the good things the good news brings to us.

²⁴ You know when people run in a race, they all run, but only one of them wins the prize. So you also should run to win the prize. ²⁵ Every athlete is careful in how he trains. They are running so one of them may get a crown of victory that is put on their heads; but it is made of olive leaves, and it quickly perishes and fades away. But we are running so we might receive a crown that will last forever. ²⁶ Therefore, in everything I do, I do it for a purpose. I do not waste my effort or exhaust myself by striking the air like a boxer who has no opponent. ²⁷ I discipline my body and I make it obey my commands. I do not want to preach the good news to others and then lose my reward because I failed to fulfill what he commanded me to do.

Chapter 10

¹ I want you to remember, brothers and sisters, that our Jewish ancestors were following God, who led them out of Egypt by means of a cloud during the day, and that they passed through the Sea of Reeds on dry land. ² And as we have been baptized into Christ, so the Israelites were to

follow Moses as he followed God in the cloud and across the sea.³ They all ate the supernatural manna that God gave them from heaven,⁴ and they all drank the supernatural water that God gave them when Moses struck the rock. The rock was Christ.⁵ But God was angry with most of them because they worshiped other gods and rebelled against him, so their dead bodies lay on the ground all across the wilderness.

⁶ Now these things were an example for us, so we would learn not to greatly desire evil things, as they did.⁷ Some of our ancestors also worshiped idols. As the scripture says, “The people sat down to eat and drink and then they rose up to dance wildly in a sexual way.”⁸ Twenty-three thousand of our Jewish ancestors died in one day because of their sexual immorality.⁹ Let us not test the authority of Christ by disobeying him, as some of our ancestors did, and poisonous snakes killed them.¹⁰ Do not grumble about what God provides, as some of our ancestors did, and an angel destroyed them.

¹¹ Now these things happened to our ancestors; they were written so we could learn from them—we, who are living very close to when the world will end.¹² And so the lesson is this: If you think you are strong and are standing strong, be very careful, because this is just when you may fall.¹³ Every temptation you have fought against is shared by us all, but God has given us his promise and he will not permit the temptation to be greater than your ability to fight against the sin. When the temptation comes, God will provide a way for you to get free of it, so you may endure the temptation to sin.

¹⁴ Therefore, my loved ones, run away as fast as you can from idol worship.¹⁵ I speak to you as people who consider carefully how you live; think about what I am

saying here.¹⁶ When we drink the cup of wine that we bless, we share in the blood of Christ. When we break the bread, we share in the body of Christ.¹⁷ There is only one loaf of bread, and we, although we are many, all make up just one body together, and we all take and eat from the one loaf of bread together.

¹⁸ Think about the people of Israel. Those who eat the sacrifices at the altar share in the altar.¹⁹ So I am saying that an idol is not something real and to eat food sacrificed to an idol is not significant. But even so, there are important issues here.²⁰ What I mean is this: When non-Jews make their sacrifices, they are really making them to demons, and not to God at all. And I do not wish that you share anything with demons.²¹ You must not drink from the Lord’s cup and then later drink the cup of demons. You must not share in the Lord’s supper and then later eat a meal with demons.²² To do so would provoke the Lord to become jealous about split loyalty. You are not stronger than he is!

²³ Some say, “Everything is lawful,” but not everything is for our good or for the good of other people. Yes, “everything is lawful,” but not everything helps people to grow strong in their life with God.²⁴ Do not work for your good only, but also for the good of other people. All of us must act toward everyone in such a way as to help them all.²⁵ Here is our rule: You may buy and eat whatever meat you want in the market without having to ask whether it was sacrificed to idols or not.²⁶ As the psalmist says, “The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it.”²⁷ If a non-Jewish unbeliever invites you to a meal, and you desire to go, eat whatever he serves you. God does not require you to ask him about where he purchased the food.²⁸ But if someone says to you, “We bought this food at the idol temple and it was sacri-

ficed to the gods,” then do not eat the food, for the good of the person who served it, and so as not to cause conflict in the sense of right and wrong. ²⁹ This is being careful about how that other person thinks about right and wrong, not how you think about it. My personal choices are not to be changed by what another person believes is right or wrong. ³⁰ If I enjoy the meal with thanksgiving, I should not permit someone else to condemn me.

³¹ The rule here is that whether you eat a meal or drink something offered to you, or whatever you do, do everything in a way so that you give praise to God. ³² Do not be offensive to Jews or to Greeks, nor even to those in the church of God, about matters such as these. ³³ I make it my duty to please everyone I can, in every way that is possible. I do this by not seeking my own good. Instead, I try to build up other people by helping them, so that God might save them.

Chapter 11

¹ Follow my example, just like I follow the example of Christ.

² I praise you because you remember me in all you do, and you hold tight to all the important teachings that I have passed down to you and you have kept them just as I taught them to you. ³ I want you to understand that Christ has authority over every man, and that a man has authority over a woman, and that God has authority over Christ. ⁴ So if any man covers his head when he prays or when he proclaims a message from God, he brings disgrace on himself. ⁵ But if a woman prays or proclaims a message God gave her with her head uncovered, she brings disgrace on herself. For it is exactly the same as if she had shaved her head. ⁶ If a woman refuses

to cover her head, then she should cut her hair short, like a man's. But you know that it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut short or to have her head shaved. So, instead, she should cover her head. ⁷ A man should not cover his head because God made him like himself, and the man reflects some of what God himself is like. But women reflect some of what men are like. ⁸ For God did not make the man Adam from the woman Eve; instead, he made the woman Eve from the man Adam. ⁹ It was not the man whom God created to help the woman, but the woman to help the man. ¹⁰ This is why women should cover their heads, as a sign of the authority, and because of the angels.

¹¹ So as we live joined to the Lord, women need men to help them, and men need women to help them. ¹² This is because the woman was made from the man, and the man is born from the woman. They are dependent on one another. But all things come from God. ¹³ Judge this for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God without a cover on her head? ¹⁴ Nature itself teaches us that it is a disgrace for a man to have long hair, ¹⁵ but nature also teaches that long hair for a woman is a display of her beauty. Her hair is given to her by God to cover her beauty. ¹⁶ But if anyone in the church wishes to argue about this matter, we do not have any other custom than this, nor do any of the churches do anything different.

¹⁷ In these instructions, I cannot praise you for what you are doing about the Lord's supper. When you come together to eat, instead of encouraging and helping one another, you make the fellowship in the church much worse. ¹⁸ The first matter of concern is that when you come together, you come with different groups and factions. This is what people have told me, and I believe that some of

what they say is true. ¹⁹ It appears that you need to have different groups among yourselves so that you can test and approve the ones that have places of honor, and others that do not. ²⁰ When you come together you are not eating the Lord's Supper. ²¹ When you eat, one person brings an entire meal and eats it as soon as he arrives; he does not wait for anyone else. Another person goes hungry while other people drink so much wine that they get drunk. ²² You act as though you did not have houses to eat and drink in! You treat the church with dishonor, and you despise the purpose for which you gather. You humiliate those who are poor. I can say nothing good about this. This is a disgrace.

²³ For I have passed on to you what I received from the Lord, that on the night when the Lord Jesus was handed over to his enemies, he took bread, ²⁴ and after he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you, do this and remember me." ²⁵ After the same manner, he took the cup, after they had eaten, and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it, remember me." ²⁶ For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes again.

²⁷ All who come to this celebration of the Lord's Supper should come to give honor to God in the way it is shared. Those who eat the bread and drink the cup must do so in a manner that honors the Lord. Anyone who dishonors the bread and the cup will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Therefore we should all examine ourselves before we take the communion. We should only eat the bread and drink the cup after we have examined ourselves. ²⁹ Anyone who eats and drinks this Supper and does not consider what is

the Lord's body, eats and drinks the judgment of God on himself. ³⁰ Many among you are physically ill, and several have even died because of the way you have treated the Lord's body. ³¹ If we examine ourselves before we take the communion, God will not judge us. ³² But when the Lord judges and punishes us, he disciplines us to correct us, so that he will not condemn us along with the world that has rebelled against God.

³³ My fellow believers, when you come together for the Lord's Supper, wait for one another. ³⁴ If one of you is hungry, eat at home—so that when you come together as the church, it will not be an occasion for God to discipline you.

And when I come to you, I will give you instructions concerning the other matters you wrote me about.

Chapter 12

¹ And now let me teach you about spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters. I want you to know how to use them. ² You may recall how, when you worshiped idols—idols that could not even speak a word—they led you astray. ³ The Spirit of God helps you declare, "Jesus Christ is Lord." No one who is filled with the Holy Spirit would ever say, "Jesus is accursed!"

⁴ The Spirit gives many different gifts to the people of Christ, but he is the same Spirit. ⁵ There are also many different ways to serve God, but there is only one Lord. ⁶ There are also many ways for people to work in God's kingdom, but it is God who gives the power to his people to work for him.

⁷ God makes it possible for each believer to show that he has some of the Spirit's power; God does this in order to help all

believers together to trust him and honor him more. ⁸ For the Spirit makes one person able to speak a message with great wisdom from God, and he makes another person able to pass on to others some knowledge from God. ⁹ To another believer the Spirit gives the gift of trusting God for wonderful things. To still another person he gives the ability to pray to God for him to heal people. ¹⁰ The Spirit makes some believers able to do powerful deeds so that people will praise God. As for certain other believers, he makes them able to speak messages from God. The Spirit makes still other believers able to tell spirits who honor God from spirits who do not. To still others, the Spirit gives various kinds of languages in which to speak messages from God, and he makes others able to interpret those messages into our language. ¹¹ Again and again we see the many different gifts, but it is the same Spirit who gives these gifts to individuals, as he chooses.

¹² As the human body is a union of many parts, and every part of the body makes the whole, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For it is by the Spirit of Christ that, when we were baptized, we were each joined together into the body of Christ. It made no difference what our background was, either Jew or Greek, slave or free, but each of us received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁴ Remember, the body is not just one part, but many parts work together to make up the entire body. ¹⁵ If your foot spoke to you and said, "I am not the hand, therefore, I am not part of your body," it would not be less a part of your body because it was not like your hand. ¹⁶ And if your ear said to you, "I am not an eye. For that reason, I have no place in the body," it would not be less a part of your body because it was not an eye. ¹⁷ If your whole body were an eye, there would be nothing with

which to hear. If your whole body were an ear, there would be nothing with which to smell. ¹⁸ But God fitted each part of the body together, and it works just as he designed it. Every part is needed. ¹⁹ If each of us were exactly like all the other parts, we would not have a body at all. ²⁰ We are all many members, but only one body. ²¹ In your body, the eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you"; it surely does need the hand. Nor would the head say to the feet, "I do not need you." ²² Even the parts that are weak are all still essential to the body as a whole. ²³ The parts that we would be ashamed for others to see, we take more care to cover them. In this way we show more respect for them. ²⁴ but God has joined the distinguished parts with the less important ones. And God gives honor to those less presentable parts, because they are part of the body. ²⁵ God honors the entire body in this way so there is no division in the church, and that members of the body of Christ might care for every member of the body with the same affection, no matter what their purpose or role, gifting or abilities. ²⁶ Because we are one body, when one member suffers, we all suffer. When one member is given honor for something they accomplished for Christ, the entire body rejoices together.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and individually, you are all members of it. ²⁸ God has also given people as gifts to the church. He gave to the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then those who do powerful deeds, those who perform healing, those who provide helps, those who do work of administration, and those who have various kinds of languages that the Spirit has given them. ²⁹ Not all of us are apostles. Not all are prophets. Not all are teachers. Not all do powerful deeds. ³⁰ Not all of us can heal the sick. Not all of us can speak in special

languages. Not all of us can interpret messages into other languages. ³¹ But I want you to eagerly seek after the greater gifts. And now, I will show you a more excellent way.

Chapter 13

¹ If I could speak so that I could amaze and persuade people to do what I wanted, or if I could speak the language of angels—but if I did not love people, all my talking would be worth less than a noisy gong or a cymbal that only clangs. ² If I could proclaim messages for God, and if I could explain secret truths about God, and if I trusted in God so much that I could move a mountain—but if I did not love people, I would be worth nothing. ³ If I gave away all I own to feed the poor, or if I sacrificed myself to be burned to rescue someone else—but if I did not love people, I would gain nothing.

⁴ If you truly love others, you will endure hardships with joy. If you truly love, you will be kind to others. If you truly love, you will not resent that other people possess things you do not have. If you truly love, you will not boast about yourself or be proud. ⁵ If you truly love others, you will not abuse them. You will not live to please yourself. No one will be able to make you angry quickly. You will not keep track of the wrong things people have done. ⁶ If you truly love others, you will not be happy if anyone does wicked things; instead, you will be happy when people are faithful to God. ⁷ If you truly love others, you will endure everything that happens. You will trust that God will do the best things for people. You will trust in God regardless of what happens. You will obey God regardless of what hardships you are facing.

⁸ If you truly love, you will not stop loving. Those who are able to speak God's messages, speak in strange languages, or know hidden truths, do these things only for a while. One day they will stop doing these things. ⁹ Now, in this life, we know only a small part of all there is to know. Those who proclaim God's messages do so only partially. ¹⁰ But when things are complete, everything that is partial or incomplete will end. ¹¹ When I was a small child, I talked as a child talks, I thought as a child thinks, and I made decisions as a child makes decision. But when I became an adult, I stopped acting like a child, and I started acting like an adult. ¹² What we understand about Christ now, we understand very imperfectly, not well at all. But when Christ returns, we will see him face to face. Now we know only part of what is true. But then we will know him fully, just as he knows us fully. ¹³ It is important that we trust in Christ now. It is important that we are certain that he will do for us everything that he has promised. And it is important that we love him and each other. But the greatest of these three things is love.

Chapter 14

¹ Strive for how to love others and for gifts that strengthen your fellow believers. Especially strive to be able to proclaim his messages that he gives you to say. ² When a person speaks in a language given by the Spirit, he is not speaking to people, because no one can understand him, but he is speaking to God. He is saying things to him as the Spirit leads him. ³ On the other hand, the prophet who proclaims the messages from God speaks directly to people. He does this in order to help them by making them stronger, to help them be unshakable, and to give them comfort so

they can be happy even in hardship. ⁴ A person who speaks in a language given by the Spirit builds himself up and gives himself help, but a person who proclaims the messages of God builds up everyone and helps everyone in the church to be stronger in their faith.

⁵ Now I wish that all of you spoke in such languages, but it would be far better for the entire church if more and more of you had the gift of speaking God's messages. Anyone who speaks messages from God is helping to strengthen his fellow believers. For this reason, he is doing work that is more important than those who proclaim messages in various other languages—unless someone is able to interpret those messages.

⁶ If I come to you and am only speaking in languages given by the Spirit, how can that help you? That cannot help you unless I speak to you and help you know matters that were hidden from you, or unless I help you understand facts you did not know, or unless I proclaim to you some message you did not hear before, or unless I teach you some rule that you had never learned before. ⁷ If someone is playing the flute or harp (they are not living things), and if the notes on the flute or harp sounded no different from each other, no one would be able to tell which tune I was playing. ⁸ And if a soldier blew the trumpet poorly, the army would not know whether to get ready for battle. ⁹ This is what it is like when you say words that no one can understand: No one will know what you have said. ¹⁰ There are certainly many languages in the world, and all of them give meaning to those who understand them. ¹¹ But if I do not understand someone's language, I will be like a foreigner to him, and he will be like one to me. ¹² So because you want very much for the Spirit to work in you, try to help

the believers in the church to trust Christ and obey him.

¹³ For that reason, pray that God will enable you to interpret what you say in a language that God has given you. ¹⁴ If anyone prays in such a language, his spirit certainly prays, but his mind does not. ¹⁵ Therefore, we should pray with our spirit, but also pray with our mind. And it is the same if we sing praise to God. ¹⁶ If you insist on praising God only in your spirit, the outsider will never understand what you are saying, and will never be able to agree with the message. ¹⁷ For if you give thanks in your spirit, that is well and good for you, but you are not helping the other believers. ¹⁸ I thank God that I speak in tongues more than any of you do. ¹⁹ But to the church I would rather speak five words with my mind, words with which I can teach others, than say ten thousand words in a strange language.

²⁰ Brothers and sisters, you should think like adults. But when you think about evil things, you should think like small children. Your thinking should be sensible. ²¹ In the law it is written that God says,

"I will speak to my people Israel

by foreigners, men who speak in strange languages;

but my people will still not understand me."

²² So if a believer speaks in a language that God has given him, this impresses the unbelievers who might be listening. But if a believer speaks a message from God, this impresses the other believers. ²³ You can see how confusing it would be if all the believers met together and spoke in different languages. Any unbeliever who heard them would call them all crazy. ²⁴ But if you were all taking turns speaking true messages from God, any unbeliever would realize that he was guilty of sinning

against God. ²⁵ This unbeliever would become aware of what was deep in his consciousness. He would fall down with his face to the ground in wonder and fright, and he would praise God and say that God is truly with you.

²⁶ Brothers and sisters, it should be this way when you worship God together. Each of you should come with a psalm to sing, or something to teach from the scriptures, or something that God has told you, or with a message in a language that God has given, or with an interpretation of such a message. Everything you do together should encourage each other, for you are Christ's church. ²⁷ If there are any who wish to speak a message in a language from the Spirit, there should be no more than two or three such persons. They should speak one at a time, and someone should interpret the messages. ²⁸ However, if there is no one able to interpret those messages, then those who speak in languages from the Spirit should keep silent and speak only to God.

²⁹ If there are any who want to speak a message from God, there should be only two or three such persons; and everyone else should judge those messages according to what the scriptures say. ³⁰ But if God allows someone seated in the assembly to understand a message, then the one speaking the message should stop speaking. In this way, all the believers can listen to the meaning of the message. ³¹ For each of those who proclaim the messages of God should do so. But they must do so one by one, in order, so that all the believers can learn and receive courage to love God better. ³² For those who truly speak God's messages control the spirit in which they do so. ³³ For God does not create confusion; instead, he makes peace.

This next question is answered the same way in all the churches of God's people.

³⁴ Women should keep silent in church for they are not permitted to speak. They must not interrupt the one who is speaking God's message, but they should always obey their husbands, as also the law says.

³⁵ When women want to learn, instead of interrupting the worship, they should speak with their husbands at home. It dishonors her husband for a woman to interrupt the service. ³⁶ Were you the people by whom God gave us his word? Or are you the only ones to whom it came? ³⁷ Those of you who think you are prophets or spiritual should agree that the things I write are what the Lord has commanded and follow what I have written. ³⁸ But as for those who do not acknowledge what I have written, you should not acknowledge them in your assembly.

³⁹ So, brothers and sisters, with earnest desire speak God's messages to the church; and do not forbid anyone from speaking in languages that God gives. ⁴⁰ All that you do in the worship of the church, do it in a pleasant and orderly way.

Chapter 15

¹ And now I wish to remind you, brothers and sisters, about the good news I proclaimed to you. You believed this message and now you live according to it. ² This good news saved you, as long as you hold firmly to it—unless you did not truly believe it.

³ For I have passed on to you what others first told me, that Christ died for our sins, as the scripture foretold he would; ⁴ also that they buried him, and that God raised him to life on the third day, all just the way the scriptures said it would happen. ⁵ Then Christ appeared to Cephas (known as Peter), and then he appeared to the rest of the apostles. ⁶ He later ap-

peared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters in the Lord when they were all together. Some of them have since died, but most are still alive and can verify this. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, and then again to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all he appeared to me, although I am very unlike the other apostles. ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles. I made the church of Christ suffer greatly, so I do not deserve to be an apostle. ¹⁰ But God has been very kind to me, so I am an apostle, and he has done much good through me. Really, I have worked harder than all the other apostles. Still, it was not really I who worked, but God, who gave me the strength. ¹¹ So whether it is the other apostles or I who preached to you, we proclaimed the good news about Christ, and you believed us.

¹² Now some of you are saying that those who are now dead will not rise anymore. This cannot be true, because we have announced to you that Christ rose from the dead. ¹³ If no one rises from the dead, then God certainly has not raised Christ. ¹⁴ And if he has not raised Christ from the dead, then what we preach makes no sense at all, and what you believe about Christ can do nothing for you in your life or in your death. ¹⁵ In addition, people will see that we have told lies about God, if the dead really do not rise again. ¹⁶ Again I say, if no one rises from the dead, then God has not even raised Christ. ¹⁷ And if he has not raised Christ, then what you believe is useless, and God still condemns you because you have sinned. ¹⁸ If that is the case, then all those who have died trusting in Christ have also died with no hope of resurrection. ¹⁹ If in this life only we have hope in Christ, and we expect him to do nothing for us after we die, then of all people we most deserve the pity of others, for we have believed in a lie.

²⁰ But in fact, God has raised Christ from the dead, and he is only the first of the many people that he will raise. ²¹ For everyone in the world dies because of what one man, Adam, did. However, those who have died will live again—also because of what one person has done; that is, the man Christ Jesus. ²² Because, just as all die because Adam sinned, in the same way, all will live again because of what Christ has done. ²³ But they will rise from the dead in a certain order: Christ is the first to have risen from the dead; then those who are joined to Christ will live again when he returns to earth. ²⁴ Then the world will come to an end, when Christ will present all the world to God the Father, for him to rule. This is when Christ will bring to an end all who have the status of rulers, and everything that has reigning authority and all seats of power in this world. ²⁵ For Christ must rule until God has conquered every one of his enemies, and placed them under Christ's feet to show that they have no more power. ²⁶ The final enemy that God will destroy is death itself. ²⁷ For the scriptures say, "God has placed everything under his feet," that is, Christ's feet. But it is clear that this does not include God himself. ²⁸ After God has placed all things into Christ's power, then the Son also will place himself in the power of God the Father, so that God may be the same in relation to everyone and everything.

²⁹ If there is no resurrection from the dead, as some say, then there is no reason for people to receive baptism for the sake of those who have died, as some do. If God does not bring any dead people back to life, then here is no reason for living people to receive baptism for the sake of those who have died. ³⁰ And we apostles would have no reason to risk our lives every day, as we do, to proclaim the good news if there is no resurrection from the dead. ³¹

My brothers and sisters, I am so proud of you; you are like my possessions that I show off to Christ Jesus our Lord. Every day I am in danger of dying! ³² If God will not raise the dead, then I fought with those wild animals at Ephesus for nothing. What the poets wrote would in that case be true: "Let us eat food and drink wine today, because we will die tomorrow." ³³ Do not be tricked: "If you have bad friends, you will not care to live any longer in the right way." ³⁴ Sober up! Live in the right way and do not keep sinning. Some of you do not know God at all. I say this to shame you.

³⁵ Someone may ask you, "How can the dead rise? What kind of body could they ever have?" ³⁶ You know nothing! You do not think about the fact that any seed you plant in the ground will not start to grow until it dies. ³⁷ And what a farmer plants does not look the same as what will come up. It is only a bare seed; it will change into something entirely different. ³⁸ God will give it a new body just as he chooses, and to each seed put into the ground he will give a different body. ³⁹ Not all living creatures are the same. There are human beings, and there are animals on the land of many kinds, and there are the birds and fish. All of them are different. ⁴⁰ There are also different kinds of things in the heavens. The nature of those bodies in the sky is different from the nature of the things on this world. ⁴¹ There is one kind of the nature for the bright sun, and another kind for the softer moon. There is still another kind of nature for the stars, but the stars all differ one from another in many ways.

⁴² It is the same way when people rise from the dead. What goes into the ground has died, but what rises will never die again. ⁴³ When it goes into the ground, it is in the dirt, but when God raises it again,

it grows with honor and power. ⁴⁴ What goes into the ground belongs to this earth, but what rises from the dead has God's power. So, there are things that belong to this earth, and there are things that have God's power, which lasts forever.

⁴⁵ So the scriptures say, "The first man, Adam, was a living being who gave his children and descendants life." But Christ, the second Adam, gave people God's power to live forever. ⁴⁶ What belongs to the earth came first, the natural, and then came what belongs to God, that is the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man, Adam, belonged to the earth, for he was made from dust. But the second man, Christ, belongs to heaven.

⁴⁸ All those who are made from dust are just like Adam, the one who was made from dust. All those who belong to heaven are just like Christ, the man from heaven. ⁴⁹ Just as God made us like the man who was made from dust, so he will also make us be like the man from heaven.

⁵⁰ Now I say this, brothers and sisters, human beings who will die cannot obtain the things that God promises to give all those whom he rules. It is just as the things that die cannot become things that do not die. ⁵¹ Look! I tell you something that God has hidden from us. Not all believers will die, but God will change all of us. ⁵² He will change us in an instant, as fast as one can blink his eye, when God's angels blow the final trumpet. For they will blow that trumpet and then God will raise the dead so as to never die again. ⁵³ For it is these bodies that will die, but God will make them live forever, never to die again, and it is these bodies that now can be destroyed, but God will make them new, never to die again. ⁵⁴ When this happens, then it will come true, what the scriptures say:

"God has totally defeated death."

⁵⁵ "Death will never win again!"

The pain of dying has been taken away!”

⁵⁶ It is sin that brings such pain to us when we are dying. And sin’s power comes into our lives because of the law. ⁵⁷ But now we thank God because he gives us victory over death through our Lord Jesus Christ!

⁵⁸ Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, be solid in your faith, unmoveable in your life, doing more and more in the Lord’s work. You know that whatever you do for him will last forever.

Chapter 16

¹ Now I wish to answer your questions about the money that we are collecting for the people in Jerusalem who belong to God. You should do exactly what I told the believers in the churches in Galatia to do. ² Every Sunday, each of you should put some money aside, as you are able, so you will not need any more collections when I come. ³ You must choose people, whomever you wish, to take your gifts to Jerusalem. And when I arrive, I will send letters with them about your gift. ⁴ If it is the right thing to do, they will travel together with me to Jerusalem.

⁵ I am planning to come to you when I travel through the region of Macedonia. ⁶ Perhaps I will stay with you, and perhaps all through the winter, so that you can help me along the way in my trip. ⁷ I do not want to see you for only a short time. I hope that the Lord will allow me to spend enough time together that we can help each other. ⁸ I want to stay in Ephesus until the Festival of Pentecost, ⁹ because the Lord has opened a door for me there, although there are still many who oppose us.

¹⁰ Now when Timothy comes, treat him

kindly and see to it that he has nothing to be afraid of, for he is doing the Lord’s work, just like I am doing. ¹¹ Do not let anyone treat him as unimportant. Help him on his way as much as you can; send him away in peace so that he may join me. I am expecting him to travel with other brothers who are coming my way.

¹² You asked about our brother Apollos. I urged him strongly that he should visit you when the other brothers came to you. He decided not to come now, but he will come to you later when he has opportunity.

¹³ Be on guard, do not wander from your faith. Work for the Lord like grown men, and be strong. ¹⁴ Do everything through the power of love.

¹⁵ You know the people in the house of Stephanas. You know that they were the first ones in the province of Achaia to believe, and they are determined to help those who belong to the Lord. I urge you, brothers and sisters, ¹⁶ obey people like them who help in the work and who work hard with us. ¹⁷ I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus arrived here from Corinth, because they made up for the fact that you were not here. ¹⁸ They encouraged and helped me in my spirit, and they helped you as well. Tell others about how much they helped you.

¹⁹ The churches in Asia send greetings. Aquila and Priscilla send you greetings as you do the work of the Lord, and the other believers that meet in their home do so as well. ²⁰ The rest of the brothers and sisters greet you, too. Greet one another with a kiss of affection.

²¹ I, Paul, am writing this sentence with my own hand. ²² If anyone does not love the Lord, let a curse be on him. O Lord, come! ²³ May the kindness we do not de-

serve that comes from the Lord Jesus be with you. ²⁴ I send you this reminder that I love all of you, as you all are joined together in Christ Jesus.

2 CORINTHIANS

Chapter 1

¹ I, Paul, together with Timothy our brother, write this letter to you. Christ Jesus sent me to serve him and to obey God's will. We are sending this letter to those who come together as God's people in the city of Corinth; we are also sending it to the all Christians who live in the region of Achaia—people whom God has set apart for himself. ² May God give you the free gifts of his love and peace—these things that come from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

³ May we always praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—he is the one who does us acts of kindness and who always comforts us. ⁴ God comforts us when we go through any painful trial. His comfort heals our lives so we can give away that very same comfort to other people who are suffering. ⁵ Just as we experience the sufferings of Christ which are beyond all measure, we also experience through Christ comfort that cannot be measured. ⁶ So whenever we experience sufferings, it is so God may comfort you and rescue you from danger. Whenever God comforts us, it is so you can be comforted even more, so he can teach you to wait for God, when you suffer in the same way we suffered. ⁷ We are certain about what will happen to you; because you suffer like we suffer, God will also comfort you, as he does us.

⁸ Brothers and sisters in Christ, we want you to know about the trouble we had in the province of Asia. That trouble gave us such pain that we could not bear it. We were almost certain that we were going to die. ⁹ They pronounced the sentence of death on us; we were waiting to be killed.

That sentence of death taught us not to rely on our own strength but on God, who raises the dead and brings them back to life. ¹⁰ But God rescued us from those terrible dangers, and he promises to rescue us in the future. ¹¹ He will do this as you help us by praying for us. Now many thank God because he has been so kind to us, since many have prayed for us.

¹² We can very happily say that we have we lived toward all people in an honest and sincere way. We lived in the world as God's own people and we have deep trust in God, that was a gift from him. We do not live in any way that the world values. We do not listen to the world's wisdom when we choose what we will do. Instead, God has made us honest and holy in how we live. ¹³ You have read my letters. I have written them so you can understand them. ¹⁴ You know a little about us already, but on the day when the Lord Jesus returns, I hope that you will be very proud of us in his presence, and we will be very proud of you.

¹⁵ I am so sure that this will be the case that I have wanted to come to you first, so I could visit you twice. ¹⁶ I planned to see you both when I was on my way to Macedonia and then when I was coming back from there, so you could send me on my way to Judea. ¹⁷ My mind was made up that this would be the plan. I was not telling you "Yes" and then telling you "No." I was not making my plans like unbelievers often make plans. ¹⁸ But God is faithful in guiding us, and we do not confuse you, either. We are making our plans and staying with them. ¹⁹ Our "Yes" comes from the Son of God, Jesus Christ—the one we proclaimed to you; and there has never been any confusion in him—with him there is no "Yes and then No." Instead, it has always been simply "Yes" in him. ²⁰ For the promises of God are "Yes"

because they come from him. And we add our confirmation to his “Yes.” And we say about God’s honor: “It is True! Yes!”²¹ God makes the bond between us Christians strong because we both are joined to Christ, and he is the one who sends us out to tell people the good news.²² He put his official seal on us, so people will know he approves of us. And he gave us the Spirit who lives within us, as an unbreakable promise that he will do even more things for us.

²³ May God himself assure you about my reason for not coming to you, Christians in Corinth: It was so that you would not have to face me giving correction to you.²⁴ We are not like masters who give you orders about how you must trust in God. However, we want to work with you, so you can learn to trust God no matter what happens, and have joy in trusting him.

Chapter 2

¹ In the last visit I made to Corinth I know that I hurt you very much by what I said to you. I decided this time that I would not make another painful visit to you.² I caused you much pain on my last visit, and the people who could cheer me up the most would be the same people whom I hurt when I was there.³ I wrote that letter to you so when I came to you, you would not make me feel sad again—you, who should actually make me rejoice! I was sure that we all have the reasons to be joyful.⁴ I wrote to you then because I still had much hurt and pain in my heart—I cried many tears for you, and I did not want to hurt you anymore. I want you to know how much I love all of you.

⁵ This person who fell into sin—he did not just make me sad by what he did; his sin made all of you sad.⁶ We all agree what

we should do about this man and his sin. He has now been punished and his punishment was fair.⁷ So this is where we are now: He suffered through his punishment, but now it is time to forgive him for what he did and to love him so that he might not be discouraged by feeling too sad.

⁸ In front of all the believers, tell him how much you love him.⁹ I wrote you to see if you would obey God and deal with this problem.¹⁰ So the man you forgave, I also forgive. Whatever I have forgiven—even the smallest matters—I have forgiven out of my love for you, and I forgive as though Christ were standing in front of me.¹¹ By forgiving this man, we made it so Satan could not trick us into doing something worse. We know all about his tricks and his lies.

¹² Even though the Lord opened many ways for us to share the good news in the city of Troas,¹³ I was worried about our brother Titus, because I did not find him there. So I left the believers in Troas and returned to Macedonia to look for him.¹⁴ We thank God that we are joined together with Christ, and Christ always leads us in his march of victory. Through our lives and our message, everywhere we go, we are like those who have been near burning incense; but our fragrance does not come from real incense, but it comes from knowing Christ, and because we know him we have his fragrant aroma.¹⁵ God smells this same fragrance, and it reminds him of Christ. And those who God rescues smell this same fragrance in us. Even the people whom God does not rescue smell that aroma that reminds them of Christ.¹⁶ To those people that God does not rescue, that aroma of Christ is like the smell of a dead person dying once again. But to those whom God is rescuing—they smell Christ, who is alive, coming to make them

alive, too. Indeed, no one is able by himself to spread this fragrance! ¹⁷ You know that many people go from city to city selling the word of God for money. But we are not like them. We work hard to please God and we do what he wants. And we speak about Christ because we know God sees everything we do, and we announce Christ because we are joined to him.

Chapter 3

¹ You know us well, and you should trust us. A stranger might need someone you know to write you a letter to introduce him to you, but you know us very well. ² You yourselves are like a letter that introduces us to other people, because everyone who knows you can see how much you trust us. ³ The way you live is like a letter that Christ himself has written and that we brought to you. Of course, it is not a letter written with ink or on stone tablets. No, it is a letter that the Spirit of the true God has written on your own hearts.

⁴ This is how we trust God, because we are joined to Christ. ⁵ We are not able to do anything for God in our own strength, so we cannot claim to be able to. Instead, it is God who gives us all we need to serve him. ⁶ God gave us what we needed to be servants of the new covenant. This covenant does not get its strength from the law that was written down, but from the Spirit of God. The written letter of the law brings death, but the Spirit gives life.

⁷ God's law brings death, and he wrote it on stone tablets, and he gave it to Moses. It came with the brilliant light that always shines where God is. And that glory shined on Moses' face; his face shined so brightly that the Israelites could not look at his face. That bright light slowly faded

from his face. ⁸ How much more brightly does the ministry of the Spirit shine! ⁹ Even the law shined with God's brilliant light. But that brilliant light of the law can only bring death to everyone. So how very much more does his brilliant light shine in us when God makes us right with himself! ¹⁰ When the brilliant light of the law is compared with God's work of putting us right with himself, it is as if the law is not wonderful at all, because what replaced it is so much more wonderful! ¹¹ So you can see that the law, which is passing away, was wonderful, but you can also see that what is replacing it will be even more wonderful; and it will last forever.

¹² Since we apostles trust in God for the future, we have great courage. ¹³ We are not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so the children of Israel would not have to look at the fading light from God. ¹⁴ Long ago, the children of Israel refused to believe God's message. Even today, when the old law is read, they wear that same veil. Only when we are joined with Christ does God take the veil away. ¹⁵ Yes, even today, whenever they read the law of Moses, it is as if they had a veil over their minds. ¹⁶ But when a person turns to the Lord, God removes that veil. ¹⁷ Now the word "Lord" here means "the Spirit." Where the Spirit of the Lord is, people become free. ¹⁸ But for all of us who believe, we look at him with no veil over our faces, and we reflect his brilliant light more and more. This is what the Lord does; and he is the Spirit.

Chapter 4

¹ God gave us this responsibility to carry out, and he also had mercy on us. So we are not downhearted. ² We are careful not to do anything we would be ashamed

of doing, and we have nothing to hide from anyone. We do not promise something that God will not give, and we do not twist God's message to make it say what we want. We proclaim only the truth. In this way, we present ourselves for you to judge us as we stand before God. ³ If the good news is hidden with a veil, it is hidden from those who are dying apart from God. ⁴ For them, the god of this world has made them blind to the truth because they do not trust the good news about the wonderful honor of Christ—for it is Christ who shows us what God is like. ⁵ We do not proclaim ourselves to you as people who can rescue you from any evil. Instead, we proclaim Christ Jesus as our Master, and we are your servants because we are joined to Jesus. ⁶ For God is the one who said, "Light will shine out of the darkness." He has shone his light into our hearts, so that when we trust in Jesus Christ, we can learn how wonderful God is.

⁷ Now we carry these precious gifts from God in our bodies, which are fragile like clay pots. There can be no mistake about where our strength comes from: It comes only from God. ⁸ We have suffered many different kinds of trouble, but they have not destroyed us. We may be confused about what we should do, but we never give up. ⁹ Some people try to harm us, but we are never alone; it is as if some people knocked us down, but we always get up again. ¹⁰ We are often in danger of dying, as Jesus died, but our bodies will live again, because Jesus is alive. ¹¹ For those of us who are alive, God is always leading us to face death because we are joined to Jesus, so that when people look at us, they can know that Jesus is alive. ¹² So you can see that death is doing its work in us, but that life is working in you.

¹³ We trust in God, just as the scriptures say: "I trust in God; this is why I speak."

We also trust in God, and we also speak about what he has done for us. ¹⁴ We know that God, who raised up the Lord Jesus from the dead, will also raise us up from the dead with him, and that Jesus will take us along with you, and take us to be where God is. ¹⁵ All that I have suffered is to help you, so that more and more people can know how God loves them freely, and so that they may praise him more and more.

¹⁶ We are not discouraged. When our bodies are dying a little each day outwardly, God is making us new every day on in the inside. ¹⁷ For these short, easy times of suffering are getting us ready for the day when God will make us wonderful forever, wonderful in ways that no one can measure or explain. ¹⁸ For we are not waiting for things that we can see, but for the things we cannot see. The things that we can now see are temporary, but the things we cannot see, they last forever.

Chapter 5

¹ We know that these bodies are only temporary dwelling places, like tents that do not last very long. But we know that when we die, God gives us a permanent place in which we will live, a body that lasts forever, a body that God has made. ² While we live in our physical bodies, we groan with longing for the bodies we will have when we will live with God—³ because when God clothes us in our new bodies, that will be our covering, like clothing.

⁴ For we live in these bodies that one day will die, and we long for the day when we lay aside these bodies. Not that we are eager to die, but we are eager to be clothed with our eternal bodies, just like the saying that says, "All that dies, will be swallowed up by life." ⁵ God himself prepares our new bodies for us, and he guarantees

that we will receive them by giving us his Spirit.

⁶ So you should always be certain that as long as we live in our bodies on the earth, we are away from Lord, who is in heaven ⁷ (we live our lives by trusting in him, and not by trusting in what we can see). ⁸ Because we have put our trust in him, we would much rather give up our present bodies so we could be at home with the Lord. ⁹ Therefore we make it our goal to obey him, whether we are here or in heaven. ¹⁰ For we will all stand before Christ when he sits as the judge of all. He will judge what we did when we were in this life. Christ will give us what we deserve, and he will judge what was good or bad.

¹¹ Therefore we know what it is to honor the Lord, so we make sure to tell people what kind of God he is. God knows what kind of people we are, and I expect that you also understand whether we are doing good or evil. ¹² We are not trying to prove again that we are genuine servants of God. We only want you to know what kind of people we are, and to give you a reason to be proud of us. We do this, so that you can answer those who praise their own actions, but do not care about what they really are in their inner being. ¹³ If people think we are crazy, well, we are serving God. But if we are in our right minds, it is to help you. ¹⁴ Our love for Christ drives us on. We are sure of this: Christ died for all, therefore we all have died with him. ¹⁵ Christ died for all, so that those who live should not live for themselves, but should live for Christ, who died for their sins; and he is the one whom God raised from the dead.

¹⁶ Since we live no longer for ourselves, we judge no one according to the way the unbelievers judge. We once even viewed Christ by these human standards. But as

Christians, now we judge no one like this. ¹⁷ When anyone is joined with Christ and trusts in him, he becomes a new person. Everything from the past is gone—See!—God makes everything in you new. ¹⁸ All these gifts come from God. He made peace with us so that we are no longer enemies of God. Now we have peace with God through the cross of Christ. Also, God has given us the responsibility of announcing that he is bringing people and himself together. ¹⁹ That message brings God and people together and is how God made peace with the world by what Christ did. God is not applying their sins to their account. Instead, Christ has taken our sins away and has given us this message that makes peace and brings God and people together. ²⁰ So God has appointed us to represent Christ. God pleads with you through us. So we plead with you on Christ's behalf: Through Christ, let him make peace with you and bring you to himself. ²¹ God made Christ the offering for sin—the one who never sinned—so that when we trust in Christ and believe in him, God makes us right with himself.

Chapter 6

¹ We work together, and we beg you not to receive the gift of God's love in a way that makes no difference for you. ² For God said,

”At a time when I displayed my loving mercy, I listened to you,

And when I completed the work of my salvation, I helped you.”

Look, this is the day when God is having mercy on you; this is the day that he is rescuing you.

³ We certainly do not want to give anyone reason to do wrong, because we want

no one to accuse us of preaching the good news in order to encourage evil doing. ⁴ We have proved again and again that we are God's true servants. We endure great suffering, we face with courage people who hurt us, and we live through hard times. ⁵ People have beaten us very badly; others have locked us up in prisons; we were the cause for people to riot; we have done hard physical labor; we have passed many long nights without sleep, and we have often gone with very little food. ⁶ But in all this, our lives are pure, our knowledge is deep, and we are able to wait until God ends our suffering. We know how kind Christ is to us; we are filled with the Holy Spirit, and we love others. ⁷ We live according to God's true Word, and we have God's power. By means of Christ, God has put us right with himself. This is the truth that we continuously believe; it is like armor that a soldier wears, and like weapons for both of his hands. ⁸ Sometimes people honor us; at other times, they dishonor us. Sometimes they say many evil things about us; at other times, they praise us. They accuse us of lying, even though we tell the truth. ⁹ We live like persons whom nobody knows, but some people know us very well. Some try to kill us for announcing the message about Christ, even though no one legally ever condemns us to death. ¹⁰ We live with great sorrow but we always rejoice. We live as some of the poorest people, but we have the treasure of the good news that makes many rich. You can see that we own nothing, but the truth is that all things belong to us.

¹¹ We have spoken to you very openly and honestly, fellow believers at Corinth. We have freely shown you that we love you. ¹² We are not the ones holding back, but you seem to be reluctant to show that you love us. ¹³ It would be a fair exchange—I am speaking as to children—for you to

love us in return.

¹⁴ Do not work in unsuitable ways with people who do not trust Christ. What do people who live by God's measure and rules have in common with those who break his laws and do what they want? Darkness and light cannot be together. ¹⁵ How can Christ agree in any way with the demon Beliar? What does a person who trusts in God have in common with another person who does not trust in God? ¹⁶ How right would it be to bring pagan idols into the temple of God? For we are the temple of the living God, just as God said:

"I will have my home among my people.
I will live my life among them.
I will be their God
and they will be my people."

¹⁷ The scriptures therefore say:

"Come out from among the unbelievers
and be separate from them," says the Lord,

"Do not handle anything that makes you filthy and unable to worship me;

and I will open my arms and welcome you, ¹⁸ and I will be your Father,

and you will be my sons and daughters." says the all-powerful Lord.

Chapter 7

¹ Dear ones, since God has promised to do these things for us, we should stop doing anything with our bodies or minds that keeps us from worshiping God. Let us keep trying to avoid sinning; let us keep honoring God and trembling in his presence.

² Open your hearts to us! No matter what you may have heard about us, we have not wronged anyone. And we have never taken advantage of anyone. ³ I do not scold you to condemn you. We love you with all our hearts! We are united in purpose and we will live with you and die with you. ⁴ Moreover, I not only love you, I praise you to others—and I am filled up to overflowing with such joy because of you, even when we are going through severe afflictions.

⁵ When we came to you in Macedonia, we were exhausted. We had troubles on every side—we faced hardships that other people caused, and we feared many things. ⁶ But God always comforts us when we are discouraged, and he comforted us at that time by sending Titus to be with us. ⁷ Titus's coming was a great comfort, but you also comforted him when you were with him. When he came to us, he told us of your deep love for us, and how you were sorry for us in our sufferings. He also told us about how you were deeply concerned for me, so I rejoiced even more because of you.

⁸ I know the letter I wrote to you made you sad, but I had to write it. I did regret it when I wrote it, but what I wrote to you was necessary to help you deal with the problems in the church. I knew that your sorrow would last only for a short time. ⁹ And so now I can rejoice, not because you were sad when you read my letter, but because your sorrow turned you away from the sin that was hurting you so much, and it changed your sadness into a sorrow that God brought to you, a sorrow that gave you so much more than you had lost. ¹⁰ This kind of sorrow turns a person away from sin so that God can rescue him; people are glad, in the end, to have had this kind of sorrow. On the other hand, worldly sorrow, a sadness for

your sins only because you were caught in them, can lead only to death. ¹¹ Now think about how much good you wanted to do because you had this sorrow that God gave you. You wanted to show me you were innocent. You were so concerned about that accusation of sin, and you were so worried about how that person had sinned. You wanted justice to be done. In sum, you showed that you were innocent. ¹² What I wrote to you was not intended for the wrongdoer, and it was not written either for the one who suffered the wrong, but it was written for you to understand how much you are faithful to us. God knows that you are faithful to us. ¹³ By all of this we are very encouraged!

We were so happy about what Titus told us, and we were also happy because you had given him rest and helped him. ¹⁴ I told him very good things about you, how proud I was of you, and you did not put me to shame when he came to you. We praised you so much to Titus, and you proved it was all true! ¹⁵ Now his love for you has grown because he has seen for himself how much you follow God, and he knows how you welcomed him among yourselves—you welcomed him with fear, because God is holy, and with trembling, because you know God is great. ¹⁶ I am filled with joy because in everything, I have confidence in you.

Chapter 8

¹ We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about how God has been kindly working in wonderful ways among the churches in the province of Macedonia.

² Although the believers there were suffering very much, they were rejoicing so much that, although they are poor, they gave much money for the collection for

the believers in Jerusalem. ³ They gave as much as they were able—and I testify it is true—and some sacrificed and gave so much they suffered need themselves, but they still gave. They wanted to give, ⁴ and they begged us over and over and pleaded with us to allow them to give to this collection, so they could help those believers whom God has set apart for himself. ⁵ We did not think they could give like that. But they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then they gave themselves to us. ⁶ Titus had already begun encouraging you to contribute money, so we urged him to guide the collection to its end. ⁷ As you do better than others, not only in your trust in God, in your encouraging words, in what you have learned, in taking a task to completion, and in your love for us—make sure you do very well by completing this collection also.

⁸ I am not giving you an order, but I want you to prove how much you love the Lord by comparing how you give to how others give to people in need. ⁹ I say this, because you know how kind Jesus Christ has been to you. Although he possessed everything, he gave it all up and became poor. He did this in order to make you rich. ¹⁰ And in this I have some encouragement to give you: You started this ministry of help a year ago, and when you began it you were eager to do it. ¹¹ In the same way, you should finish this work. Just as you were eager to begin this work, you should be eager to end it, and to do this as quickly as you can. ¹² God will accept what you do in this task, if you are eager to do it. You must finish the work by giving money from the money that you have. You cannot give what you do not have. ¹³ We are not taxing you because we do not want others to have to support themselves. But it is fair for you to help them. ¹⁴ You have more than you need at this time; what you have left over will be enough for them, too. In

the future, they will have more than they need, and perhaps then, they will be able to help you. That is fair for everyone. ¹⁵ This is like the scriptures say:

”The one who had much did not have anything left to share;

but the one who had only a little did not need anything more.”

¹⁶ We thank God because he has caused Titus to care for you as much as I do. ¹⁷ When we asked him to help you, he agreed to do so. He was so eager to help you that he decided to visit you himself. ¹⁸ We have sent Titus along with another Christian brother. All the believers in the churches praise him because he preaches the good news very well. ¹⁹ The believers in the churches asked him to go with us to Jerusalem to help us take to the believers there what you and the others are giving to them. We all want to contribute this money in order to honor the Lord and to show everyone how much we believers help each other.

²⁰ We are doing everything we can to keep anyone from asking why we are asking for this money that you are giving so generously. ²¹ We are careful to do all this in an honest and open way. We want everyone to know how we are doing this, and we know that the Lord sees us, too. ²² And with these brothers we are sending to you, we are adding still one more brother. We have seen that this brother does important work in a very faithful manner. He now desires even more to help you because he trusts you very much. ²³ As for Titus himself, he is my partner; he works alongside me. The other brothers—it is the churches in our region who have chosen them to go with us to Jerusalem. When other people see them, they will praise Christ very much because of them. ²⁴ So show these brothers how you love them; show them why we spoke so well

about you, and why we could not stop telling all the churches how proud we are of you.

Chapter 9

¹ Now about this collection of money for the believers in Jerusalem—all those people whom God has set apart for himself, I really do not need to write anything more to you. ² I already know that you want to help, and I praised you for this to the believers of Macedonia. In fact, I told them that you, and the other people of the province of Achaia, have been preparing for this collection since last year. Your enthusiasm is an example that has moved the believers of Macedonia to take action. ³ For I am sending the brothers ahead of me, so that when they meet you, they will see that we did not praise you for nothing; I also sent them ahead of me so that you would be ready to finish the work, as I promised others you would be. ⁴ I am afraid that some Macedonians might come with me when I come a little later, and that they might find that you are not ready to give all that you want to give. If that happens, we will be ashamed that we spoke so well about you—and you would be ashamed, too. ⁵ I decided it was necessary to make every effort to send the brothers to you, so they could set in order everything necessary to receive the money you have promised to give. In this way, this money will be something you freely offer, rather than a tax that we make you pay.

⁶ The point is, anyone who sows very little seed will also have a small crop to harvest, but anyone who sows a great amount of seed will gather a great harvest. ⁷ First decide in your heart how much money to give, so when you give it you will not re-

gret doing it. You should not feel that anyone is forcing you to give, because God loves a person who is happy to give. ⁸ God can give you all kinds of gifts more and more, so that you will always have what you yourselves need, and also enough to do good things with. ⁹ As it is written in the scriptures:

”He gives good things to people everywhere,

and he gives to the poor what they need.

He does these things forever.

¹⁰ God gives seed to the one who sows, and he gives bread to one who bakes it. He will also supply your seed and increase what you are able to give away to others.

¹¹ God will make you rich in many ways, so that you can be generous. As a result, many others will thank God for what they receive through the work that we apostles have done.

¹² We receive this money, not only to help our Christian brothers and sisters in need; we also do it so that many, many believers will thank God. ¹³ Because you began this task, you have shown what kind of people you are. You honor God by obeying him and believing what he says in the good news about Christ. You also honor him by giving generously. ¹⁴ The ones to whom you will give will greatly desire to see you; they will pray for you, because of the wonderful way in which God has been kind to you. ¹⁵ We give thanks to God for this gift from him—his gift is so great we cannot express it in words.

Chapter 10

¹ Now I, Paul, beg of you—and I am humble and gentle as I do so, because Christ has made me that way: I, who was shy when I was in front of you, but forceful

when I am writing you a letter from far away: ² I beg of you that, when I come, I will not have to be harsh with you. I am afraid, however, that I will have to be, in order to speak against the people who think that we work with human standards. ³ For though we now are living in our physical bodies, we are fighting like armies fight. ⁴ And we are fighting with weapons, but these weapons are not designed by human beings, but by God. These weapons are powerful, so powerful that they can tear apart any false arguments. ⁵ In this way we can tear apart every false argument and all those who rise up against God. Those are the ones who try to keep people from knowing him. We keep and hold every thought that people have and we take those thoughts as our prisoners. God would work in those who did not obey him, and they will turn to him, and one day they will obey Christ. ⁶ When you completely obey Christ yourselves, we will be ready to punish any who remain disobedient to him.

⁷ You should look at the clear facts. If anyone has faith that he belongs to Christ, remind him that just as he belongs to Christ, so do we! ⁸ When I praised myself about our authority as apostles, that may have been too much for you. But the Lord gave that authority to me not to destroy you, but to help you and make you strong. So I am not ashamed of the authority the Lord gave me. ⁹ Though my letters seem strong when you read them, I do not want you to be afraid when you read them. That is not why I have written them to you. ¹⁰ Some people who know me and read my letters say, "We should take his letters seriously because they say powerful things, but when Paul is with us, he is physically weak and he is not worth listening to." ¹¹ Let those who criticize me know that what we write to you in our letters are the very things we do when we are with you.

¹² We will not even try to compare ourselves with those who praise themselves. When they compare themselves to one another, it proves only that they are foolish. ¹³ We will praise ourselves only about what God has given us to do. And we will work only as he has told us to work; our work, however, includes you also. ¹⁴ When we reached out to you, we did not go beyond where God assigned us to work. He assigned your region to us, and we were the first to tell you the Good News about Christ.

¹⁵ We are not boasting about the work God gave to others, as if we had done that work. Instead, we hope that you will trust God more and more, and that in the same way, God will assign us a larger region to work in. ¹⁶ We hope for this, in order that we may share the good news with people beyond where you live. We will not take credit for work that any other servants of God are doing, in their own regions where they serve him. ¹⁷ The scriptures say,

"Let the one who is proud, be proud of the Lord."

¹⁸ When a person praises himself for what he has done, God does not reward him for doing that. Instead, he rewards those whom he approves.

Chapter 11

¹ It is foolish for a person to praise himself, but that is what I am doing. Please allow me to continue a little. ² For I want to guard you carefully. I want to guard you the way God himself would guard you. I am like a father who promised you in marriage to only one husband and who wants to be the one who presents you, as a pure virgin bride, to Christ. ³ But as I think about you, I have become afraid that someone has tricked you, like

the devil tricked Eve. I am afraid that someone has convinced you to stop loving Christ with an honest heart. ⁴ I say this because you do not seem to mind if someone else comes and tells you different things about Jesus than what we told you, or if he wants you to receive a different spirit from the Spirit of God, or a different kind of good news. ⁵ People call those teachers “super-apostles,” but I do not think they are greater than I am. ⁶ It may be true that I never studied how to give wonderful speeches, but I certainly know many things about God, as you learned when I spoke to you.

⁷ Was I wrong to serve you as a humble person in such a way that others praised you instead of me? Was I wrong to preach the good news to you without charging any money? ⁸ Yes, I allowed believers in other churches to give me money so I could serve you. Maybe you will say that I was robbing them. But I asked you for nothing. ⁹ There was a time when I was with you that I needed many things, but I did not ask you for any money at all. The brothers who came from Macedonia provided all I needed, instead. I have done everything I could for you not to be in hardship because of me, and this I will continue to do. ¹⁰ I am telling the complete truth about Christ and how I have worked for him. So I will continue to let everyone in all the region of Achaia know about this. ¹¹ You do not really think that I refused your money because I did not love you, do you? Far from it! God knows I love you.

¹² I will continue to serve you in this same way, so that I stop those who say that they are equal to us. They will have no excuse to offer for how they boast. ¹³ Such people are false apostles claiming that God has sent them. They are workers who always tell lies, and they are pretending to be apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ They should not

surprise us. Even Satan pretends to be an angel shining with the light of God’s presence. ¹⁵ His servants also pretend to serve God; they pretend to be good. God will punish them as they deserve.

¹⁶ No one should think I am a fool. But if you really do think of me as a fool, then I will go ahead and continue to praise myself a little more. ¹⁷ When I speak in this way, this is not the way the Lord speaks of me; it is simply me speaking like a fool. ¹⁸ Many have been proud about who they are in this life. Well, I can be that way, too. ¹⁹ You will certainly gladly put up with my foolishness, since you are so wise yourselves! ²⁰ I say this because you have tolerated leaders who treated you like slaves; you followed those who created divisions among you; you let your leaders take advantage of you; you permitted your leaders to imagine themselves to be better than others; and you permit them to slap you in the face but you do nothing about it. And do you really call yourselves wise? ²¹ I could be ashamed, because when we were with you, we were too timid to treat you like that. ²² Are those people Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. ²³ Are they servants of Christ?—I speak like a man who is out of his mind! I worked harder than any of them; I have been in more prisons than they; I have had more severe beatings than they, and I have faced death more times than they have. ²⁴ Five times the Jews punished me with the thirty-nine lashes, beating me each time until I nearly died. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten by my captors with wooden rods. Once they threw stones at me to kill me. Three different ships I was on were lost to the storms, and I have spent a night and a day in the open ocean hoping for rescue. ²⁶ I have been on many journeys and I have known dangers in rivers, I have been

in danger from robbers, danger from my own people, the Jews, danger from the non-Jews, danger in cities, danger in the wilderness, danger in the ocean, danger from false brothers who betrayed us.²⁷ I have worked hard and been in hardship, often gone without sleep; I have been hungry and thirsty with nothing to eat. I have been cold and without enough clothing.²⁸ In addition to all that, I worry every day about how well the churches are doing.²⁹ There is no fellow believer who is weak, without me being weak with him. There is no fellow believer who has led another person into sin, without me being very angry about it.

³⁰ If I must boast, I will boast only about things like these, things that show how weak I am. ³¹ The God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ—may everyone and everything give him praise!—he knows I am not lying!

³² At the city of Damascus, the governor under King Aretas put a guard around the city, hoping to arrest me. ³³ But my friends put me in a basket and let me down out of the city, through a window in the wall, and I escaped from him.

Chapter 12

¹ Even though it does no good, I must continue to defend myself, so I will continue by boasting about some visions that the Lord gave me. ² Fourteen years ago God took me, a man who is joined to Christ, up to the highest heaven—although only God knows whether he took me up only in my spirit or in my body, too. ³ And I—whether in my body or only in my spirit, God alone knows—⁴ I was taken up into a place in heaven called paradise. There I heard things that were so holy and that I am not able to tell them to you. ⁵ I can

boast about that—but God made all that happen, not I. For myself, I can be proud only about how God works in me, a weak man. ⁶ Even if I kept on boasting about myself, I would not be foolish, because I would be saying only what was true. However, I will boast no more, so that you can judge me only by what you hear me say, or by what you already know about me. ⁷ So I will leave the subject of the amazing visions that God gave me; except that I should tell you that God sent me something very difficult to bear, a device from Satan, in order to cause me to suffer. God did this so that I would not become proud about the visions I saw. ⁸ I prayed three times to the Lord about this matter; each time I begged him to take this away from me. ⁹ But he said to me, “No, I will not take this away from you. All you need is for me to love you and be with you, because I do my most powerful work in you when you are weak.” That is why I would rather be proud of my weakness, so that Christ’s power can come and make me strong. ¹⁰ I can face anything because Christ is with me. It may be that I must be weak, or that others might treat me with scorn, or that I must have great hardships, or that others will try to kill me. It may be that I will continue to suffer hardships of various kinds. In any case, when my power is gone, then I am at my strongest.

¹¹ When I write this way, I am praising myself. But I had to do so, because you should have had confidence in me. I am just as good as these “super-apostles,” even though I am really nothing at all. ¹² I gave you the true signs of being an authentic apostle—miracles that I did very patiently among you: Wonderful miracles that proved that I truly serve Jesus Christ. ¹³ You certainly were just as important as all the other churches! The only way you were different was that I received no money from you as I did from them. For-

give me that I did not ask this from you!

¹⁴ So listen to this! I am now ready to visit you for a third time, and on this trip, as on all the others, I will not ask you for any money. I do not want anything you have. What I want is you! You know the principle that we all follow in our families: The children should not pay the expenses of their parents, but the parents save up to pay the expenses of the children. ¹⁵ I will most happily do everything I can for you, even if it means losing my life. If this means that I love you more than ever, surely you should love me more than ever as well.

¹⁶ And so, someone might say that although I did not ask you for money, I tricked you into letting me myself pay for everything I needed. ¹⁷ Well, I never cheated you by using someone else I sent to you, did I? ¹⁸ For example, I sent Titus and the other brother to you, but they did not ask you to support them, did they? Titus never made you pay his expenses, did he? Titus and the other brother treated you the same as I did, is this not so? We lived our lives in the same way; you never had to pay anything for us.

¹⁹ You do not really think that I have been trying to defend myself in this letter, do you? God knows that I am joined to Christ, and that I have written everything in order to strengthen you in trusting him. ²⁰ But when I come to you, I may not find you as I wished. When I come you may not want to listen to me. I fear that you are arguing a lot among yourselves, that some of you are jealous of one another, and that some of you become very angry with each other. I fear that some of you are putting yourselves first, that you are talking about each other, and that some of you are very selfish. ²¹ I am afraid that when I come to you and see you, God will humble me. I am afraid that I will have to mourn for

many of who disobeyed God earlier and have not stopped sinning in various sexual ways.

Chapter 13

¹ This is the third time I am coming to you to deal with these matters. The principle in dealing with these issues is what the scripture says: "Every accusation against another must be based on the testimony of two or three persons," not just one. ² When I was there on the second visit I said to those who had sinned and who had been charged before the church, and to the entire church, and I will say it again: I will not overlook these charges. ³ I tell you this because you are looking for proof that Christ is speaking through me. He is not weak in dealing with you; instead, he is working in you by his great power. ⁴ We learn from Christ's example, because they crucified him when he was weak, yet God has made him alive again. And we, too, are weak as we live and follow his example, but with him, God will strengthen us as we talk with you about these sins that some of you have committed.

⁵ It is yourselves whom you must examine and see how you live. You must look for evidence that you trust in how God loves you and has mercy on you. It is you whom you must put yourself to the test and ask if Jesus Christ lives within you? He lives in every one of you, unless, of course, you fail this test. ⁶ And I hope that you will find that we pass the test and Christ lives in us. ⁷ Now we pray to God that you may not do anything that is wrong. We pray for this, not because we want to seem better than you by passing that test. Instead, we want you to know and do the right things. Even if we seem to have failed, we want you to succeed. ⁸ The truth controls what

we do; we cannot do anything against the truth. ⁹ We have joy when we are weak and you are strong. We pray that you may always trust and obey God completely. ¹⁰ I am away from you now as I write this to you. When I come to you, I do not have to deal harshly with you. Because the Lord made me an apostle, I prefer to encourage you and not to make you weaker.

¹¹ The last thing, brothers and sisters, is this: Rejoice! Act and behave better than you have been acting, and allow the Lord to give you courage. Agree with each other and live in peace together. If you do these things, God, who loves you and brings you peace, will be with you. ¹² Welcome each other in a way that tells everybody how much you love each other. ¹³ All of us here, whom God has set apart for himself, greet you. ¹⁴ May the Lord Jesus Christ act kindly toward you, may God love you, and may the Holy Spirit be with you all.

GALATIANS

Chapter 1

¹⁻² I, Paul, am writing to my dear brothers and sisters in the province of Galatia. I am Paul, the apostle. No group of people made me an apostle, and God did not tell anybody to make me one. Instead, I am an apostle because Jesus Christ and God the Father have sent me as one—yes, God the Father, who made Christ live again after he had died! I and all the fellow believers who are here with me greet you all in the churches in the province of Galatia. ³ I pray that God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ will kindly help you and give you peace. ⁴ Christ sacrificed himself to God for our sins, in order to take us away from this world in which people act in such evil ways. He did this because God, our Father, wanted him to. ⁵ Because that is true, let us now praise God forever and ever.

⁶ As you know, Christ called you in his kindness to trust in him. But now I am amazed that you have stopped trusting in him! Now you believe a different message, which some people say is the true good news about God. ⁷ Christ never told us another good news, but other people are confusing you. They want to change the good news about Christ; they want you to believe that Christ actually said something different. ⁸ But even if we apostles or an angel from heaven should tell you a good news that is not the same as what we told you before, God should punish that person forever. ⁹ As we have already told you, so now I say to you again that someone is telling you a form of the good news that he says is good, but it is not the same as what you believed. So I ask God that he condemn that person forever. ¹⁰ I do

not need people to like me, because it is God who approves of me. I am not trying to please people. If I were still trying to please people, then I would not really be serving Christ.

¹¹ My fellow believers, I want you to know that the message about Christ that I proclaim to people is not one that some person created. ¹² I did not learn this good news from any ordinary human being, and no such person taught it to me. Instead, it was Jesus Christ himself who taught me.

¹³ People have told you about what I did in the past when I worshiped God in the Jewish way. I never stopped doing the worst things to the groups of believers that God had established. I tried to destroy those believers and their groups. ¹⁴ I honored God in the Jewish way more thoroughly than any other Jew my own age. I was very angry when I saw other Jews neglecting to obey the traditions that our ancestors had kept. ¹⁵ However, I was still in my mother's womb when God chose me to serve him, and he did this because it pleased him to do so. ¹⁶ He showed me that Jesus is his Son; he did this so that I would tell others the good news about his Son in regions where the non-Jews live. But I did not immediately go to any mere humans in order to understand that message better. ¹⁷ And I did not immediately leave Damascus and go to Jerusalem to see the apostles there, the men who had become apostles before I became one. Instead, I went away into the region of Arabia, a region of wilderness. Later I returned once more to the city of Damascus. ¹⁸ It was actually three years after God revealed this good news to me that I went up to Jerusalem to visit Peter. I stayed with him for fifteen days. ¹⁹ I also saw James, the half-brother of our Lord Jesus and the leader of the believers in Jerusalem, but

I did not see any other apostle. ²⁰ God knows that what I am writing to you is completely true! ²¹ After I left Jerusalem, I went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia. ²² At that time believers in the Christian congregations who were in the province of Judea still had never seen me. ²³ They only heard others keep saying, “Paul, the one who in the past was doing violent things to us, is now proclaiming the same good news that we believe and he had been trying to stop!” ²⁴ So they kept praising God because of what had happened to me.

Chapter 2

¹ After fourteen years passed, Barnabas, Titus, and I went up again to Jerusalem.

² We did this because God had told me we should go. I explained privately to the most important leaders of the believers the content of the good news that I had been proclaiming in the regions of the non-Jews. I did this because I wanted to make sure that they approved of what I had been preaching. I wanted to make sure that I had not been working uselessly.

³ But those leaders did not even require Titus, who was with me and was an uncircumcised Gentile, to be circumcised. ⁴ The people who would have required him to be circumcised were not true believers, but they pretended that they were fellow believers. They watched us closely to see how we obey God without following all the Jewish laws and rituals, since we know that Christ Jesus has freed us from those things. These false believers would like to make us like slaves to the law. ⁵ But not even briefly did we agree with them about circumcision. We resisted them in order that the true good news about Christ might continue to benefit you. ⁶ But those who others said were the leaders did not add anything to

what I proclaim. Those leaders are important men, but they do not matter to me, because God does not favor certain persons more than others. ⁷ Instead, the leaders understood that God was trusting me to proclaim the good news to the non-Jews, just as Peter was proclaiming the good news to the Jews. ⁸ That is, just as God had empowered Peter to go as an apostle to take God’s message to the Jews, he also empowered me to go as an apostle to take his message to the non-Jews. ⁹ Those leaders understood that God had kindly given to me this special mission. So James, Peter, and John, the leaders of the believers in Christ, leaders who many people knew and honored, shook hands with us because we were fellow workers with them. We agreed that God had sent us to the non-Jews, who were not circumcised, and that God had sent them to Jews, who were circumcised. ¹⁰ They only urged us to still remember to help the poor among the fellow believers who live in Jerusalem. That is exactly what I have been eager to do.

¹¹ But later while I was in the city of Antioch, after Peter came there, I looked into his eyes and told him that what he was doing was wrong. ¹² This is what happened. Peter went to Antioch and started eating regularly with non-Jewish believers there. Later there were certain Jewish believers who came to Antioch who claimed that James, the leader of the believers in Jerusalem, had sent them. And when those men came, Peter stopped eating with the non-Jewish believers and would not associate with them. He was afraid that the Jewish believers from Jerusalem would criticize him for associating with non-Jews. ¹³ Also, the other Jewish believers in Antioch joined in Peter’s hypocrisy by separating themselves from the non-Jewish believers. Even Barnabas thought he had to stop associating with

the non-Jews! ¹⁴ But when I realized that they were not following the truth of the good news about Christ, and when all the fellow believers had come together, I said to Peter in front of them all, “You are Jewish, but you have been living like a non-Jew who does not follow the law. So how can you possibly persuade the non-Jews to live like Jews?” ¹⁵ We were born as Jews, not as non-Jewish sinners who know nothing about God’s law. ¹⁶ But we now know that it is not because a person obeys the law that God gave to Moses that God makes a person right in his sight. God does that only if that person trusts in Jesus Christ. Even some of us Jews have trusted Christ Jesus. We did that so God would declare us good in his sight, because we trust Christ, and not because we try to obey the law that God gave to Moses. God has said that he will not declare anyone good in his sight just because they obey the law. ¹⁷ But when we asked God to make us right in his sight by trusting in Christ, we stopped trying to obey the law, so the law proved us to be sinners for doing that. But this certainly does not mean that Christ is in favor of sin. Certainly not!

¹⁸ If I again believed that God would make me right in his sight because I obey his law, I would be like a man who rebuilds a shaky old building that he had once torn down. Everyone would see that I was breaking God’s law. ¹⁹ As I was trying to obey God’s law, I became like a dead man; it was as if the law had killed me. This happened so that I might live to worship God. ²⁰ It is as though my old way of life ended when Christ died on the cross. I no longer direct my life. Christ who lives in my heart now directs how I live. And whatever I do now while I live, I do it trusting in God’s Son. He is the one who loved me and offered himself as the sacrifice to provide God’s forgiveness to me. ²¹ I do not set aside God’s kindness, as if keep-

ing the law could make us right with God. Otherwise, Christ would have died on the cross for nothing.

Chapter 3

¹ You fellow believers there in Galatia are very foolish! Someone must have bewitched you with their evil eye! I told you exactly how they had crucified Jesus Christ, did I not? ² So I want you to tell me only one thing: When the Holy Spirit came to you, did he come because you were obeying the law of Moses? Or did the Spirit come to you because you had heard the good news and trusted in Christ? Certainly this is what happened. ³ You are very foolish! You first became Christians because God’s Spirit enabled you. But now you think you will continue until you die by trying as hard as possible to obey the law. ⁴ All the difficult things you have experienced after you believed in Christ would have been of no value at all if you had not been trusting in him. ⁵ When God now generously gives to you his Spirit and performs mighty deeds among you, do you think that it is because you obey God’s law? Surely you know it is because when you heard the good news about Christ, you trusted in him!

⁶ What you have experienced is just as Moses had written in the scriptures about Abraham. He wrote that Abraham trusted God, and as a result God declared Abraham good in his sight. ⁷ You should realize, therefore, that it is those who trust in Christ to save them whom God has made into descendants of Abraham. ⁸ Even before God began to make non-Jews good in his sight when they trusted in him, men wrote in the scriptures that he would do this. God announced this good news to Abraham, as we read in the scriptures,

“Because of what you have done, I will bless all the people groups in the world.” ⁹ So, we know by this that it is all those who trust in Christ whom God blesses along with Abraham, who also trusted in God. ¹⁰ God curses all those who think they can please God by obeying his law. It is just as you can read in the scriptures, “God will eternally punish everyone who does not continuously and completely obey all the laws that Moses wrote in the book of the law.” ¹¹ But God has said that if he declares any people good in his sight, it will not be because they obeyed his law. You can read in the scriptures, “Every person whom God declares to be good will live because he trusts God.” ¹² Whoever tries to obey the law is not trusting in Christ, “Whoever starts to do the things in the law must obey them all.”

¹³ Christ stopped God from having to curse us as they wrote in the law he must. This happened when God cursed Christ in our place. You can read in the scripture, “God curses everyone whom they hang on a tree.” ¹⁴ God cursed Christ in order to bless the non-Jews who believe in Christ just as he blessed Abraham. And he blessed the non-Jews so that we might receive the Spirit, whom he promised to all who trust in Christ.

¹⁵ My fellow believers, God’s promise is like a contract between two people. After they sign it, no one can cancel it, nor can they add anything to it. ¹⁶ God promised to bless Abraham and his special descendant. The scriptures do not say, “your descendants,” that is, many people, but instead “your descendant,” meaning just one person, Christ. ¹⁷ This is what I am saying. God established an agreement with Abraham that the law which he gave to Moses 430 years later could not cancel. ¹⁸ This is because if what God is giving to us forever comes because we keep his law, then

he would not be giving it because he had promised to do so. In reality, however, God gave Abraham this gift because he had freely promised to give it.

¹⁹ So why did God later give his law to us? God gave his law to teach us that we all deliberately break it. And looking forward, God gave the law for the time when a descendent of Abraham would come. That descendent is the one who receives the promise that was made before to Abraham. The angels protected and applied the law by the authority of the one who would stand between God and people. ²⁰ Now, when one person speaks directly with another, there is no mediator. And God himself made his promises directly to Abraham.

²¹ So do the words of the law speak against what God promises? Certainly not. If we could obey the law and then live forever with God, then he certainly would have regarded us as good in his sight. ²² But that was impossible. Instead, because we sin, the law in the scriptures controls us—and all things—just as if we were in prison. So when God promised to free us from that prison, he was speaking about anyone who believes in Jesus Christ. ²³ Before God revealed the good news about how people should trust in Christ, his law was like a soldier who kept us in prison, unable to move about. ²⁴ Like a father protects his small child by telling a slave to take care of him, God was supervising us by his law until Christ came. He did this so that he might now declare us good in his sight, if we trust in Christ. ²⁵ But now that we can trust in Christ, we no longer need God’s law to supervise us.

²⁶ I say this because you are all God’s children because you have trusted in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ All of you who trust in Christ and were baptized so that you are joined to him, have taken on the characteris-

tics of Christ's life. ²⁸ If you are believers, it does not matter to God if you are Jews or non-Jews, slaves or free persons, males or females, because all of you are together joined to Christ Jesus. ²⁹ Furthermore, since you belong to Christ, he makes you into descendants of Abraham, and you will receive everything that God has promised him and us.

Chapter 4

¹ Now, I will further discuss children and heirs. An heir is a son who will later possess all that his father has. But as long as that heir is a child, he is like a slave whom others control. ² Until the day that his father has previously determined, other persons supervise the child and manage his property. ³ Likewise, when we were like young children, we were under the evil rules that everyone in this world lives by. Those rules controlled us like masters control their slaves. ⁴ But when the time that God had determined arrived, he sent Jesus, his Son, into the world. Jesus was born to a human mother, and he had to obey the law. ⁵ God sent Jesus to rescue us from the law controlling us. He did this to adopt us as his own children. ⁶ Because you are now God's sons, he sent the Spirit of his Son to live in each of us. It is his Spirit who enables us to call God, "Father, our dear Father!" This shows that we are God's sons. ⁷ So, because of what God has done, no longer is each of you like a slave. Instead, each of you is a child of God. Since each of you is now God's child, God will also give you all that he has promised. God himself will do it!

⁸ When you did not know God, you worshiped gods that really did not really exist. You were their slaves. ⁹ But now you do know God as your God. Perhaps it would

be better, however, to say that now God knows each of you. So why are you returning again to follow the weak and worthless evil rules of this world? You do not really want to become their slaves all over again, do you? ¹⁰ It actually seems that you do! You are once more obeying what others insist you should do on certain special days and at special times in certain months, seasons, and years. ¹¹ I worry about you! I worked so hard for you, but it seems that it was all for nothing. ¹² My fellow believers, I strongly urge you to become like me, because I do not let the law control me. I became like you non-Jews when I became free from the law, so you too should free yourselves from the gods. When I first went to you, you did not harm me at all, but now you are making me worry about you very much.

¹³ You remember that the first time I told you the good news, I did it because I was sick. ¹⁴ Although you might have despised me because I was sick, you did not reject me. Instead, you welcomed me like you would welcome an angel that came from God. You welcomed me like you would welcome Christ Jesus himself! ¹⁵ But now you are no longer happy! I know for certain that you would have done anything to help me. You would have torn out your own eyes and given them to me, if that would have helped me! ¹⁶ That is why I have become so sad now. You seem to think that I have become your enemy because I have continued to tell the truth about Christ to you. ¹⁷ Those who are insisting on obeying the Jewish laws are trying to get you to follow them, but they are not doing it for your good. They want to keep you away from me, because they want you to follow them, not me. ¹⁸ Well, it is good to insist on doing the right things; you should do this always, and not only when I am with you. But make sure it is the right people who are teaching you

what to do! ¹⁹ You who are like my children, once again I am very worried about you, and I will continue to be worried until you become like Christ. ²⁰ But I do wish that I could be with you now and that I might talk more gently with you, because right now I do not know what to do about you.

²¹ Let me try to explain this again. Some of you desire to obey all the law of God, but do you really pay attention to what the law says? ²² In the law we read that Abraham became the father of two sons. His female slave, Hagar, bore one son, and his wife Sarah, who was not a slave, bore the other. ²³ Ishmael, the son born by Hagar, the female slave, was conceived naturally. But Isaac, the son born by Sarah, who was not a slave, was conceived miraculously because God had promised Abraham that he would have a son. ²⁴ Now these two women symbolize two covenants. God made the first covenant with the people of Israel at Mount Sinai. That covenant requires the Israelites to live like a slave to the law. So Hagar, the female slave, symbolizes this covenant. ²⁵ So Hagar symbolizes Mount Sinai, in the land of Arabia. But Hagar also symbolizes the city of Jerusalem as it is today. This is because Jerusalem is like a slave mother: She and all her children—that is, her people—are like slaves, because they all must obey the law that God gave to Israel at Mount Sinai. ²⁶ But there is a new Jerusalem in heaven, and that city is like a mother of all us who believe in Christ, and that city is free! ²⁷ That new Jerusalem will have many more people than the old Jerusalem. This is because the prophet Isaiah wrote,

“You who live in Jerusalem, you must rejoice!

Now you have no children,

like a woman who cannot have children!

But one day you will shout with joy even though you have no children now.

Like a woman who cannot give birth to children,

and you feel deserted.

You will have more children than any woman with a husband could have borne.”

²⁸ Now, my fellow believers, you have become children of God because you believed in what God promised to give to us. You are like Isaac, who was born because Abraham had believed in what God promised to give to him. ²⁹ But long ago Abraham’s son Ishmael, who was born naturally, caused trouble for Abraham’s son Isaac, who was born because the Holy Spirit made it happen. It is the same way now. The people who are slaves to God’s law persecute those of us who trust in what Christ has promised to give us. ³⁰ But these are the words in the scriptures: “The son of the woman who was not a slave will inherit what his father owns. The slave boy will inherit nothing. So send away from this place the female slave and her son!” ³¹ My fellow believers, we are not children who have a slave woman as our mother, but we are the children who are born from a woman who was free, and so are we are free too!

Chapter 5

¹ Christ set us free from the law so that it may control us no longer. So stop anyone who says you are still slaves to the law, and do not let the law control you like slaves again. ² Consider very carefully what I, Paul, an apostle, now tell you. If you let anyone circumcise you, what

Christ has done for you will not help you at all! ³ Once again I solemnly declare to every man whom they have circumcised, that he must obey the law perfectly, for God to declare him good in his sight. ⁴ If you expect God to declare you good in his sight because you try to keep the law, you have separated yourself from Christ; God will no longer act kindly toward you. ⁵ We whom God's Spirit enables us to trust in Christ are confidently waiting for the time when God will declare us good in His sight. ⁶ God is not concerned whether we are circumcised or not circumcised. Instead, God is concerned about whether we trust in Christ, with the result that we love others because we trust in him.

⁷ You were following Christ so well! Who stopped you from obeying his true message? ⁸ God, the one who chose you, is not the one who is persuading you to think like this! ⁹ This false teaching that someone is teaching you is in danger of spreading to all of you, just like a little yeast in the dough causes it all to swell up. ¹⁰ I am certain that the Lord Jesus will keep you from believing in anything else except his true good news. God will certainly punish anyone who is confusing you by teaching this false message, whoever he is. ¹¹ But, my fellow believers, maybe someone is saying that I still teach that you must let them circumcise you. I certainly taught that before I followed Christ, but I am not teaching that any longer. But what they are saying cannot be true; otherwise, no one would be persecuting me now. No, I tell you that if people think they have to be circumcised to follow Christ, then the fact that Christ died on the cross no longer make any difference to them. ¹² I wish that those who are confusing you would go all the way and castrate themselves!

¹³ My fellow believers, God has called you to set you free. But do not think he set you

free so you could sin. Instead, love and serve each other, because you are now free to do that! ¹⁴ Remember something that Jesus said. He said all the law means this: "Love each person like you love yourself." ¹⁵ So if you attack and harm each other like wild animals, you might completely destroy each other.

¹⁶ So I tell you this: Always let God's Spirit lead you. If you do that, you will not sin, as normal human beings want to do. ¹⁷ When you want to sin, you go against God's Spirit. And God's Spirit goes against what normal humans want. These two are always fighting against each other. The result is that you do not always do the good things that you truly desire to do. ¹⁸ But when God's Spirit leads you, the law does not control you.

¹⁹ Now what normal human beings want to do is easy to see. They commit evil sexual actions, sexual actions that even go against what is natural, and they desire things that are against good laws. ²⁰ They also worship false gods and things that represent those gods. They try to get evil spirits to act for them. People are hostile to others. People quarrel with each other. People are jealous. People behave angrily. People try to get others to think highly of them and do not consider what others want. People do not associate with others. People associate only with those who agree with them. ²¹ People want what others have. People get drunk. People get drunk and riot. And they do other things like these. I warn you now, just like I warned you previously, that the ones who constantly act and think like this will not receive what God has for his own people when he reveals himself to everyone as king. ²² But as we grow in trusting Christ, God's Spirit starts causing us to love others. We are joyful. We are peaceful. We are patient. We are kind. We are good. We

are ones whom others can trust. ²³ We are gentle. We control our behavior. There is no law that says people should not think and act in such ways. ²⁴ Furthermore, we who belong to Christ Jesus have stopped allowing ourselves to do the evil things that we did in the past. It is as though we had nailed them to a cross and killed these evil things!

²⁵ Since God's Spirit has enabled us to live in a new way, we should behave as the Spirit leads us. ²⁶ We should not be proud about ourselves. We should not make each other angry. We should not envy each other.

Chapter 6

¹ My fellow believers, if you discover that a brother or sister is doing wrong, those of you whom God's Spirit is directing should gently correct that person. Furthermore, as you correct another person, you should be very careful so that you do not sin either. ² When there are brothers or sisters who have problems, you should help each other. By doing that, you will do what Christ commands. ³ I say this because people who think more highly of themselves than they should merely fool themselves. ⁴ Instead, each of you should constantly test and decide if you can approve what you yourself are doing and thinking. You can be proud because what you yourself have done is good, and not because what you have done is better than what anyone else has done. ⁵ I say this because you must each perform your own individual tasks.

⁶ If fellow believers teach you the truth about God, then you should share your possessions with them. ⁷ You should not deceive yourselves. Remember that no one can deceive God. Just like a farmer

will harvest exactly the kind of crop that he plants, God will pay back people according to what they have done. ⁸ God will punish eternally those who commit the sins that they wish to. But those who please God's Spirit will live forever with God because of what God's Spirit does for them. ⁹ But we should not tire of doing what pleases God, because eventually, at the time that God has determined, we will receive a reward, if we do not stop doing the good things that we have been doing. ¹⁰ So whenever we have opportunities, we should do what is good to all people. But especially we should do what is good to all our fellow believers.

¹¹ I am now writing this last part of this letter to you in my own handwriting. Notice the large letters with which I am now writing. ¹² Some Jewish believers want to circumcise you so that the other Jews will think highly of them for making converts to Judaism. But they are doing this just so that the others will not persecute them for believing that Christ died on the cross to save us. ¹³ The reason that I say this is that not even those people keep the law of God; instead, they want to circumcise you so they can boast that they have made more converts to the Jewish faith. ¹⁴ I myself, however, desire very much never to boast about anything like that. The only thing I will be proud about is our Lord Jesus Christ and his dying on the cross. When he died on the cross, he made everything the unbelievers wish for to be nothing in my sight, and he made what I wish for to be nothing in their sight. ¹⁵ I will be very proud about that, because God does not care whether people are circumcised or not. Instead, he cares only that he changes them into new people. ¹⁶ May God give peace and act kindly toward all who live like this. These believers are the true nation of Israel that belongs to God!

¹⁷ I say that people have persecuted me for declaring the truth about Jesus, and as a result I have scars on my body, unlike your new teachers. So let no one trouble me about these matters again!

¹⁸ My fellow believers, may our Lord Jesus Christ kindly be good to all of you. Amen!

EPHESIANS

Chapter 1

¹ I, Paul, write this letter to my dear fellow believers whom God has set apart for himself, and who are loyal to Christ Jesus—I am writing to the fellow believers who are living in the city of Ephesus. I am Paul, whom God chose and whom God sent to you as an apostle of Christ Jesus. ² I pray that God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord will give you his kindness and peace.

³ Praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! He has caused us great joy through every kind of heavenly spiritual blessing that Christ gives to us. ⁴ Before God created the world he chose us to be his people through Christ, who set us apart for God to live blamelessly in his sight. ⁵ Because he loves us, God planned long ago to adopt us as his own children because of what Jesus Christ has done. He planned to adopt us because it pleased him to have us as his children, so he did what he wanted to do. ⁶ Because of this we now praise God for his amazing kindness given to us by his Son whom he loves, kindness that we did not deserve.

⁷ Jesus has freed us as if he purchased us out of a slave market. He freed us by his death; that is, God has forgiven us of our sins, because he has been very, very kind to us. ⁸ He has been very kind to us, and he has given us every kind of wisdom. ⁹ God has now explained the secret of his plan. He has helped us to know the great work of Christ that he had planned. He did that because he chose to do it in that way, and he showed us what Christ would do for us. ¹⁰ God planned that at the time that he appointed he would unite all things in heaven and all things on earth,

and Christ would be the one who will rule them. ¹¹ Long ago God chose to unite us to Christ. He planned to do this, and he always does exactly what he wishes to do. ¹² God did that so that we who believe in Christ would live to give praise to God's glory. We were the first ones to trust in Christ. ¹³ It was in Christ that you also, after you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation—it was in him that you also have believed and were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. ¹⁴ The Holy Spirit is proof that we will receive all that God has promised. All this is great reason to praise him!

¹⁵ Because God has done so much for you, and because I heard how you trust in the Lord Jesus and love all whom God has chosen for himself, ¹⁶ I have not stopped thanking God for you and praying for you often. ¹⁷ I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father who lives in shining light, may help you think wisely and understand everything about what he reveals to you. ¹⁸ I pray that God may teach you about what he wants to do for us, and why we know he is speaking the truth. I pray that we may know how great are the things he promises to give to us and to everyone whom he will choose to belong to himself. ¹⁹ And I pray that you will know how very powerfully God acts for us who are trusting in Christ. He works powerfully for us, ²⁰ just like he acted powerfully for Christ when he caused Christ to become alive again after he died, and raised him to the place of highest honor in heaven. ²¹ In that place, Christ rules as supreme over every powerful spirit on every level of authority and over every name that exists. Jesus is much higher than any other being, not only now, but forever. ²² God has put all beings under the rule of Christ, as if they were all under his feet. And God has appointed Christ as the ruler over everything among

all believers everywhere. ²³ It is as if all believers together were Christ's own body. He fills all believers everywhere with his power, just as he fills all the universe with his power.

Chapter 2

¹ Before you trusted Christ you were powerless to obey God. You were as helpless as a person who is dead. ² You were like most people in the world today, and you, too, did what Satan wants—Satan is the ruler the evil spirits who have such power over the world. Satan is the evil spirit who is at work in the lives of people who disobey God. ³ We were at one time among those who disobeyed God; we did the evil things that we desired, things that would bring pleasure to our bodies and our minds. So God was very angry with us, just as with the others.

⁴ But God acts very mercifully, and he loves us very much. ⁵ We were like dead people, powerless to obey God, but then he made us live again by joining us to Christ. God has saved us because he has been very, very kind to us. ⁶ He raised us up from among those who are like dead people, and he gave us seats of honor to rule with Christ Jesus in heavenly places. ⁷ He did this to show in future times how kind he has been to us, for we are joined to Christ Jesus.

⁸ For God has saved you from his punishment by his extreme kindness given to you because you trust Jesus. You have not saved yourselves; this is a gift from God—⁹ a gift that no one can earn, so no one can boast and say that he has saved himself. ¹⁰ So God has created us as new people joined to Christ Jesus, so we can do good things—things that God planned long ago for us to do.

¹¹ Do not forget that you non-Jewish believers were previously called Gentiles because you were not born as Jews. The Jews insulted you by calling you “uncircumcised pagans.” They call themselves “the circumcision”; by this they mean that they, not you, are God's people, although circumcision is something that only humans do, not God. ¹² At that time, you did not have any part of Christ and you were not part of his people Israel. You did not know God's promises and law. You did not have confidence in the future that God promised you, and as you lived your lives, you did not know God. ¹³ But now because of what Christ Jesus has done, you have been able to trust in him because Christ agreed to die on the cross.

¹⁴ Christ has brought peace and unity between Jews and non-Jews by destroying the barrier between us, as if he had destroyed a wall of hate that separated our peoples from one another. ¹⁵ He made it no longer necessary for us to obey all the Jewish laws and commandments. He made Jews and non-Jews into one people instead of two because he made peace between us. ¹⁶ Jesus caused Jews and non-Jews together to both become friends with God in one new group of believers. By dying on the cross, Jesus made it possible for them to stop hating each other. ¹⁷ Jesus came and proclaimed the gospel that brings peace with God; he proclaimed it both to you non-Jews, who did not know about God, and to us Jews, who did know about God. ¹⁸ Through Jesus both Jews and non-Jews now can speak with the Father because God's Spirit lives in all believers.

¹⁹ Therefore now you non-Jews are no longer strangers and foreigners to God's people, but instead you are fellow members with those whom God has set apart for himself, and you belong to God's fam-

ily for whom God is the Father. ²⁰ You are like stones that God has made to be part of his building, and the building is built on what the apostles and prophets taught. The most important stone, the cornerstone, of the building is Christ Jesus himself. ²¹ Jesus is increasing his family of believers and fitting them together like a temple of stones is built and fit together, increasing as the Lord joins new believers to himself. ²² Jesus is building you up together, both Jews and non-Jews, into one family in which God lives by means of his Spirit.

Chapter 3

¹ Because God has done all this for you non-Jews, Christ Jesus has put me, Paul, in prison for your sake. ² I assume that you know that God has honored me by giving me a certain task to do for your sake. ³ He gave me this task because of the secret truth about which I wrote to you briefly; ⁴ when you read what I have already written briefly about that, you will be able to understand that I clearly understand the truth about Christ. ⁵ Formerly, God did not fully reveal the good news that was to come to anyone. It was something that no one understood, but now his Spirit has revealed the good news to his apostles and prophets whom the Spirit called to serve God. ⁶ This hidden truth is that the non-Jews now share together with Jews the spiritual riches of God, and belong to the same group of God's people, and will share all the things God has promised them because they are joined to Christ Jesus—this is the gospel. ⁷ I am now God's servant to spread the good news, a work I did not deserve to do, but which God gave me working in me with his power.

⁸ Although I am the least worthy of all God's people, God has enabled me by his

kindness and mercy to proclaim to non-Jews the good news about what Christ has done for us, which is so much that no one can learn all about it. ⁹ My mission is to explain to everyone what God's plan is, something that God has kept hidden from long ago, from the time when he created everything. ¹⁰ What God has wisely planned, he has even shown to powerful angels in heaven through his people who trust in Christ. ¹¹ That is what God had always planned for eternity, and it is what he accomplished through the work of Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹² So now when we pray, we can come to God confidently and without being afraid, because we trust in Jesus, who has fulfilled God's plan. ¹³ So I ask that you do not be discouraged because of my suffering many things for you here in prison, which actually end up honoring you.

¹⁴ Because God has done all this for you, I kneel and pray to God our Father. ¹⁵ He is the one who gives every family in heaven and on the earth their name. ¹⁶ I pray because of his great power that God will give you power and will strengthen you by his Spirit who lives in your spirits. ¹⁷ I pray that Christ may live in your hearts because you trust in him, and that you will be like a firmly rooted tree and a building founded upon stone, ¹⁸ so that you may be fully able to understand, along with the all those set apart for God, how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ. ¹⁹ For this love is so great that we cannot understand it, but because of this love, I pray that God may fill you all with himself.

²⁰ God is able to do much greater things than we usually ask him to do, or even that we might think that he can do, because of his power that is working within us. ²¹ May all believers assembled to worship God, and Christ Jesus himself, honor God more than they honor anything else.

May all believers from all generations of history praise him forever and ever! So let it be done.

Chapter 4

¹ Therefore, from this prison where I am because I proclaim the Lord Jesus, I urge you whom God has chosen to live in a way that honors Jesus, who called you. ² Humbly and gently and patiently serve the needs of one another because you love each other. ³ Do all you can to remain united with one another by peacefully living together with each other. ⁴ All believers form one group, and there is only one Holy Spirit, and you were chosen to confidently wait for God to fulfill His promises to you. ⁵ There is only one Lord, Jesus Christ, and there is one faith, that is the trust we have in God; and there is only one true Christian baptism. ⁶ There is one God, the true Father of all. He rules over everyone, and he is working through all events, and he is working within everything that happens.

⁷ God has generously given to each believer spiritual gifts that Christ has measured out to us as he wishes. ⁸ This is similar to what the psalmist said about God receiving tribute money from those whom he had conquered,

When he ascended to his city at the top of the mountain,

he led the captives into captivity

and gave their gifts of tribute to his people.

⁹ The words “he ascended” certainly make us know that Christ had also previously descended to the earth from heaven, like God’s anointed king coming down from Jerusalem to fight. ¹⁰ Christ, who descended to earth to conquer evil, is also

the one who was crucified for our sins, came back to life, and ascended to the most exalted position in heaven, in order that he might control everything. ¹¹

He appointed some believers to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some to lead and others to teach the groups of believers. ¹² This was to prepare God’s people to do God’s work and serve others, so that all the people who belong to Christ might become spiritually strong

¹³ He wants all of us believers to be united together as we all trust in him and grow to fully understand him. He wants us to become mature believers, together, growing to become perfect, as he himself is perfect. ¹⁴ Once we are mature, we will no longer be ignorant of what is true, like little children. We will no longer follow every new teaching, like a boat is blown around by the wind and waves. We will not allow people who teach what is false to trick us and deceive us. ¹⁵ Instead, we will live by loving God and trusting his true teachings, and we will become more and more like Christ in every way. He controls his people like a person’s head controls his body. ¹⁶ He enables all believers everywhere to grow together and love each other, like a person’s body fits together and holds together by the joints that connect the body together, which allows the body to grow and build itself up because the parts of body depend upon each other.

¹⁷ By the authority of the Lord Jesus, I strongly affirm that you must no longer live like the unbelieving non-Jews do. The futile way they think directs them how to live. ¹⁸ They are unable to think clearly about what is right or wrong. They cannot comprehend obeying God because they refuse to listen to his message, and so they do not have the eternal life that Jesus gives us. ¹⁹ They have chosen to do shameful things their bodies desire without stopping. They commit all kinds of immoral

acts and are obsessed with them more and more, and they are greedy for anything they desire.

²⁰ But when you learned about Christ you did not learn to live like that. ²¹ Now that you have heard about Jesus and he has taught you, you know that his way is the true way to live. ²² Jesus taught that you must stop living the way you used to live. You were like corpses that were decaying because you were deceiving yourselves with what you desired. ²³ You must let God change your spirits and how you think. ²⁴ You must start living like new persons. God has created you as new persons. You are set apart for him. He created you to live in the right way, to be truly dedicated to God.

²⁵ Therefore, quit lying to one another. As the scripture says, "Speak truthfully to one another because we now are each other's fellow believers." We now belong to one another in God's family. ²⁶ If you get angry, do not let your anger become sin. Before the end of the day, stop being angry ²⁷ so that you will not allow the devil to attack you. ²⁸ Those who have been stealing must not steal any longer. Instead, they must work hard to earn their living by their own efforts, so that they may have something to give to those who are needy. ²⁹ Do not use foul language. Instead, say good things that will help people when they need help, things that help those who hear. ³⁰ Do not make the Holy Spirit of God sad by how you live. He has promised that God will one day rescue us from this world of evil. ³¹ Do not be resentful at all toward others. Do not become angry in any way or shout abusively at others. Never slander others. Never plan evil toward others. ³² Be kind to one another. Act mercifully toward each other. Forgive each other, just like God forgave you because of what Christ has done.

Chapter 5

¹ Imitate God because he loves us, because you are his children. ² Live by loving others just like Christ loved us when he gave himself up on the cross as the offering and sacrifice to God for our sins, which was very pleasing to God. ³ Do not suggest any kind of immoral act and do not desire what others have or wrong things others do. Such sins can cause people to say bad things about God's people, who are together set apart for God, not for sin. ⁴ Do not tell obscene stories to others or say foolish things or joke about committing sins. Such things are not what people who belong to God talk about. Instead, thank God for his love when you talk to others. ⁵ You can be sure of this: No person who is sexually immoral or indecent, or who is greedy (for this is the same as worshipping idols) will be among God's people over whom Christ rules as king. ⁶ Do not let anyone deceive you with false arguments. Because they do these sinful things, God will be angry with the people who disobey him.

⁷ So do not join with those who do these kinds of sins. ⁸ Before you believed in the Lord Jesus, you were living in sinful disobedience, as if a dark night surrounded you all the time. But now live in the light of the Lord. ⁹ Like light produces good things, so also those who live in the light of Jesus know and do what is good, right, and true. ¹⁰ Test and find out what pleases the Lord. ¹¹ Do not participate together with those who are doing the worthless deeds done in spiritual darkness. Instead, just say, "Those sinful acts are worthless," ¹² because the evil things people do in the secret of darkness are too shameful to describe in the light. ¹³ Everything that light exposes can then be clearly seen and better understood ¹⁴ because the light shows

what it truly is. It is like when God's word explains the sins that destroy people and Jesus who forgives and renews people. So believers say,

"Wake up from your sleep
and arise from living like dead people.
Christ will enable you to understand
his forgiveness and new life."

¹⁵ So be very careful how you live. Do not behave as foolish people do. Instead, behave as wise people do. ¹⁶ Use the time you have on earth wisely because the days here are filled with evil. ¹⁷ So do not be foolish. Instead, understand what the Lord Jesus wants you to do, and do it!

¹⁸ Do not become drunk by drinking alcoholic drinks, which can ruin your life. Instead, let God's Spirit control what you do at all times. ¹⁹ Sing to each other Psalms, and sing songs about Christ, and sing songs that God's Spirit gives you. Sing these Psalms and other songs from your hearts to praise the Lord Jesus. ²⁰ At all times thank God the Father for everything because of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for you. ²¹ Humbly submit yourselves to each other because you honor Christ.

²²⁻²³ Wives should submit to their own husband's leadership as they do to the Lord Jesus, because the husband is the leader of the wife as also Christ is the leader of the worldwide assembly of believers. He is the Savior who has saved all believers from being condemned for their sins. ²⁴ Just as all believers submit themselves to the authority of Christ, the women must submit themselves completely to the authority of their husbands.

²⁵ Each of you husbands, love your wife as Christ loved all believers and gave up his own life for us on the cross, ²⁶ so that he might set us apart for himself. By the

power of his word Jesus purified believers by removing the punishment for our sins, as if he had washed us with water. ²⁷ Now Christ can present all believers to himself as a completely clean, forgiven, faultless group, without sin. ²⁸ Each man should love his wife as he loves his own body. When men love their wives, it is as though they loved themselves, ²⁹⁻³⁰ because no one ever hated his own body. Instead, he feeds his own body and cares for it, just like Christ also cares for all us believers in his worldwide assembly. We have become one group of believers that belongs to him. ³¹ The scriptures say this about people who marry:

"When a man and a woman marry, they should permanently leave their fathers and mothers. They should be joined as husband and wife, and the two of them will become as though they were one person."

³² It is difficult to understand the meaning of these things that God has now revealed, but I am telling you about Christ's love for his worldwide assembly of believers. ³³ However, as for you, each man must love his wife just as he loves himself, and each woman must respect her husband.

Chapter 6

¹ You children, because you belong to the Lord Jesus, obey your parents, because it is right for you to do that. ² God commanded in the scriptures,

"Greatly respect your father and mother." That is the first law that God commanded in which he also promised something. He promised,

³ "If you do that, you will prosper, and you will live a long time on the earth."

⁴ You parents, do not treat your children

so severely that they become angry. Instead, bring them up well by instructing them and by disciplining them in the manner that the Lord Jesus wants you to do.

⁵ You slaves, obey those who are your masters here on the earth. Obey them very respectfully and sincerely just like you obey Christ. ⁶ Obey them not only when they are watching you. Instead, obey them as though you were slaves of Christ, not slaves of your masters. Do enthusiastically what God wants you to do. ⁷ Happily serve your masters, as you would serve the Lord Jesus, not as you would serve ordinary people. ⁸ Do this because you know that one day the Lord Jesus will reward each person for whatever good deeds that person has done. It makes no difference whether that person was slave or free.

⁹ You masters, just like your slaves should serve you well, you must treat them well. Stop threatening them. Do not forget that the one who is their Lord and your Lord is in heaven. He judges whether you have done right without preferring one person over another.

¹⁰ Finally, rely completely on the Lord Jesus to strengthen you spiritually by his own mighty power. ¹¹ Just like a soldier puts on all his armor, you should use every resource from God to successfully resist the devil when he cleverly schemes against you. ¹² We are not fighting against other humans, but instead we are battling against all kinds of demonic rulers and evil spirits who live in spiritual darkness. ¹³ Therefore, just as a soldier puts on all his armor, so also you must put on all of the armor of God so that you can stand against evil in this time of evil on earth. With God's armor, you can fight against attacks of evil and live for God.

¹⁴ Stand firm as a soldier is on guard. Wear truth like the soldier fastens his belt around his waist; and as he puts on a

breastplate, you put on your breastplate by doing what God has commanded you to do. ¹⁵ Just as soldiers put on their boots, be ready to go anywhere you are needed for the sake of the gospel. You carry the gospel with you everywhere you go, and you bring peace with you everywhere. ¹⁶ As the soldier takes up a shield for protection, so you take up the shield of faith, and that shield will put out the flaming darts that the evil one will shoot at you. Your shield will protect you. ¹⁷ As the soldier puts on a helmet to protect his head, your helmet of protection is your salvation. The soldier has a sword, but your sword is the word of God, which is "the sword of the Spirit." ¹⁸ And let God's Spirit direct you in how you pray and what you pray for. Keep praying to God at all times and keep asking God to meet the needs that other people have. If you are going to be effective in your prayers, you must keep spiritually alert. Take special care to pray for all God's holy people. ¹⁹ And pray for me. Pray that God will tell me what I should say whenever I speak, in order that I may boldly tell others the good news about Christ. People did not know that message before, but God has now revealed it to me. ²⁰ I am a representative of Christ because of that, here in prison. Pray that when I tell others about Christ, I may speak without being afraid, because that is how I ought to speak.

²¹ In order that you may know about what is happening to me and what I am doing, I am sending Tychicus to you with this letter. He will tell you everything that is happening here. He is a fellow believer whom we all love very much, and he serves the Lord Jesus faithfully. ²² That is the reason that I am sending him to you; I want you to know how my companions and I are. I want him to comfort and encourage you.

²³ I pray that God our Father and the Lord

Jesus Christ may cause all of you fellow believers to have inner peace, to love each other, and to have faith in God. ²⁴ May God give his grace to all people who love our Lord Jesus Christ without ceasing.

PHILIPPIANS

Chapter 1

¹ I, Paul, am writing this to the dear fellow believers who live in the city of Philippi. We, Paul and Timothy, are sending this letter to all of you in Philippi whom God has set apart for himself, you who are joined to Christ Jesus. We are also sending this letter to the overseers and deacons who are serving there. ² We pray that God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord will be kind to you and give you peace.

³ I thank my God as I pray to him, whenever I think about you. ⁴ I am constantly praying for you with joy ⁵ and thanking God because you are working with Timothy, me, and others in proclaiming the good news from the first day you believed until now. ⁶ I know that God is doing very good things among you. I am completely confident that he will finish those things at the time when Jesus Christ returns. ⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about you because I love you from my heart. You have been partners with me in carrying out the work that God kindly gave me to do, whether now as I am in prison, or when I speak in public about the good news and show people that it is true. ⁸ God sees how deeply I desire to be with you, just as I deeply love you all, just as Christ Jesus tenderly loves us all.

⁹ I am praying for you, that you might love each other more and more, and that you might know and understand why God wants you to do so. ¹⁰ I also pray that God will enable you to know what you should believe and the best ways in which you should act. I pray for this so that you might be honest and blameless at the time when Christ returns. ¹¹ I also pray that you will always do the things that you can do

because God has declared you good in his sight because of Jesus Christ. Then other people will see how you honor God.

¹² My fellow believers, I want you to know that the hard things I have suffered have not prevented me from proclaiming the good news to people. Instead, my hardships have enabled even more people to hear the good news about Christ. ¹³ In particular, all the military guards here in Rome and many other people in this city now know that I am a prisoner because I proclaim the good news about Christ. ¹⁴ Also, most of the believers here now proclaim the good news about Jesus more courageously and fearlessly because they trust the Lord more firmly to help them. They speak about Jesus more confidently because they have seen the Lord help me in prison to speak the good news.

¹⁵ Some people are proclaiming the good news because they are jealous and they want believers to honor them rather than me. But others are proclaiming the good news because they love Christ and they want people who have not heard the good news to hear it. ¹⁶ Those who proclaim the good news because they love Christ know that God appointed me to speak in public and explain why the good news is true. ¹⁷ But those who are proclaiming the good news about Christ for selfish reasons do not have good reasons for doing so. They believe they are causing me more suffering while I am here in prison. ¹⁸ But it does not matter! People are proclaiming the good news about Christ, either for good reasons or for bad reasons. So I am rejoicing that people are spreading the message about Jesus Christ! And I will continue to rejoice in that!

¹⁹ I will rejoice because I know that God will free me from prison. He will do this because you are praying for me and because the Spirit of Jesus Christ is helping

me. ²⁰ I eagerly and confidently expect that in no way will I fail to do what I should do. Instead, I will have courage now, just as in the past. I will honor Christ with my body, whether I live or die.

²¹ As for me, I live to honor Christ. But if I die, it will be even better for me. ²² On the other hand, if I continue to live here in my body in this world, I will be able to serve Christ here. So I do not know whether I prefer to live or to die. ²³ I cannot choose which I prefer, living or dying. I long to die and leave this world and go to be with Christ, because to be with Christ would be very much better for anyone. ²⁴ But it is more necessary that I remain alive here on earth because you still need me to help you. ²⁵ Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain alive with you all to help you rejoice and trust Christ more. ²⁶ So you should be happy about me because of Christ Jesus when I am once again with you.

²⁷ Most importantly, behave in front of the people who live around you in a way that shows that you honor the good news about Christ. Do this so that whether or not I come and see you, how you live will make me happy. They should tell me that you together are doing your best to believe and live as the good news teaches us. ²⁸ Do not let any of those people who are against you frighten you! When you are courageous and resist them, this will show them that God will destroy them but will save you. ²⁹ God is kind to you: He is allowing you to suffer for Christ as well as to trust in him. ³⁰ You are having to resist those who oppose the good news, just like you saw that I had to resist such people there in Philippi, and just like you hear that I still have to resist such people here now.

Chapter 2

¹ Since Christ encourages us, since he loves us and comforts us, since God's Spirit fellowships with us, and since Christ is very merciful to us, ² make me completely happy by doing the following things: Agree with one another, love one another, act together as one person, and try to accomplish the same things. ³ Never try to make yourselves more important than others nor boast about what you are doing. Instead, be humble, and in particular, honor one another more than you honor yourselves. ⁴ Each one of you should not only be concerned about your needs. You should also be concerned about other people and help them when they have needs.

⁵ Think the same way as Christ Jesus thinks:

⁶ Although he is deserving of all the honors that God should receive,

he took his honors and laid them down, and did not hold on to them.

⁷ Instead, he gave up everything, taking on the qualities of a servant, and he became a human being.

⁸ And he humbled himself by taking on human form,

and in his humility he obeyed God

even though obedience to God meant he had to die,

and he died a terrible death, the death of a criminal, death on the cross.

⁹ Because of Christ's obedience to him, God honored him very much;

he honored him more than anyone else who has ever lived,

¹⁰ so that when everyone hears the name "Jesus"

everyone will bow down to honor him, people who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth;

¹¹ so that everyone will say the same praises,

that Jesus Christ is Lord,

and they will praise God the Father because of him.

¹² My dear friends, as you always obeyed God when I was with you, now that I am apart from you, obey him even more. Honor God together, be humble, and do your best to live as those whom God is saving. ¹³ For God is working in your hearts so that you will want to do and then actually do the good things that please him.

¹⁴ Do everything without complaining or arguing, ¹⁵ so that you neither do nor think of anything wrong as you live among unbelievers, since many of these are wicked people who call evil good. Among these wicked people you should be like the stars at night that shine in the midst of darkness. ¹⁶ Keep trusting in the message that can make you live forever. If you do this, I will rejoice at the time when Christ returns, because then I will know that I did not work among you uselessly.

¹⁷ And I will greatly rejoice with you all, even if they kill me, and my blood pours out like something I offer to God. It will be in addition to what you sacrifice to God because you trust in him. ¹⁸ In the same way you, too, should rejoice together with me!

¹⁹ I am trusting in the Lord Jesus to be able to send Timothy to you soon. I hope that when he returns, he will encourage me by telling me about what God is doing in your lives. ²⁰ I have no one else like Timothy who genuinely cares for you. ²¹ All the others whom I might send to you are concerned only about their own matters. They are not concerned enough

about what Jesus Christ considers important. ²² But you know Timothy's proven character, because as a son with a father he served me in the gospel. ²³ I confidently expect to send Timothy to you as soon as I know what will happen to me. ²⁴ And because I believe that the Lord wants this to happen, I am confident that they will soon release me, and that I will come to you myself.

²⁵ I believe that I must send Epaphroditus back to you. He is a fellow believer and my fellow worker and soldier for Christ, and your messenger and servant whom you sent to help me in my need. ²⁶ When Epaphroditus learned that you heard he was sick, he became very worried and began longing to be there with all of you at Philippi. ²⁷ Indeed, he was so sick that he almost died, but he did not die. Instead, God was very kind to him and also to me, so that I would not have a reason to grieve much. ²⁸ So I am sending him back to you as quickly as possible. I will do this in order that you may rejoice when you see him again, and that I might grieve less. ²⁹ Welcome Epaphroditus with the great joy we have because the Lord Jesus loves us. Honor him and other believers like him. ³⁰ As he was working for Christ, he almost died. He ran the risk of dying in order to supply the things that I needed, something you could not do because you are far away from me.

Chapter 3

¹ Finally, my fellow believers, continue to rejoice because you belong to the Lord. Though I will now write to you about those same matters that I mentioned to you before, this does not make me tired, and it will protect you from those who would like to harm you.

² Beware of those people who are as dangerous to you as wild dogs. They just mutilate men's bodies so they will become Jews. ³ But as for us—the Spirit of God enables us to truly worship God; we rejoice because we trust in Christ Jesus; and the rituals or ceremonies that people perform mean nothing to us. Therefore we ourselves are what it truly means to be circumcised. ⁴ If anyone could have done enough things to please God, it would have been me.

⁵ They circumcised me seven days after I was born. I was born as one of the people of Israel. I am from the tribe of Benjamin. You cannot find a person more Hebrew than myself! My ancestors were all Hebrews. And it was as a Pharisee that I obeyed all the laws of Moses and what our ancestors taught about them. ⁶ I was so passionate to make people obey the law that I caused believers in Christ to suffer. No one could say that I ever disobeyed the law.

⁷ But everything that I then considered to be important I now consider to be worthless, because Christ has changed me. ⁸ Instead, even more I now consider all things as not only worthless, but as useless garbage to throw away, compared to how great it is to know Christ Jesus my Lord. I have removed from my life everything worthless, in order to benefit from Christ. ⁹ I now belong completely to Christ. I know that I cannot make myself good in God's sight by keeping the law. Instead I trust totally in Christ, so God has declared me good in His sight. ¹⁰ When God declared me good in his sight, he did this so that I could begin to know Christ; so that God could begin to work in me with the same power with which he raised Christ from the dead; so that I could begin to suffer along with Christ as he suffered; and so that Christ could make me more like him

when he died. ¹¹ All of this is because I fully expect that God will cause me to live again, as he has promised.

¹² I do not claim that all of these things have fully happened to me yet. But I keep trying to receive these things, because these things are why Christ Jesus took possession of me. ¹³ My fellow believers, I certainly do not yet think that all these things have completely happened to me. But I am like a runner, because I do not look backward as I run toward the finish line. ¹⁴ Instead, I keep running toward the finish line, in order to win the prize, which is to live forever with God. This is what God has called me for, and what Christ Jesus has made possible. ¹⁵ So all of us who have become strong believers should think this same way. But if any of you do not think this same way, God will reveal this to you. ¹⁶ Whatever is true about us now, however far we have come, let us trust Christ more and more in the same way we have done until now.

¹⁷ My fellow believers, join with me and imitate me, and observe closely those people who live as I do, and imitate our example. ¹⁸ There are many people who say that they believe in Christ, but they really oppose what he did on the cross for us. I have told you about those people many times before, and now I am sad, even crying, as I tell you about them again. ¹⁹ God will destroy them in the end because their god is their desire to eat, and they live shamefully and think about things of the earth. ²⁰ As for us, we are citizens of heaven. It is from heaven that we are eagerly awaiting our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to return. ²¹ He will change the bodies we have now, weak and humble bodies, into bodies like his own powerful body. He will do this with the same power with which he controls all things.

Chapter 4

¹ My fellow believers, I love you and I long for you. You give me joy; you will be the reason for which God will reward me. Dear friends, continue to believe firmly in the Lord, as I have described to you in this letter.

² I urge you, Euodia, and I urge you, Syntyche, to again have a peaceful relationship with each other, because you are both joined to the Lord Jesus. ³ And I also urge you, my faithful partner, please help these women. They have faithfully proclaimed the good news and worked with me, together with Clement and the rest of my fellow laborers, whose names are in The Book of Life in which God has written the names of all those people who will live forever.

⁴ Always rejoice for the Lord Jesus! I say again, rejoice! ⁵ All people must see that you are gentle because the Lord is near. ⁶ Do not worry about anything. Instead, in every situation pray to God, tell him exactly what you need, and ask him to help you. And thank God for all he does for you. ⁷ Then God's peace, which is much greater than we can understand, will be like a soldier that is guarding how you feel and how you think, as we are joined to Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, my fellow believers, whatever is true, whatever is worthy for people to honor, whatever is right, whatever no one can find fault with, whatever is pleasing, whatever people should admire, whatever is good, whatever deserves people to praise it: These are the things that you should always be thinking about. ⁹ Those things that I have taught you and that you have received from me, those things that you have heard me say and that you have seen me do, those are the things that you yourselves should always do. Then God,

who gives us his peace, will be with you.

¹⁰ I rejoice greatly and thank the Lord because now, after some time, you sent money to me, and so you have once again shown that you are concerned about me. Indeed, you were concerned about me all the time, but you had no opportunity to show it. ¹¹ I am not saying this because I need certain things. In fact, I have learned to be content with whatever I have. ¹² I am able to be needy or to have plenty. I have learned how to be satisfied in all circumstances. I know the secret of how to be happy at all times. ¹³ I am able to do everything because Christ makes me strong. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, you did the right thing to share with me in my hardship.

¹⁵ My friends there at Philippi, you yourselves know that during the time I first proclaimed the good news to you, when I left there to go away from the province of Macedonia, no assembly of believers sent me funds or helped me in any way except you only! ¹⁶ Even when I was in the city of Thessalonica, you sent money more than once to supply what I needed. ¹⁷ I say this, not because I desire that you give me money now. Instead, I want to see you do even more things that God will praise you for.

¹⁸ I have plenty of things now. I have so many things that you sent me through Epaphroditus. These things are like when priests burn an animal sacrifice to God and it smells good to him. ¹⁹ God, whom I serve, will supply everything you need because you belong to Jesus Christ, who owns the splendor and wealth of heaven. ²⁰ So people should praise God our Father, who will rule forever and ever in brilliant light! Amen!

²¹ Greet for me all the believers. They all belong to God! The believers with me greet you, as well. ²² All of God's people here send their greetings to you. Espe-

cially the fellow believers who work in the palace of Caesar, the emperor, send their greetings to you.

²³ My desire is that our Lord Jesus Christ will continue to act kindly toward you all.

COLOSSIANS

Chapter 1

¹ I, Paul, write this to the dear fellow believers in the city of Colossae. This is from Paul, whom God chose to send to you as an apostle of Christ Jesus, and this letter is also from Timothy, our fellow believer joined to Christ. We are sending this letter to all of you. ² We send this letter to those God has set apart for himself—those who are faithful believers who belong to Christ. We pray that God our Father will give you his kindness and peace.

³ We often thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, while we are praying for you. ⁴ We give God thanks because we have heard that you trust in Christ Jesus and that you love all those whom God has set apart for himself. ⁵ You love our fellow believers because you confidently are waiting for the things God is reserving for you in heaven. You first heard about these things when you heard the true message, the good news about Christ. ⁶ Believers are proclaiming this good news that you heard in Colossae to everyone in the world. It is just as it has worked in you also, from the first day you heard it and understood how truly kind God is. The good news is like a field planted with crops that are growing and will give a very large harvest. ⁷ Epaphras taught you the good news. We love him because he serves Christ together with us and works for Christ faithfully in our place. ⁸ He told us that you love all God's people because God's Spirit has empowered you to love God and others.

⁹ Since the time we heard about how you love, we have always been praying for you. We ask God to show you everything he wants you to do, and to make you wise

so that you will understand what God's Spirit is teaching you. ¹⁰ We pray that you will live in a way that will help others honor the Lord also, so that he will approve of you. We pray that you will grow to understand God more and do every good thing that he tells you to do. ¹¹ We pray that God will strengthen you with all his mighty power, so that you will patiently endure every difficulty. ¹² We pray that you will be rejoicing and thanking God our Father, because he has declared you worthy to be with the others whom he has set apart for himself; this is so he can give you all the things that he is keeping for you when you are with him in the light of his presence.

¹³ God our Father has rescued us from the evil that controlled us; he has made his Son, whom he loves, to rule over us now. ¹⁴ By means of his Son he has set us free from that evil; that is, he has forgiven our sins. ¹⁵ When we know the Son, we know what God is like, even though we cannot see him. The Son has first place over everything that he has created. ¹⁶ For the Son created all things, as the Father desired him to do: Everything in the sky and everything on earth, everything that we can see and everything that we cannot see, such as angelic beings of all kinds and powers and authorities, all things exist because the Son created them because the Father wanted him to. And they exist for him. ¹⁷ The Son himself existed before anything else, and he holds everything together. ¹⁸ He rules all believers—the church—like a person's head rules his body. He rules over the church because he started it. He was the first person to come back to life with a perfect body. So he is greater than every thing. ¹⁹ God the Father was pleased to make everything he is to live in Christ. ²⁰ It also pleased God to bring everything back to himself in peace through Jesus. God offered peace to all

people and all things everywhere on earth and in heaven. He did this by causing the Son to die on the cross as a sacrifice, shedding his blood as he died.

²¹ Before you believed in Christ, God considered you his enemies, and you were unfriendly to God because you thought evil thoughts and because you did evil deeds.

²² But now God has offered peace between yourselves and himself and has made you his friends. He did this when Jesus gave up his body and life for us by dying. This made it possible for us to belong to God; he finds nothing wrong in us now, nothing to blame us for. ²³ But you must continue to trust Christ completely; then you will be like a house that they built on solid rock. Do not for any reason stop believing in what God has promised to do for you in the good news that people all over the world have heard. This is the same good news that I, Paul, am serving God by proclaiming to people.

²⁴ Now I rejoice that I am suffering for your benefit. Yes, in order to help the church, which is like Christ's body, I suffer things that must still happen. ²⁵ God made me his servant and gave to me special work to do, which is to proclaim the full message of God to non-Jewish people like you. ²⁶ From ancient times, for generations, God did not tell this good news, but now he has revealed this mystery to those whom he has set apart for himself.

²⁷ It is to these people—Jews and non-Jews like yourselves just as much—that God planned to tell this wonderful secret. It is this: Christ will live in you and make you confidently expect to share in God's glory! ²⁸ We are wisely warning and teaching every person about Christ so that we might bring into God's presence each one as knowing God completely, joined to Christ. ²⁹ It is to do this that I work my hardest, because Christ is giving me

strength.

Chapter 2

¹ I want you to realize that I am doing my best to help you and those in Laodicea, and also the believers who have never seen me personally. ² I do this so that I might encourage them and you yourselves to love each other and unite yourselves together. I desire that you all confidently and completely understand this secret truth about God and that this truth is Christ! ³ It is only by means of Christ that we can know what God is thinking and how wise he is. ⁴ I am telling you this in order that no one may deceive you. ⁵ Even though I am absent from you physically, I am very much concerned about you, just as if I were indeed with you. Yet I am rejoicing because I know that you follow Christ in a way that no one can stop you, that you trust in Christ without giving up.

⁶ You began to believe in Christ Jesus the Lord by trusting in him, so also live by trusting him. ⁷ You should rely completely on Christ Jesus the Lord, just like a tree spreads its roots deep into the ground. You learned to trust Christ very much in this way, like men build a house on a good foundation. And you should always give thanks to God.

⁸ Do not believe anyone who says that you must obey what people have taught about how to honor God or that you must obey what they worship in this world. Instead, obey Christ, ⁹ because the man Jesus Christ is fully God. ¹⁰ Now God has given you everything you need because he has joined you to Christ, and he rules over every other person, spirit, and angel. ¹¹ It is as if God has also circumcised you. But this was not as though

a piece of human being cut flesh from your body. Instead, Jesus took away the power of sin that was within you, and this “circumcision” is the one that Christ does when he conquered your sinful nature and took it away from you. ¹² Because they have baptized you, God considers that when men buried Christ, they buried you along with him. He considers that when he made Christ come alive again, he made you come alive also, because you trusted that he could make you live again. ¹³ God viewed you as being dead, because you were sinning against him, and because you were not Jews, so you did not worship him. But he made you come alive together with Christ; he forgave us of all our sins. ¹⁴ We have all sinned so much, but God has forgiven our sins. It is like a man might forgive people who owe him money, so he tears up the papers they signed when he loaned them the money. But as for God, it is as if he had nailed those papers on which he had written all our sins and all the laws that we had broken to the cross on which Christ died. ¹⁵ Moreover, God defeated the evil spirit beings who rule people in this world, and he let everybody know that he had defeated them. It was just as if he had paraded them around in the streets as prisoners.

¹⁶ So disregard anyone who says that God will punish you because you eat certain foods and drink certain drinks or because you do not celebrate special yearly festivals or when the new moon appears or weekly Sabbaths. ¹⁷ These kinds of rules and events only picture what is truly coming. What is truly coming is Christ himself. ¹⁸ Those same people pretend to be humble, and they love to worship angels. Do not let them convince you to do the same. If you do, you will lose what Christ has promised you. These people are always talking about visions they say

God has made them see. They boast about these things because they think like people everywhere think who do not honor God. ¹⁹ Such persons are not joined to Christ. Christ is the head of the body, and that body is all those who believe in him. The whole body depends upon the head. The head takes care of each part and puts together all the bones and ligaments so they work together, and it is God who makes it grow.

²⁰ God considers that you died with Christ when he died. So now the spirits and all the rules that people make for how to please God—none of these things rule you anymore. So why are you still living as if these things were real? Why do you still obey those things? ²¹ These rules are such as: “Do not handle certain things. Do not taste certain things. Do not touch certain things.” Do not think you still have to obey such regulations. ²² These rules are all about things that perish in this world as people use them, and they were made up and taught by men, not by God. ²³ These rules may seem to be good. But people made them because they were trying to honor God in their own way. That is why those people often look so humble; that is why they often hurt their own bodies. But if we obey these rules, we do not really stop wanting to sin.

Chapter 3

¹ God considers that he made you alive again when he made Christ alive after he died. And Christ is in heaven and is sitting at God’s right side, the place for the person of greatest honor and power. You also should try to live here as if you were already there. ² Desire what Jesus is keeping in heaven to give you; do not desire the things here on earth. ³ For God considers that you have died and no longer

belong to this world. He considers that he has hidden you with Christ to keep you safe. ⁴ When God reveals Christ to everyone on earth in his shining light, then he will also reveal you in that same light, because Christ makes you live!

⁵ Therefore, think of the desires you have to do evil things in this world as enemies that must die. You must execute them: Do not try to do sexually immoral or impure acts. Do not think in lustful or evil ways. And do not be greedy, because that is the same as worshiping idols. ⁶ It is because people do things like these that God is angry with them and will punish them, for they do not obey him. ⁷ You yourselves also formerly lived like that when you were participating with those who behaved like that. ⁸ But now you must stop doing these things. Do not be angry at each other; do not try to make trouble for each other. Do not insult each other or talk in shameful, disgusting ways. ⁹ And do not lie to one another. Do not do any of these things, because you have become a new person now, a person who does not do these evil things any more. ¹⁰ You are a new person, and God is always making you to know him better and better and to be like him, as he created you to be. ¹¹ God has made us into new persons joined to Christ, and he is always making us new. So it is no longer important whether anyone is a non-Jew or a Jew, or whether anyone is circumcised or is not circumcised, or whether anyone is a foreigner, or even uncivilized, or whether anyone is a slave or not a slave. But instead what is important is Christ, who is all things in all of you.

¹² Because God has chosen you and set you apart as his people, and because he loves you, serve others compassionately and mercifully and with kindness. Humbly and gently care for one another with pa-

tience ¹³ and bear with each other. If anyone complains against someone else, forgive one another. Just as the Lord Jesus has forgiven you, so also you must forgive each other. ¹⁴ And what is most important is to love one another, because by doing that you will tie yourselves together perfectly.

¹⁵ Christ is the one who makes you to live in peace with God and one another, so always behave so as to remain at peace. This is why he has called you to be together. And always thank God for everything. ¹⁶ As you live and serve God, always obey together what Christ has taught you. Teach and instruct each other with wisdom; praise and thank God sincerely as you sing psalms, hymns, and songs that honor him.

¹⁷ Whatever you say, and whatever you do, do it all to honor the Lord Jesus, and do it while you give thanks to God for what Christ has done for you.

¹⁸ Wives, obey your husbands; this is right and according to what the Lord Jesus has commanded. ¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

²⁰ Children, obey your parents in every way, because the Lord God is pleased when you do that. ²¹ Fathers, do not cause anger in your children, so they do not become discouraged.

²² Slaves, obey your masters in this world in every way. Do not obey your masters only when they are watching you, like those who merely want their masters to think they always obey. Instead, obey your masters sincerely from the heart because you honor the Lord Jesus. ²³ Whatever work you do, work wholeheartedly for the Lord Jesus rather than for people. Do not work like those who are working merely for their human masters, ²⁴ because you know the Lord will repay you;

you will receive your share of what the Lord has promised you. Jesus Christ is the real master whom you are serving. ²⁵ But God will judge each person in the same way; he will punish those who do wrong as they deserve.

Chapter 4

¹ Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly supply what they need, because you know that you also have a master who is in heaven.

² Keep praying without stopping. Do not be lazy, but instead keep praying and thanking God. ³ Pray together for us too, so that God will make it possible for us to freely explain the good news, the secret about Christ that God is now revealing everywhere. It is because we proclaimed this good news that I am now in prison. ⁴ Pray that I might be able to fully explain the good news.

⁵ Live wisely around those who are not believers, and make each moment valuable by using it wisely. ⁶ Always speak graciously and in a pleasant and interesting way to those who do not believe in the Lord Jesus. Then you will know how to speak to each person about the Lord.

⁷ Tychicus will tell you everything that has been happening to me. He is a fellow believer whom I love, who helps me faithfully, and who serves the Lord Jesus together with me. ⁸ The reason that I am sending Tychicus to you with this letter is that you might know about us and that he might encourage you. ⁹ I am sending him to you with Onesimus, who is a faithful fellow believer, whom I love and who is your fellow townsman. They will tell you all about what has been happening here.

¹⁰ Aristarchus, who is in prison with me,

and Mark, who is Barnabas' cousin, greet you. I have instructed you about Mark, so if he comes to you, welcome him. ¹¹ Jesus, who is also named Justus, greets you, too. These three men are the only Jewish believers working with me to proclaim God as king through Christ Jesus. They have greatly helped and encouraged me. ¹² Epaphras, who is your fellow townsman and a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you. He prays earnestly for you very often, that you might be strong and believe everything that God teaches us and promises us. ¹³ I can say that he has worked very hard for you, for those who live in the city of Laodicea, and for those who live in the city of Hierapolis. ¹⁴ Luke the doctor, whom I love, and Demas greet you.

¹⁵ Greet the fellow believers who live in Laodicea, and greet Nympha and the group of believers that meets in her house.

¹⁶ After someone reads this letter among you, have someone also read it to the assembly in Laodicea. And read the letter from Laodicea, too. ¹⁷ Tell Archippus to make sure that he completes the task that God gave him to do.

¹⁸ I, Paul, greet you now in my own handwriting. Remember me and pray for me in prison. I pray that our Lord Jesus Christ would continue to act graciously toward you all.

1 THESSALONIANS

Chapter 1

¹ I, Paul, am writing this letter. Silas and Timothy are with me. We are sending this letter to you who are the group of believers in the city of Thessalonica who are joined to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. May God be kind to you and give you peace.

² We always thank God for you all when we mention you while we pray. ³ We continually remember that you work for God, who is our Father, because you trust in him and you earnestly help people because you love them. You have a solid confidence in the future, because you know our Lord Jesus Christ! ⁴ My fellow believers whom God loves, we also thank him because we know that he chose you to become his people. ⁵ We know that he chose you because when we told the good news to you, it was much more than words only. The Holy Spirit powerfully worked among you, and he strongly assured us that our message to you was true. In the same way, you know how we spoke and how we conducted ourselves when we were with you, in order that we might help you. ⁶ We have now heard that you are living like we live and are following our example. But more important, you are also living like our Lord lived. You received the message of God's love with great joy that only comes from the Holy Spirit, even though you had to go through many trials and difficulties. ⁷ All the believers who are in the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia are learning how they should trust God just like you have learned and as you are trusting him. ⁸ Other people have heard you tell the message from the Lord Jesus. Then they also proclaimed the good news

to people who live throughout Macedonia and Achaia. Not only that, but people who live in many faraway places have heard that you trust in God. So we do not need to tell people what God has done in your lives. ⁹ People who live far from you are telling others how warmly you welcomed us when we came to you. They also report that you stopped worshiping false gods and that now you worship and serve the God who alone is the living God, and he is the real and only God. ¹⁰ They also tell us that now you wait expectantly for his Son to return to earth from heaven. You firmly believe that God caused him to live again after he died. You believe also that Jesus will rescue all of us, who trust in him, when God punishes all the people of the entire world.

Chapter 2

¹ My fellow believers, you know that our time with you was very worthwhile. ² Although people in Philippi city previously mistreated us and insulted us, as you know, God caused us to be courageous. As a result, we told you the good news that God sent us to tell you, even though some people in your city opposed us very much. ³ When we encouraged you to obey God's message, we did not speak to you something false. And we do not want to get something for ourselves by immoral means. We do not try to deceive you or anyone else. ⁴ On the contrary, God trusted us to tell you the good news, because he had examined us and considered us to be the right people to do this work. As we teach people, we do not say what they like to hear. Instead, we say what God wants us to say, because he judges everything that we think. ⁵ You know that we never praised you in order to get anything from you. And we never said

anything to you to convince you to give us things. God knows that this is true! ⁶ We never tried to get you or anyone else to honor us, although we could have demanded that you give us the things we needed to live while we were with you, because Christ had sent us to you. ⁷ On the contrary, we were gentle when we were among you, as a mother gently takes care of her own children. ⁸ So, because we love you, we were delighted to personally tell you the good message that God gave us. But also we were delighted to do all that we could do to help you because we began to love you very much. ⁹ My fellow believers, you remember that we worked hard during the day and also at night. This is how we earned money, so that we would not have to ask any one of you to give us what we needed. We did this while we proclaimed to you the good news about God. ¹⁰ Both you and God know that we lived toward you believers in a very good and right way—in a way that no one could criticize. ¹¹ You know also that we behaved toward each one of you as a father who loves his children behaves toward them. ¹² We kept strongly exhorting and encouraging you to live like God's people should, because he has called you to become his people to whom he will show himself as king with the most wonderful power.

¹³ This is why we always thank God, because when you heard the message that we told to you, you accepted it as the true message, the good message that God gave to us. We ourselves did not invent it. We also thank God that he is changing your lives because you trust this message. ¹⁴ We are certain about these things, because you acted just like the groups of believers in Judea acted. They also are joined to Christ Jesus, and, just as they endured it when their fellow countrymen mistreated them because of Christ, in the same way you have endured it when your

own fellow countrymen mistreat you. ¹⁵ Those Jews had killed the Lord Jesus and many prophets, too. Other unbelieving Jews forced us to leave many towns. They really make God angry, and they work against what is best for all human beings! ¹⁶ For example, they try to stop us from telling the good news to non-Jews; they do not want God to save them! They have sinned almost as much as God will allow them to before he punishes them at last!

¹⁷ My fellow believers, when we had to be away from you for a short time, we felt like parents who had lost their children. We strongly desired to be present with you. ¹⁸ Indeed I, Paul, tried to return several times to see you. But each time Satan prevented us from returning. ¹⁹ Indeed, it is because of you that we hope to do God's work well; it is you who make us proud; it is because of you that we hope to succeed in serving God. It is because of you as well as others that we hope that the Lord Jesus will reward us when he returns to earth. ²⁰ Indeed, it is because of you that even now we are pleased and are joyful!

Chapter 3

¹ As a result of that, when I could no longer endure worrying about you, I decided that Silas and I would stay behind alone in the city of Athens, ² and we sent Timothy to you. You know that he is our close associate and also works for God by proclaiming the good news about Christ. Silas and I sent him in order that he would urge you to continue to strongly trust in Christ. ³ We did not want any of you to turn away from Christ in fear because of what you were suffering. You well know that God knew that others would mistreat us because of Christ. ⁴ Remember that when

we were present with you, we kept telling you that others would mistreat us. And that is what happened, as you know.⁵ This is why I sent Timothy to you, because I could wait no longer to know whether you were still trusting in Christ. I was afraid that Satan, the one who tempts us, had caused you to stop trusting in Christ. I was afraid that everything we had done with you was useless.

⁶ But now Timothy has just returned to Silas and me from being with you, and he has told us the good news that you still trust in Christ and that you love him. He told us also that you always happily remember us and that you want very much us to visit you, just as we want to visit you.⁷ My fellow believers, even though we are suffering very much because of what people are doing to us here, we have been comforted because Timothy told us that you still trust in Christ.⁸ Now it is as if we are living in a new way, because you are trusting very much in the Lord Jesus.⁹ We cannot thank God enough for what he has done for you! We greatly rejoice over you when we pray to our God!¹⁰ We constantly and fervently ask God that we will be able to visit you, and that we will be able to help you to trust in Christ more strongly!

¹¹ We pray to God, our Father, and to our Lord Jesus, that they will enable us to return to you.¹² As for you, we pray that the Lord Jesus will help you to love each other and other people more and more, just like we continue loving you more and more.¹³ We pray that our Lord Jesus will make you want to please him more and more. We pray that God our Father will enable you to become more like him, and that no one can criticize. We pray this, so that when Jesus comes back to earth and all those who belong to him come with him, he will be pleased with you.

Chapter 4

¹⁻² Now, my fellow believers, I want to write about some other matters. I urge you—and when I urge you, it is the same as the Lord Jesus himself urging you—to conduct your lives in a way that pleases God. We taught you to do that because of what the Lord Jesus had told us to say. We know that you are conducting your lives that way, but we strongly urge that you do that even more.

³ God wants you to do no sin, living in a way that will show that you completely belong to him. He wants you to avoid doing any sexually immoral acts.⁴ That is, he wants each one of you to know how to live with your wife, in a way that honors her and you do not sin against her.⁵ You must not use her to satisfy your lustful desires (as non-Jews do because they do not know God).⁶ God wants each one of you to control your sexual desires, in order that no one of you sin against your fellow believer and take advantage of him or her by doing things like that. Remember that we strongly warned you previously that the Lord Jesus will punish all people who commit sexually immoral acts.⁷ When God chose us believers, he did not want us to be people who behave in a sexually immoral way. On the contrary, he wants us to be people who do not sin.⁸ So I warn you that those who disregard this teaching of mine are not just disregarding me, a human being. On the contrary, they are disregarding God, because God commanded it. Remember that God sent his Spirit, who does not sin, to live in you!

⁹ I want to urge you again that you should love your fellow believers. You do not really need that anyone write to you about that, because God has already taught you how to love each other,¹⁰ and because you already are showing that you love your

fellow believers who live in other places in your province of Macedonia. Nevertheless, my fellow believers, we urge you to love each other more and more. ¹¹ We urge you also to try hard to attend to your own affairs and to not meddle with the affairs of others. We urge you also to work at your own occupations to earn what you need to live. Remember that we taught you previously to live like that. ¹² If you do these things, unbelievers will acknowledge that you behave decently, and you will not have to depend on others to supply what you need.

¹³ My fellow believers, we also want you to understand what will happen to our fellow believers who now are dead. You must not be like the unbelievers. They grieve deeply for people who die because they do not expect to live again after they die. ¹⁴ We believers know that Jesus died and that he rose to live again. So we also know well that God will cause those joined to Jesus to live again, and that he will bring them back with Jesus. ¹⁵ I write this because the Lord Jesus revealed to me what I am now telling you. Some of you may think that when the Lord Jesus comes back, we believers who are still living will meet Jesus sooner than those who have already died. That is certainly not true! ¹⁶ I write this, because it is the Lord Jesus himself who will descend from heaven. When he comes down, he will command all of us believers to rise. The chief angel will shout with a loud voice, and another angel will blow a trumpet for God. Then the first thing that will happen is that the people who are joined to Christ will live again. ¹⁷ After that, God will take up into the clouds all of us believers who are still living on this earth. He will take us and those other believers who have died, in order that we all might together meet the Lord Jesus in the sky. As a result of that, we all will be with him forever. ¹⁸ Because all this is

true, encourage each other by sharing this teaching with each other.

Chapter 5

¹ My fellow believers, I want to tell you more about the time when the Lord Jesus will come back. Really, you do not need that I write to you about that, ² because you yourselves know accurately about it already! You know that the Lord Jesus will return unexpectedly. People will not expect him, just as no one expects a thief when he comes at night. ³ At some time in the future many people will say, "All is peaceful and we are safe!" Then suddenly God will come to punish them severely! Just as a pregnant woman who experiences birth pains cannot stop those pains, those people will have no way to escape from God. ⁴ But you, my fellow believers, you are not like people who live in darkness, because you know the truth about God. So when Jesus returns, you will be ready for him. ⁵ You belong to the light, to the daytime. You are not like those who belong to the darkness, to the nighttime. ⁶ So we believers must be aware of what is happening. We must control ourselves and be ready for Jesus to come. ⁷ It is at night when people sleep and do not know what is happening, and it is at night when people become drunk. ⁸ But we believers belong to the day, so let us control ourselves. Let us be like soldiers: As they protect their chests with breastplates, let us protect ourselves by trusting in Christ and loving him. As they protect their heads with helmets, let us protect ourselves by expecting Christ to rescue us completely from evil.

⁹ When God chose us, he did not plan for us to be people whom he will punish. On the contrary, he decided to save us

because we trust in what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us. ¹⁰ Jesus died to atone for our sins in order that we might live together with him, whether we are alive or whether we are dead when he returns to earth. ¹¹ Because you know that this is true, continue to encourage each other, as indeed you now are doing.

¹² My fellow believers, we ask that you recognize as leaders those people who work hard for you. This means that you must respect these leaders as fellow believers—you see how hard they work to help you grow in faith. These leaders guide you and they teach you how to live for the Lord. ¹³ We ask that you honor them because you love them and because of the work they do. We also urge you to live peacefully with each other.

¹⁴ My fellow believers, we urge that you warn believers who want to live off what others give them instead of working. Also encourage believers who are fearful, and help all people who are weak in any way. We also urge you to be patient with everyone. ¹⁵ Make sure that none of you does evil deeds to anyone who has done evil to you. On the contrary, you must always try to do good deeds to each other and to everyone else.

¹⁶ Be joyful at all times, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ and thank God in all circumstances. God wants you to behave like that because of what Christ Jesus has done for you.

¹⁹ Do not keep God's Spirit from working among you. ²⁰ For example, do not despise anything that the Holy Spirit tells someone. ²¹ On the contrary, evaluate all such messages. Accept the parts that are good and obey them. ²² Do not obey any kind of evil message.

²³ May God give you peace and make you without fault so that you do not sin. May he keep you from sinning in any way until

our Lord Jesus Christ comes back to earth. ²⁴ Because God has called you to be his people, you can certainly trust him to keep on helping you in that way.

²⁵ My fellow believers, pray for me, for Silas, and for Timothy. ²⁶ When you gather together as believers, greet each other affectionately, as fellow believers should. ²⁷ Make certain that you read this letter to all the believers who are among you. When I tell you this, it is the same as if the Lord were speaking to you! ²⁸ May our Lord Jesus Christ continue to act kindly toward you all.

2 THESSALONIANS

Chapter 1

¹ I, Paul, and Silas and Timothy are writing this letter to you in the city of Thessalonica, who are a group of believers joined to God our Father and to Jesus Christ our Lord. ² We pray that God our Father, and Jesus Christ our Lord, will continue to act kindly toward you and that he will continue to give you peace.

³ Our fellow believers, we are always thanking God, and we should do this, because you are trusting in the Lord Jesus more and more, and because every one of you is loving each of the others more and more. ⁴ As a result, we keep proudly talking about you to the other groups of believers belonging to God. We tell them how you are being patient and how you continue trusting in the Lord Jesus, even though other people frequently cause you much trouble.

⁵ Since you are enduring all that trouble, we clearly know that God will judge all people justly. In your case, he will declare to everyone that you are worthy for him to rule forever, because you are suffering as you trust in him. ⁶ God will certainly cause trouble for those people who are troubling you, because it is right for him to do so. ⁷ He also considers that it is right that he should reward you by bringing you through your hardships. He will do that for both you and us when our Lord Jesus shows himself to everyone when he returns from heaven with his powerful angels. ⁸ Then with blazing fire he will punish those people who are not loyal to him, those who refuse to accept the good news about our Lord Jesus. ⁹ Our Lord Jesus will drive them far from himself, where he will destroy them for-

ever, far from where he rules with very great power. ¹⁰ The Lord Jesus will do this when he comes back from heaven at the time that God has decided. As a result, all we who are his people will praise him and marvel at him. And you will be there, too, because you believed what we solemnly told you.

¹¹ In order that you might praise Jesus like this, we are also always praying for you. We pray that God will make you worthy to live in the new way he has called you to live. We pray also that he will make you able to do good in every way that you desire, and that since he is so powerful, he will also make you able to do every kind of good thing because you trust in him.

¹² We pray this because we want you to praise our Lord Jesus, and we want him to honor you. This will happen because God, whom we worship, and our Lord Jesus Christ keep acting kindly toward you.

Chapter 2

¹ Now I want to write to you about the time when our Lord Jesus Christ will return and when God will gather us together with Jesus. My fellow believers, I urge you ² to think calmly about any message that may have come to you. It does not matter if it is a message that someone claims God's Spirit revealed to him, or if it comes from some person, or if it is a letter that someone claims that I wrote: I do not want you to believe that the Lord Jesus has already returned to earth. ³ Do not allow anyone to persuade you to believe such a message.

The Lord will not come immediately. First, many people will rebel against God. They will accept and obey a certain man who will sin very greatly against God, the one whom God will destroy. ⁴ He will be the

supreme enemy of God. He will proudly work against everything that people consider to be God and everything that people worship. As a result, he will even enter God's temple and sit down there to rule! He will publicly proclaim that he himself is God! ⁵ I am sure that you remember that I kept telling you these things while I was still with you there in Thessalonica.

⁶ You also know that there is something that is preventing this man from showing himself to everybody now. He will not be able to show himself until the time that God will allow him to. ⁷ Although Satan is already secretly causing people to reject God's laws, the one who is preventing this man from revealing himself now will continue to prevent him until God removes him. ⁸ It is then that God will allow this man, who rejects God's laws completely, to show himself to everyone in the world. Then the Lord Jesus will speak a single command that will destroy him. Just by showing himself to everyone when he returns, Jesus will cause that man to become completely powerless.

⁹ But before Jesus destroys him, Satan will give that man very great power. As a result, he will do all kinds of supernatural miracles and amazing deeds, and many people will believe that God was making him able to do those things. ¹⁰ And by doing wicked deeds, that man will completely deceive those who are doomed to perish. He will be able to deceive them because they did not agree to love the true message about how Jesus could save them. ¹¹ So God will enable this man to easily deceive them, so that they will believe what this man falsely claims that he is. ¹² The result will be that God will judge and condemn all those who refused to believe the truth about Christ, people who instead enjoyed doing everything that is wicked.

¹³ Our fellow believers, you whom our

Lord Jesus loves, we should always thank God for you. We should do this because he chose you to be among the first people to believe in the truth about Jesus, among the first people that God would save, and to set you apart for himself by means of his Spirit. ¹⁴ We thank God that he chose you as a result of our proclaiming the message about Christ to you, in order that God might honor you in some of the same ways that he honors our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹⁵ So, our fellow believers, continue to strongly believe in Christ. Continue believing the true things that we have taught you when we spoke to you and wrote a letter to you.

¹⁶ We pray that our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God, our Father—he who loves us and will encourage us forever and who kindly makes us expect to receive good things from him—¹⁷ may God and Jesus Christ together encourage you! And may they cause you to continue doing and saying good things.

Chapter 3

¹ As for the other matters, our fellow believers, pray for us that more and more people will soon hear our message about our Lord Jesus and honor it, just as you have done. ² Pray also for us that God will keep wicked and evil people from harming us, for not everyone believes in the Lord.

³ Nevertheless, the Lord Jesus is trustworthy! So we are sure that he will cause you to continue to be strong. We are also sure that he will protect you from Satan, the evil one. ⁴ Because we are all joined to our Lord Jesus, we are confident that you are now obeying what we have commanded you, and that you will obey what

we are commanding you in this letter. ⁵

We pray that our Lord Jesus would continue to help you know how much God loves you and how much Christ has endured for you.

⁶ Our fellow believers, we command you—and it is as if the Lord Jesus Christ himself were saying this—that you stop associating with every fellow believer who is lazy and refuses to work. That is to say, you must stay away from those who are not conducting their lives in the manner that others taught us and that we in turn taught you. ⁷ We tell you this because you yourselves know that you should behave like we behaved. We did not merely sit around without working while we were living among you. ⁸ That is to say, we did not eat anyone's food if we did not pay for it. Instead, we worked very hard to support ourselves during the day and the night, in order that we would not have to depend on any of you for what we needed. ⁹ We have always had the right to depend on you for money because I am an apostle, but instead, we worked hard in order to be good examples for you, in order that you should behave like we behave. ¹⁰ Remember that when we were there with you, we kept commanding you that if any fellow believer refuses to work, you should not give him food to eat. ¹¹ Now we tell you this again, because someone has told us that some of you are lazy and not working at all. Not only that, some of you are interfering with what other people are doing.

¹² We command those fellow believers who are not working, and urge them, just as if the Lord himself were speaking, that they should mind their own business, earn what they need to live on, and support themselves.

¹³ Fellow believers! Do not ever get tired of doing what is right!

¹⁴ If any fellow believer does not obey

what we have written in this letter, publicly identify that person. Then do not associate with him, in order that he may become ashamed. ¹⁵ Do not think of him as though he were your enemy; instead, warn him as you would warn your other fellow believers.

¹⁶ I pray that our Lord Jesus himself, who gives peace to his people, will give peace to you always and in every situation.

I pray that our Lord Jesus will continue to help you all. ¹⁷ Now I have taken the pen from my scribe, and I, Paul, am sending this greeting to you as I write this myself. I do this in all my letters in order that you may know that it is truly I who have sent this letter. This is how I always end my letters. ¹⁸ I pray that our Lord Jesus Christ will continue to act kindly to you all.

1 TIMOTHY

Chapter 1

¹⁻² I, Paul, am writing this to Timothy. God our Savior and Christ Jesus are those in whom we have confidence for the future, and Christ commanded me to be an apostle. You became a Christian when I told you about Jesus Christ, and you are my true son in the Lord. May God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord be kind to you, have mercy upon you, and give you peace.

³ The reason that I urged you to remain in Ephesus while I traveled to Macedonia was so that you would command certain men not to teach what is different from what we teach. ⁴ And command them not to give their time and attention to old useless stories and lists of ancestors that people never stop thinking about. These things only cause people to argue with each other, but do not help them to know God's plan to save us—a plan that we believe by faith. ⁵ Instead, the purpose of what we command you to teach is to love God from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from faith that is sincere. ⁶ Some men have stopped trying to do these good things; instead, they are now saying useless things. ⁷ They want to teach about the law, but they do not understand it. Yet they insist that what they teach is true.

⁸ But we know that law is good if we know how to use it according to what the law says. ⁹ We know that the law is not made to control good people, but to control rebellious people and those who do not honor God, for sinners, and disrespectful persons, for murderers and for those who even murder their own parents. ¹⁰ It is made also to control homosexuals and all people who practice improper sexual

behavior, to control those who steal others and sell them as slaves, to control liars and false witnesses in courts of law, and to stop whatever is different from our good and healthy teaching. ¹¹ All of this agrees with the wonderful good news that God, whom we praise, has taught us, and that he trusts me to announce to others.

¹² I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, because he gave me the strength to serve him. He also relies on me to serve him. ¹³ In past times, I insulted and persecuted the believers. I did violent deeds, but God had mercy on me because I did not believe, and I did not know what I was doing. ¹⁴ God was extremely kind to me, for he made me able to believe in Christ Jesus and love him because he united me to him.

¹⁵ Everyone should accept this fact, because we can count on it completely: Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. It is true that I am the worst sinner of all. ¹⁶ But because I am the worst sinner, God had mercy on me before many others, so that they would see how patient he is. God is patiently waiting to give everlasting life to those who believe in him.

¹⁷ The eternal king cannot be seen, and he cannot die. He alone is God. It is he whom everyone will honor and praise forever and ever. Amen. ¹⁸ Timothy, my child, I command you: Remember what certain believers prophesied about you. Do this in order to follow those things as you work hard for the Lord. ¹⁹ Trust God and keep a good conscience. Some people have not paid attention to their own consciences. So what has happened to their faith is a disaster. ²⁰ Hymenaeus and Alexander are two men like this. I have handed them over to Satan for him to attack them, so that they may learn not to insult God.

Chapter 2

¹ Most importantly, because false teachers are dangerous, I urge all the believers to ask God and pray to him to help all people, and to thank him for them. ² Pray for kings and for everyone who has power over others, so that we may live quietly and peacefully in a way that we can honor God and other people. ³ God, who saves us, listens to us when we pray like this. He sees it as good. ⁴ He wants to save everyone. He wants everyone to learn what is true about him. ⁵ The truth is this, that there is one God, and there is only one person who can make us acceptable to him. Christ Jesus, the man, is this one person. ⁶ He gave himself to set all people free—and that was the proof of what God was doing through Christ's death. ⁷ To declare this truth, God made me a messenger and an apostle. I speak the truth; I am not lying. I teach the Gentiles the things that they should truly believe.

⁸ Therefore, I want men everywhere to pray and to lift up their hands to God in a way that he will accept. Believers should not pray to show anger or doubt about God. ⁹ I also want the women to dress themselves carefully. They should control themselves so that they do not dress to show themselves off to others. Instead of braided hair, gold, pearls, or expensive clothing, ¹⁰ women should dress themselves in what is right for women who do good works and who say that they honor God. ¹¹ When men are teaching the believers, women should listen quietly, and they should give respect to their teachers and do all they can to learn from them. ¹² I do not allow women to teach or to tell men what to do. Women who honor God keep quiet when the believers come to learn. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve after him. ¹⁴ And it was not Adam that the snake

deceived. It was the woman whom he completely deceived, so that she sinned. ¹⁵ But God will save women as they bear children, if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.

Chapter 3

¹ You should rely on what I tell you here: If someone desires very much to oversee believers, he wants to do something really excellent. ² For that reason, however, an overseer must be someone whom no one accuses of anything bad. He must have only one wife. He must not do anything to excess; he must think in wise ways. He must behave well, and he must welcome strangers. He must be able to teach others. ³ He must not be an alcoholic and not quick to fight. Instead, he must be patient and peaceful with others. And he should not be greedy for money. ⁴ He should control the people in his own home well. His children should obey him with respect. ⁵ I say this because if a man does not even know how to control the people in his own house, how can he care for an assembly of God's people? ⁶ A new believer should not be an overseer, because he might think that he is better than other people. If that happened, God might punish him like he punished the devil. ⁷ Those outside of the church must also think well of him. Otherwise he might be shamed and the devil might persuade him to sin.

⁸ Deacons, in the same way, should be people whom others respect. They should be sincere when they speak. They should not drink too much wine, and they must not be greedy for money. ⁹ They should believe in the true things that God has told us, and at the same time know what is right, and then do it. ¹⁰ Find these qualities in them first, and then choose

them to serve because no one can find anything wrong with them. ¹¹ In the same way, other people should respect deacons' wives. Their wives should not talk badly about other people. They must not do anything to excess, and they must be honest in everything they do. ¹² A deacon must have only one wife and must control his children and his possessions well. ¹³ Good deacons are men whom the other believers highly respect. They come to trust in Christ Jesus very much.

¹⁴ As I write to you these things, I hope to come to you soon. ¹⁵ But if I do not come soon, I am writing to you now so that you may know how to act in the family of God, which is the group of those who believe in God, who gives life to all things. It is these who teach the truth and witness that it is true. ¹⁶ And we say together that the truth that God has revealed to us is very great, and we honor him for it:

"Christ was God revealed in a human body.

The Holy Spirit proved that he was genuine.

Angels saw him.

Believers announced him among the nations.

People in many parts of the world believed in him.

God took him up to himself and gave him his power."

Chapter 4

¹ Now the Spirit clearly says that in later times, some people will stop believing the truth about Christ and pay attention to spirits who deceive believers and demons who teach false things. ² These people will say one thing but do any evil thing

they wish, as if a hot iron had burned and ruined their minds. ³ They will try to stop believers from marrying. They will tell them not to eat certain things, even though God has created them, so that believers who have come to know the truth can share them with each other while thanking God for them. ⁴ I say this because everything that God has made is good. We reject nothing that we receive from God while thanking him for it. ⁵ For by praying to God and by believing his word we set it apart for him. ⁶ If you keep speaking this truth to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good servant of Jesus Christ. You will serve him well, because the message that we believe is strengthening you, as the good things God has taught you and that you have followed. ⁷ But do not listen to the things that mean nothing and to the stories that only old women tell. Instead, train yourself to honor God. ⁸ Physical exercise helps only a little, but if you honor God, this will help you with everything as you live now on earth and as you live in the future with God. ⁹ What I have just written is something that you can rely on. It is worth believing completely. ¹⁰ For this reason we work very hard, as hard as we can, because our hope is in God who lives, the savior of all humanity, but especially the savior of those who believe. ¹¹ Declare and teach these things to the believers.

¹² Do not allow anyone to say that you are useless because you are young. Instead, show other believers how to live. Show them this by how you speak, by how you live, by how you love, by how you trust God, and by how you keep from committing evil deeds. ¹³ Until I come to you, see to it that you read God's word to the believers in public, and that you explain and teach it to the believers. ¹⁴ Be sure to use the gift that is in you, what God gave to you when the elders laid hands on you

and spoke God's messages to you. ¹⁵ Be sure to do all these things and live according to them. In this way, all the believers will see that you are doing them better and better.

¹⁶ Control yourself very carefully and do everything that we teach. Keep doing these things. If you do so, you will save yourself and the people who listen to you.

Chapter 5

¹ Do not speak harshly to a man older than yourself. Instead, encourage him as if he were your father. Do the same to younger men as if they were your brothers. ² Encourage older women as mothers, and younger women as if they were your sisters. Act toward them in a way that no one can criticize.

³ Respect the widows if they are true widows. ⁴ But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should honor their mother at home and pay her back for everything she has done for them. If they do this, they will please God. ⁵ Now, a real widow is a widow who has no family members. So she depends on God and on what he gives her when she asks him and prays to him all day and night long. ⁶ But a widow who lives for how she can please herself is dead, even though she is still alive. ⁷ You should announce these things so that these widows and their families will not do anything wrong. ⁸ But anyone who does not try to help his own relatives, especially those who live in his own house, that person rejects what we believe. He is, in fact, worse than an unbeliever.

⁹ Put a woman on the list of true widows if she is more than sixty years old. She also must have had only one husband,

to whom she had been faithful. ¹⁰ People must know that she does good deeds: Perhaps she takes care of children; perhaps she welcomes strangers; perhaps she helps the believers or people who are suffering; or perhaps she is known for doing a large variety of good things. ¹¹ But do not put younger widows on the widows' list, because they often want to marry again when they change their minds and put married love ahead of Christ. ¹² When they do this, then they become guilty of going back on their commitment to being widows. ¹³ Also, they go from house to house and get into the habit of doing nothing. They also engage in foolish and trivial activities and say things that they should not say. ¹⁴ So I prefer that younger widows get married, have children, and run their households, so that Satan, the enemy, gets no opportunity to accuse them of doing wrong. ¹⁵ I write these things because some younger widows have already left the way of Christ to follow Satan.

¹⁶ If any believing woman has widows among her relatives, let her help them, so those widows will not be a burden to the church. In this way the church will be able to help real widows.

¹⁷ Let the believers give double honor to the elders who lead them well, and especially to the elders who preach and teach God's word. ¹⁸ For the scripture says, "You shall not keep the ox from eating the grain that he is treading out" and "The laborer deserves to get his pay."

¹⁹ Do not listen to anyone who accuses an elder of doing wrong, unless two or three people are testifying about the matter. ²⁰ Those who continue to sin, correct them where everyone can see you, so that the rest of the people will be afraid to sin.

²¹ God, Jesus Christ, and the chosen angels see me as I solemnly command you to do these things. Be sure that you do not judge

anyone before you should. Be sure that you do not favor one person over another when you lead the believers.

²² When you want someone to begin to serve the believers, make no decision too quickly, so you do not choose them too soon. And do not be a partner with anyone in sinning. You must keep yourself without fault. ²³ No longer drink only water, Timothy. Instead, drink a little wine for your many stomach sicknesses. ²⁴ The sins of some people are clear to everyone, and the church does not need much time to judge them. But the church does not discover some sins until later. ²⁵ In the same way, some good deeds are clear to everybody, but even the other good deeds will become clear at some time in the future.

Chapter 6

¹ As for believers who are slaves, they should honor their masters in every way, so that no one will insult God or what we teach.

² Slaves who have believing masters should not respect them less, for they are brothers. Instead, they should serve their masters even better, because the masters whom they serve are their brothers whom they should love. Teach and announce these things to the believers.

³ If anyone teaches false doctrines that do not agree with the reliable and true teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ that person is very proud and does not understand anything. They want to argue about unimportant matters and about certain words, and people who listen to them envy others. They quarrel with others and with one another. They say bad things about others. They suspect that others have evil motives.

⁵ Their whole way of thinking has become

completely wrong because they have rejected true things. As a result, they make the mistake of thinking that by doing religious things they will get a lot of money.

⁶ Well, we truly do gain great benefit when we behave in a way that honors God and when we are content with what we have.

⁷ Indeed, we brought nothing into the world when we were born, and we cannot take anything out of it when we die. ⁸ So if we have food and clothing, we should be satisfied with these. ⁹ But some people strongly desire to be rich. As a result, they do wrong things to get money, and this will cause them to be caught as animals get caught in traps. They foolishly desire many things, and so they get hurt. God will completely destroy them! ¹⁰ People do all sorts of evil things when they want to have a lot of money. Because some people longed for money, they have stopped believing the truth that all of us believe and they have caused themselves to be very sorrowful.

¹¹ But you, the man who serves God, keep completely away from such love of money. Decide that you will do what is right, and that you will honor God. Trust God, and love others. Endure difficult circumstances. Always be gentle with people. ¹² Fight a good fight for that faith that saves you! Take hold of this great gift of eternal life and cling to it through everything you experience, no matter where you go. Remember that God chose you to live with him forever. These gifts of God are in you, and you made a good confession about them when you stood before many people.

¹³ God, who gives life to all things, knows everything that you do. Christ Jesus also knows everything that you do. He strongly declared what was true when he was on trial before Pontius Pilate. ¹⁴ So as you remember those things, I command

you to hold tightly on to what Christ has commanded us in every way. Hold fast to those teachings in a way that our Lord Jesus Christ will not need to criticize you about what is wrong, until he comes again.

¹⁵ Remember that God will cause Jesus to come again at the proper time. God is awesome! He is the only Ruler! He rules over all other people who rule! ¹⁶ He is the only one who will never die, and he lives in heaven in light that is so bright that no one can approach it! He is the one whom no person has ever seen and whom no person is able to see! My desire is that all people will honor him and that he will rule powerfully forever! May it be so!

¹⁷ Tell the believers who are rich here in this present world that they should not be proud, and that they should not trust in their many possessions, because they cannot be certain how long they will have them. Instead, they should trust in God. He is the one who abundantly gives us everything we have in order that we may enjoy it. ¹⁸ Also, tell them to do good things. These are true wealth. Indeed, they should share with others very much of what they have. ¹⁹ If they do that, it will be as though they were storing up for themselves many things that God will give them. When they do this, they will have the life that is the real life.

²⁰ Timothy, faithfully proclaim the true message that Jesus has given to you. Avoid the people who want to chatter about things that are not important to God. Avoid the people who say that they have true knowledge but who say things that are against the true things we teach. ²¹ Certain men teach these things and so they stop believing the truth. May God be kind to you all.

2 TIMOTHY

Chapter 1

¹ I, Paul, am writing to Timothy. Christ Jesus sent me as an apostle to tell everyone that if they are united with him, God promises to make them live both now and forever. ² Timothy, I love you like my own son. May God our Father and Christ Jesus our Lord act kindly and mercifully and peacefully toward you.

³ I thank God and I serve Him because I truly want to do what he wants, just as my ancestors did. I have always remembered to pray for you, Timothy, night and day. ⁴ I really want to see you because I remember how you cried for me. If I see you again, I will rejoice so much. ⁵ I remember that you truly believe in Jesus! First, your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice trusted their lives to Jesus Christ, and I am sure that you also trust in Jesus Christ just like they did!

⁶ Because you trust in Jesus, I remind you to start using again the gift God gave you when I put my hands on you and prayed for you. ⁷ When God's Spirit came to us, he did not cause us to be afraid; instead, he caused us to have power to obey God, to love him and others, and to control ourselves.

⁸ So do not think that you will have shame if you tell others about our Lord Jesus. And do not think you will have shame if you are my friend, because I am in prison because I trust in Jesus. Instead, be willing to suffer hardship as you tell others about the good news. God will make you able to suffer all hardships. ⁹ He will do this because he saved us and called us to be his own people. God did not save us because of any good works we did; in-

stead, he saved us because he planned to give us this gift! God caused the Messiah Jesus to pass this gift to us, even before the world began. ¹⁰ Now everyone can see that God can save them, because our Savior the Messiah Jesus came and destroyed death and showed everyone the Gospel, the truth that he causes people to live forever. ¹¹ It was for this reason that God decided to send me to be an apostle, preacher, and teacher. ¹² In these tasks I suffer, but I am not ashamed, because I know and have trusted Jesus Christ, and I am convinced that he is able to protect my faith in him until the final day.

¹³ As you trust in Jesus Christ and love him, follow the meaning of true words, which you heard from me. ¹⁴ God is relying on you, that you will preach the good message that he gave to you. Protect that message by relying on the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

¹⁵ You know that almost all the believers in Asia have stopped being friends with me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes.

¹⁶ But I pray that the Lord will be kind to the family of Onesiphorus. Often he helped me, and he was not ashamed that I am in prison. ¹⁷ On the contrary, when he came here to Rome, he kept searching for me until he found me. ¹⁸ May the Lord be kind to Onesiphorus on the final day. You know all the ways that he helped me in Ephesus.

Chapter 2

¹ You are like a son to me. So I urge also that you let God empower you as a result of Christ Jesus acting kindly toward you. ² Command and trust faithful men to teach the things you heard from me and from many others who have testified in the same way to others, too.

³ Endure as I do what we suffer for Christ Jesus, like a good soldier endures what he suffers. ⁴ You know that soldiers, in order to please their captain, do not become involved in civilian affairs. ⁵ Likewise, athletes competing in games cannot win unless they obey the rules. ⁶ And the farmer who works hard must receive his share of the crops first. ⁷ Think about what I have just written, because, if you do, the Lord will enable you to understand everything that you need to understand. ⁸ As you suffer hardships, remember Jesus Christ, a descendant of King David. God raised him from the dead, as I also preach in the gospel message. ⁹ For this gospel I suffer to the point of being imprisoned as a criminal. But the word of God is not in prison. ¹⁰ Therefore I willingly endure all that I am suffering for the sake of those whom God has chosen. I do this in order that Christ Jesus will save them, too, and that they will be forever with him in the glorious place where he is. ¹¹ You can depend on the words that we sometimes say:

”If we have died with Jesus, we will also live with him.

¹² If we endure, we will also reign with him.

But if we deny him, he also will deny us.

¹³ If we are unfaithful to Jesus, he continues to be faithful;

for he cannot deny himself.”

¹⁴ Those whom you appointed to teach others God’s truth, keep reminding them about these things that I have told you. Warn them before God not to fight over foolish words, because doing so does not help anything and can ruin those who listen.

¹⁵ Do your best to cause God to approve you as a worker who has no need to be ashamed, who teaches the word of God

correctly, for everyone can depend on the fact that it tells the truth.

¹⁶ Stay away from people who talk in ways that insult God, because this kind of talk dishonors God more and more. ¹⁷ This kind of words will spread like an infectious disease. Hymenaeus and Philetus are two examples of men who talk like this. ¹⁸ These men have stopped believing. They say that the resurrection of the dead has already happened. In this way they convince some Christians to stop trusting in Christ. ¹⁹ However, the truth about God still exists. It is like a firm foundation of a building, on which someone has written these words: “The Lord knows those who belong to him” and “Everyone who says he belongs to the Lord must stop doing wicked deeds.”

²⁰ In a wealthy person’s house there are not only utensils made of gold and of silver, but also utensils made of wood and of clay. The gold and silver utensils are used on special occasions. But the wood and clay utensils are used in ordinary times. ²¹ Therefore, those who rid themselves of what is evil in their lives will be able to work well for the Lord. They will be like utensils ready to do any kind of good work. They will become very useful to the Master to do special work for him, every good deed, in fact. ²² Do not keep on wanting the sinful things that young people usually desire. Instead, try to do right things. Try to trust in God and love him. Try to live in peace. Stay together with the people who worship the Lord sincerely.

²³ Do not talk with anyone who foolishly wants to argue about matters that are not important. Do not talk with them, because you know that when people talk about foolish things, they begin to quarrel. ²⁴ But those who serve the Lord must not quarrel. Instead, they should be kind to all people, they should be able to teach God’s

truth well, and they should be patient with people. ²⁵ That is, they should gently instruct the people who argue against them. Perhaps God may give them the opportunity to repent and come to know the truth. ²⁶ In that way they may think correctly and be like people who have escaped from a trap set by the devil. It is the devil who has deceived them in order to get them to do what he wishes them to do.

Chapter 3

¹ I want you to know this: In the final period of time before the Lord returns, it will be very dangerous. ² People will love themselves more than anyone else. They will love money. They will boast about themselves. They will be proud. They will insult others. They will not obey their parents. They will not thank anyone for anything. They will not honor God. ³ They will not love even their own families. They will refuse to be at peace with anyone. They will slander others. They will not control themselves. They will be brutal toward others. They will not love what is good. ⁴ They will betray the ones they should protect. They will do dangerous things without thinking. They will be proud, and they will do what pleases them instead of loving God. ⁵ They will seem to honor God, but they will refuse to accept the power that God truly wants to give them. Stay away from people like this. ⁶ These men persuade foolish women to let them come into their houses. Then they deceive those women so that they control what they think. These are women who sin all the time, so they follow these evil men into doing all sorts of bad things that they enjoy doing. ⁷ Even though these women are always wanting to learn new things, they are never able to learn what is actually true. ⁸ In the same way that

Jannes and Jambres tried to stop Moses, so do these men now try to stop people from obeying the truth. These men are ruined in how they think. They are frauds in matters of the faith. ⁹ Nevertheless, they will not succeed very much in what they do, because most others will clearly see that these people understand nothing. It is just like how the people of Israel saw that Jannes and Jambres were foolish.

¹⁰ Timothy, you have followed what I taught you. You have seen my way of living. You have seen how I want to serve God. You have seen how I trust in him. You have seen how I have peace even when I am suffering. You have seen how I love God and the believers. You have seen how I keep on serving God even when it is very hard to do so. ¹¹ You have seen how people persecuted me. You have seen every way in which I suffered when I was in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. I suffered very much in those places, but the Lord has taken me out of all that suffering. ¹² Indeed, they will make suffer every one who wants to live in a way that he honors Christ Jesus. ¹³ Evil men and frauds will continue to become more evil. They will lead people away from what is true, and they will allow others to lead themselves away also. ¹⁴ But as for you, keep on doing the things that you have learned to do, and the things that you have come to believe are right. Remember me, because I am the one who taught you these things. ¹⁵ Remember also that even when you were a young child, you learned what God says in the scriptures. These can teach you how Christ Jesus saves us, when we trust in him. ¹⁶ All the scriptures come from God's Spirit, so we should read them in order to teach the truth about God. We should also read them in order to persuade people to believe the truth. Also to correct people when they sin. Also to teach people how to do what is right. ¹⁷

We should do these things so that God can train every believer and give him what he needs in order to do every kind of good thing.

Chapter 4

¹ When Christ Jesus comes soon to rule, he will judge those who still live and those who died. And now he and God are watching me as I command you ² to proclaim the message about Christ. Be ready to do this when it is easy to do so and also when it is not easy. Convince people about what is right when they have done wrong. Warn them not to sin. Encourage them to follow Christ. Do these things as you teach them, and always be willing to wait for them to do better. ³ I tell you these things, because the time will come when people among us will not follow what God truly teaches. Instead, they will find many men who will teach that it is good to do anything they wish to do. In this way, they will always be looking for something new and different to learn. ⁴ They will stop listening to the truth, and they will pay attention to foolish stories. ⁵ But as for you, Timothy, control yourself no matter what happens. Be willing to endure difficult things. Do the work of preaching the Gospel. Complete the work you must do to serve the Lord.

⁶ I tell you these things, because soon I will die and leave this world. I will be like the cup of wine that they pour out on the altar and sacrifice to God. ⁷ I am like an athlete who has done his best in a contest. I am like a runner who has finished his race. I have done my best to obey God. ⁸ Now a prize is waiting for me because I have lived in the right way for God. The Lord will judge me in the right way. He will give that prize to me when

he comes again. And he will give it also to everyone who waits eagerly for him to come again. ⁹ Timothy, try to come to me soon. ¹⁰ Demas left me behind and went to Thessalonica, because he loves life in this world too much. Crescens went to Galatia, and Titus went to Dalmatia. ¹¹ Only Luke is still with me. Get Mark and bring him with you. Do this because he can help me very much. ¹² I have sent Tychicus to Ephesus. ¹³ When you come, bring the outer garment that I left at Troas with Carpus. Also bring the scrolls, especially those made from animal skins.

¹⁴ Alexander the metalworker acted very badly toward me. The Lord will punish him for what he has done. ¹⁵ You also should be on guard against him because he did everything possible to stop our preaching.

¹⁶ The first time I stood in court and explained my work, no believers stood by my side to encourage me. They all stayed away. May God not hold them responsible for this. ¹⁷ But the Lord stood with me and helped me. He made me strong, so that I fully spoke his word and so that all the Gentiles listened to it. In this way God saved me from dying. ¹⁸ The Lord will rescue me from every evil thing they do. He will bring me safely to where he rules in heaven. May people praise him forever. Amen.

¹⁹ Greet Priscilla and Aquila. Greet the people in the home of Onesiphorus. ²⁰ Erastus stayed in Corinth city. As for Trophimus, I left him in Miletus city because he was sick. ²¹ Try to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, also Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brothers. ²² May the Lord be with your spirit. May he be kind to all of you.

TITUS

Chapter 1

¹ I, Paul, write this letter to you, Titus.

I am a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ. God sent me to teach the people whom he has chosen as his own to trust him more. I work to help his people to know what is true, so that they can live in a way that pleases God. ² His people can learn how to live like this because they are confident that God will cause them to live forever. God tells no lies. Even before the world began, he promised to cause us to live forever. ³ Then, at the right time, he communicated his plan through this message that he trusted me to preach. I do this in order to obey the command of God, who saves us. ⁴ I am writing to you, Titus, because you are like a son to me because we both believe in Jesus Christ. May God the Father and Christ Jesus who saves us continue to be kind to you and to give you peace. ⁵ I left you on the Island of Crete for this reason: that you do the work that is still unfinished and also appoint elders for the group of believers in every city, just as I told you to do. ⁶ An elder must be without blame, the husband of one wife, with faithful children not accused of reckless behavior or undisciplined. ⁷ You yourself must continually do what is good so that others will see what they should also be doing. When you teach the believers, make sure that everything you say is true and say it in a way that they will respect. ⁸ Rather than that, he must welcome strangers and love the things that are good. He must always act sensibly and treat other people in a fair and honest manner. He must always act in a way that is right for someone who is devoted to God and he must always con-

trol his emotions. ⁹ He must always believe the true things we have taught him, and he must live according to them. He must do this in order to persuade people to live like this too, and in order to correct people if they do not want to live like this.

¹⁰ I tell you these things because there are many people who refuse to obey those who are in authority over them. The people who are the most like this are the ones who tell all followers of Christ to become circumcised. ¹¹ You and the leaders whom you appoint should prevent such people from teaching the believers. They are teaching things that they should not teach, causing entire families to believe wrong things. They only do it so that people will give them money. This is very shameful!

¹² One man of Crete, someone his people thought was a prophet, said, "Cretans are always lying to one another! They are like dangerous wild animals! They are lazy and always eat too much food." ¹³ What he said is true, so correct them forcefully so that they may believe and teach correct things about God. ¹⁴ They should stop living according to stories invented by the Jews and commandments that came from people, not God, people who have stopped obeying what is true. ¹⁵ If someone does not have sinful thoughts or desires, then for that person everything is good. But if anyone is wicked and does not believe in Christ Jesus, everything that he does makes him unclean. Such a person's way of thinking has been ruined. He does not even feel guilty when he does what is evil. ¹⁶ Even though they claim to know God, what they do shows that they do not know him. They are disgusting. They disobey God and can do nothing good for him.

Chapter 2

¹ But as for you, Titus, you must teach

people what is appropriate behavior for people who believe the truth about God.

² Tell the older men that they must control themselves at all times, that they must live in a way that other people respect, and that they must act sensibly. Tell them that they must also firmly believe the true things about God, love others truly, and do all these things even when it is difficult.

³ Tell the older women, like the men, to live so that everyone knows that they respect God very much. Tell them that they must not say mean or false things about other people, and that they must not be addicted to drinking a lot of wine. Instead, they should teach others what is good.

⁴ In this way, they will be able to advise the younger women to love their own husbands and children. ⁵ The older women should also teach the younger women to control what they say and do, not to act in a bad way toward any man, to work well at home, and to do what their husbands tell them. They should do all these things so that no one can mock God's message to us. ⁶ As for the younger men, urge them likewise to control themselves well.

⁷ When you teach the believers, make sure that everything you say is true and say it in a way that they will respect. ⁸ Teach people what is right with messages that no one can criticize, so that if anybody wants to stop you, other people will shame them because they will have nothing bad that they can justly say about any of us.

⁹ As for those believers who are slaves, teach them that they should always submit to their masters. Tell them to live in a way that pleases their masters in every way, and to not be argumentative with them.

¹⁰ They must not steal even little things from their masters; instead, they should be faithful to them, and they should do everything in a way that leads people to admire all that we teach about God, who saves us.

¹¹ Titus, all that I have written adds up to this: Everyone is now able to know that God wishes to save them; this is his gift to them.

¹² This saving grace from God trains us, as if we were children, to say no to the desires that are found in this world. It helps us to think about things in the right way, to be honest, truthful, and fair to other people and to always keep God in our thoughts and actions while we live in this world. ¹³ At the same time, God teaches us to wait for what he will certainly do in the future, which is something that will make us very happy: That is, Jesus the Messiah, our Savior and powerful God, will return to us in great splendor. ¹⁴ He gave himself to die as the payment to free us from our lawless nature, to make us his cherished possession, a treasured people that he has made clean, a people whose greatest joy is to do what is good.

¹⁵ Titus, speak about these things. Urge those who hear you to live as I have described. And use your full right of command to correct our brothers and sisters when it is necessary. Let no one disregard what you say.

Chapter 3

¹ Titus, be sure to remind our people that, as much as possible, we should comply with the rules and laws that govern our society. We need to be obedient and ready to do good at every opportunity. ² We should not say disrespectful things about anyone or argue with people. It is good to let other people have their preferences instead of pushing to get our own way, and to treat everyone with gentleness.

³ We need to remember that there was a time when we ourselves were foolish and unpersuaded about these things. We were led astray and served various pas-

sions and pleasures as if we were their slaves. We spent our lives envying each other and doing evil. We caused people to hate us and we hated each other.⁴ But when God showed us that he was acting generously to save us because he loves us,⁵ he saved us by washing us clean on the inside, giving us a new birth, and making us new by the Holy Spirit. He did not save us because we do good things, but he saved us because he is merciful.⁶ God generously gave us his Holy Spirit when Jesus the Messiah saved us.⁷ By this gift, God has declared that everything is made right between him and us. And more than that, we will share in everything that the Lord Jesus has to give us, especially everlasting life with him.

⁸ This is a statement that can be trusted. I want you to continually emphasize these things so that those who have believed God may constantly devote themselves to doing those things that are good and that help others. These things are excellent and beneficial for everyone.⁹ But stay away from senseless debates, controversies about lists of Jewish ancestors, and arguments and disputes about religious law. Those kinds of discussions are a waste of time and they do not help you in any way.¹⁰ If people insist on engaging in these divisive activities after you have warned them one or two times, then have nothing more to do with them,¹¹ because people like that have turned away from the truth; they live in sin and condemn themselves.

¹² When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at the town of Nicopolis, because I have decided to stay there for the winter.¹³ Do everything you can to send Zenas the law expert, and Apollos on their journey, along with everything that they need.¹⁴ Make sure that our people learn to occupy themselves with doing good things for people

who need help. If they do this they will be living in a useful way for God.

¹⁵ Titus, all those who are with me greet you! And please greet our friends there who love us as fellow believers. May God continue to show great kindness to all of you.

PHILEMON

Chapter 1

¹ I, Paul, am a prisoner who serves Christ Jesus. I am here with Timothy, our fellow believer. I am writing this letter to you, Philemon, our dear friend and fellow worker. ² I am also writing to Apphia, our fellow believer, and to Archippus, who is like a soldier who serves along with us. And I am writing to the group of believers that meets in your house. ³ I pray that God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ will continue to act kindly toward you all. I pray that he will continue to cause you to have peace.

⁴ When I pray for you, I always thank God, ⁵ because I keep hearing about how you trust in the Lord Jesus. I also hear about how you keep on loving and helping all the believers. ⁶ I pray that because you trust in Christ the same as we do, you may be able to know every good thing that we have to give you regarding Christ. ⁷ I have greatly rejoiced and have much courage because you, my dear friend, have been loving God's people and helping them.

⁸ So I want to ask you to do something. I am completely confident that I have the authority to command you to do what you should do, because I am an apostle of Christ. ⁹ But because I know that you love God's people, I request this instead of commanding you to do it. It is I, Paul, an old man and now also a prisoner because I serve Christ Jesus, who am requesting it. ¹⁰ I request that you do something for Onesimus. He is now like a son of mine because I told him about Christ here in prison. ¹¹ Although his name, as you know, means "useful," he was useless to you in the past. But now he is useful both to you and to me!

¹² Although he is very dear to me, I am sending him back to you. ¹³ I would like to have kept him with me, in order that he might serve me in your place. I need him because I am in prison because of my preaching the message about Christ.

¹⁴ However, because I had not yet asked you and you had not yet permitted me to keep him here with me, I decided not to keep him here. I decided that you should help me only if you really want to help me.

¹⁵ Perhaps the reason that God permitted Onesimus to be separated from you was so you could have him back forever! ¹⁶ You will no longer have him only as a slave. Instead, you will have him as someone who is more than a slave. You will have him as a fellow believer! He is very dear to me, but he certainly will be even more dear to you. This is because now he not only belongs to you as a slave, but he also belongs to the Lord.

¹⁷ So if you believe that you and I are doing God's work together, welcome him as you would welcome me. ¹⁸ If he has done you any kind of harm, or if he is in debt to you, let me take the responsibility for that. ¹⁹ I, Paul, am now writing this in my own handwriting: I will repay you what he owes you. I could say to you that you owe me even more than Onesimus owes you, because what I told you saved your own life.

²⁰ Indeed, my brother, let me benefit from you because of the Lord. Since we are both joined to Christ, make my heart glad.

²¹ I have written this letter to you, because I am sure that you will do what I am asking you to do. In fact, I know that you will do even more than what I am asking you to do.

²² Also, get a guest room ready for me to stay in, because I confidently expect that as a result of your prayers for me, I will be released from prison and will come to

you all.

²³ Epaphras, who is suffering with me in prison because he is joined to Christ Jesus, sends his greetings to you. ²⁴ Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, who are my other fellow workers, also send their greetings to you. ²⁵ I pray that the Lord Jesus Christ will continue to be kind to you.

HEBREWS

Chapter 1

¹ Long ago God communicated frequently to our ancestors in various ways by what the prophets said and wrote. ² But now when this final age is beginning, God has communicated to us by his own Son. God has chosen him to possess all things. By him God also created the universe. ³ God's Son is the light of God's powerful brilliance. He shows exactly what God is truly like. All things that exist—he keeps them existing by giving powerful commands. After he had acted so that all sin should be forgiven, he rose into heaven and sat down at the highest place of honor, at the right side of God the Father, where he rules with him.

⁴ God has made his Son to be so much more important than the angels that he has far more honor and authority than they do. ⁵ In the scriptures no one ever reported that God said to any angel what he said to his Son:

"You are my Son!

Today I have declared to all that I am your Father!"

And he never said about any angel what he said in another scripture passage about his Son:

"I will be his Father,

and he will be my Son."

⁶ When God brought his honored Son, his only Son, into the world, he commanded:

"All my angels must worship him."

⁷ And in the scriptures it is written about the angels:

"God has made his angels to be spirits,

and his ministers who serve him to be like flames of fire."

⁸ But in the scriptures, it is also written about God's Son:

"You who are God will rule forever, and you will reign justly over your kingdom.

⁹ You have loved people's righteous deeds and you have hated people's sinful deeds.

So God, whom you worship, has caused you to be more joyful than anyone else."

¹⁰ We also know that his Son is superior to angels because in the scriptures it is written about God's Son,

"Lord, it was you who created the earth in the beginning.

You also made the rest of the universe, the stars and everything in the sky.

¹¹ Those things will no longer exist, but you will keep on living forever.

They will wear out as clothing wears out.

¹² You will roll them up as if they were old clothes.

Then you will change all that is in the universe for something new,

like someone putting on new clothes.

But you stay the same, and you live forever!"

¹³ God has never said to any angel what he said to his Son:

"Sit in the most important place next to me and rule with me

while I defeat all of your enemies for you to rule over them!"

¹⁴ The angels are only spirits whom God has sent out to serve and care for believers whom God will soon save completely, as he has promised to do for them.

Chapter 2

¹ So, since that is true, we must pay very great attention to what we have heard about God's Son, so that we do not gradually stop believing it. ² When the angels spoke God's law to the people of Israel, what they said was valid. God justly punished all who disobeyed him and violated his law. ³ Since this is true, we will certainly not escape God; he will certainly judge us if we ignore the good news about how he saves us. It was the Lord Jesus who first told us about this, and the disciples who heard him have assured us that he did so. ⁴ God also confirmed to us that this message was true by giving believers power to do mighty deeds that prove these things are true. And the Holy Spirit also gives many gifts to the believers, just as he desires to distribute them.

⁵ God has not put the angels in charge of the new world he will make, but instead, he is putting Christ in charge of it. ⁶ Someone solemnly spoke to God about this somewhere in the scriptures, saying,

"No human being is worthy enough for you to think about him!

No human is worthy enough for you to care for him!

⁷ You created humans a little less important than the angels,

Yet you have greatly honored them, as people honor kings.

⁸ You have put everything under their control."

God has determined that mankind will rule over everything. That means that nothing will be left out from him ruling it. But now, at this present time, we do not see mankind ruling over everything. ⁹ However, we do know about Jesus, who

appeared in this life as a little less important than the angels. Because he suffered and died, God has made him the most important of all. He has made Jesus king over everything, because Jesus died for all mankind. It was because God was so kind to us that this happened.

¹⁰ It was proper that God should make Jesus complete in every way by suffering and dying for us. God is the one who created all things, and he is the one for whom all things exist. And Jesus is the one who enables God to save people. ¹¹ Jesus, the one who sets his people apart for God, and those same people whom God declares as good before him, are all from the same source, God himself. So Jesus is not embarrassed to proclaim them to be his own brothers and sisters. ¹² The psalmist wrote that Christ said to God,

"I will proclaim to my brothers how awesome you are.

I will sing praise to you in the middle of the assembly of believers!"

¹³ And a prophet wrote in another scripture passage what Christ said about God:

"I will trust him."

And in another scripture passage, Christ said about those who are like his children,

"I and the children whom God has given me are here."

¹⁴ So since those whom God calls his children are all human beings, Jesus also became a human being just like them. The devil has the power to cause people to be afraid to die, but Christ became human so that by his dying and defeating death he might make the devil powerless. ¹⁵ Jesus did this in order to free all of us who, all our lives, could not rid ourselves of the fear of death. ¹⁶ Because Jesus became a human being, it is not angels that he has come to help. No, it is us who trust God as

Abraham did whom he wants to help. ¹⁷ So God had to make Jesus to be exactly like us, like his human “brothers.” He became a high priest who acts mercifully to all people and who acts faithfully for God, so he could die for the people’s sins and make a way for God to forgive them. ¹⁸ Jesus is able to help those who are tempted to sin because he himself suffered and was tempted to sin, just as we are tempted to sin.

Chapter 3

¹ My fellow believers, God has set you apart and has chosen you to belong to himself. So consider Jesus. He is God’s apostle to us and is also the high priest whom we say we believe in together. ² He faithfully served God, who appointed him, just like Moses faithfully served all of God’s people, whom we call God’s house. ³⁻⁴ Now just as every house is made by someone, God made everything. So God has considered that Jesus is worthy for people to honor him more than they honor Moses, just as the one who builds a house deserves for people to honor him more than they should honor the house. ⁵ Moses very faithfully served God as he helped all of God’s people, just as a servant faithfully serves his master. So Moses testified about what Jesus would say later. ⁶ But Christ is the Son who rules over God’s people, and we are the people he rules if we continue to courageously believe in Christ and confidently expect God to do all that he has promised to do for us.

⁷ The Holy Spirit caused the psalmist to write these words in the scriptures to the Israelites:

“Now, when you hear God speak to you,
⁸ do not refuse to obey him, and do not let your desires be more important than what

God says, for if you do, you would be just like your ancestors long ago, when they turned away from God and did not obey him. ⁹ Your ancestors repeatedly tested me, to see whether I would be patient with them, even though for forty years they saw all the amazing things I did.

¹⁰ So I became angry with those people, and I said about them, ‘They are never faithful to me, and they do not understand how I wanted them to conduct their lives.’

¹¹ I was angry with them and solemnly declared, ‘They will not enter the land of Canaan where I would let them rest!’”

¹² So, fellow believers, be careful that none of you stops trusting in Christ because of evil in your heart, which would cause you to reject the only God who actually lives. ¹³ Instead, each of you must encourage each other every day, while you still have the opportunity. If you are stubborn, others will deceive you and lead you to sin. ¹⁴ We are now joined to Christ if we continue to seriously and confidently trust in him, from the time we first trusted in him to the time when we die. ¹⁵ The psalmist wrote in the scripture that God said,

“Now, when you hear me speaking to you, do not stubbornly disobey me as your ancestors did when they rebelled against me.”

¹⁶ Remember who it was who rebelled against God, even though they heard him speak to them. It was all of God’s people who Moses led out of Egypt. ¹⁷ And remember who it was with whom God was disgusted for forty years. It was God’s people who sinned, and their dead bodies lay there in the desert. ¹⁸ And remember about whom God solemnly declared, ‘They will not enter the land where I would let them rest.’ It was those Israelites who disobeyed God. ¹⁹ So, from

that example we know that it was because they did not keep trusting in God that they were unable to enter the land where God would allow them to rest.

Chapter 4

¹ God has promised that we would rest, but we must be careful, because we can miss God's place of rest. ² We have heard the good news about how Jesus gives us God's rest, just as the Israelites heard God promise that they would rest in Canaan. But just as that message did not help many Israelites because they did not trust God as Joshua and Caleb did, the good news about Christ will not help us if we do not trust God. ³ We who have believed in Christ are able to enter the place of rest because God said,

"Because I was angry with the people of Israel, I solemnly declared, 'They will not enter the land where I would let them rest.'"

God said this even though his plans had been finished from the time he created the world. ⁴ What was written in the scriptures about the seventh day after he had spent six days creating the world, shows that this is true:

"Then, on the seventh day, God rested from his work of creating everything."

⁵ But note again what God said about the Israelites in the passage that I quoted previously:

"They will not enter the land where I would let them rest."

⁶ Some people still enter God's rest. But the Israelites who first heard God promise that they would rest—they did not enter that place of resting, because they refused to believe God. ⁷ But God set another

time when we may enter that place of resting. That time is now! We know that is true because much later than when the Israelites rebelled against God in the desert, he caused King David to write what I have already quoted,

"Right now, when you understand what God is saying to you, do not stubbornly disobey him."

⁸ If Joshua had led the Israelites to enter the only place of resting God would give them, then much later God would not have spoken again about another day of rest. But he did give them another promise of rest. ⁹ So, just as God rested on the seventh day after he finished creating everything, there remains a time when God's people will rest eternally. ¹⁰ Whoever enters God's place of resting has ceased from his work, just as God finished doing his work of creating everything.

¹¹ So we eagerly enter into the rest of God by following Christ, so that the example of those who disobey will not influence us and ruin us too. ¹² God's words are alive and powerful, and they are able to cut like a sharp sword—cutting so deep that it can separate out the difference between our soul and our spirit. God's words are just like a sword that cuts deeply, down so deep they can cut into us like a sharp sword cuts through the joints of an animal. Those words cut even into the hardest places in us, like a sword that can cut down into the marrow within the bones. God's words are like a judge, deciding what thoughts are good or what thoughts are bad, and his words test the motives hidden deep within each of our hearts. ¹³ God knows everything about everyone. Nothing is hidden from him. Everything is completely open to him and he sees everything we do. We must all appear before God and we must tell him how we have lived our lives.

¹⁴ So we have a great high priest who ascended through the heavens when he returned to God's presence. He is Jesus, God's Son. So let us courageously say openly that we trust Jesus Christ. ¹⁵ Our high priest can indeed have mercy on us and encourage us, we who tend to sin easily, because Satan also tempted him to sin in every way that he tempts us to sin—but he did not sin. ¹⁶ So let us come boldly to Christ, who rules from heaven and does for us what we do not deserve, so that he might kindly help us and have mercy on us when we need him to do so.

Chapter 5

¹ When God chooses a high priest, he selects a man from the people. This man must serve God for the people; he must give God gifts and sacrifice animals to him for the people's sins. ² A high priest can be gentle with those who know little about God and with those who sin against him. This is because the high priest himself is weak with sin. ³ As a result, he also must sacrifice animals, because he sins just like the people do. ⁴ But no one can honor himself by deciding to become the high priest. Instead, God chose each man to become a high priest, as he chose Aaron to be the first high priest. ⁵ Similarly, Christ also did not honor himself by becoming high priest. Instead, God the Father appointed him by saying to him what the psalmist wrote in the scriptures:

“You are my son! Today I have declared that I am your father!”

⁶ And he also said to Christ what the psalmist wrote in another scripture passage:

“You are a priest eternally in the way that Melchizedek was a priest.”

⁷ In the days when Christ was living here in the world, he prayed to God and cried out loudly to him in tears. He asked God, who could save him from dying. And God listened to him, because Christ honored him and obeyed him. ⁸ Although Christ is God's own son, he learned to obey God by suffering and dying. ⁹ By accomplishing everything that God wanted him to do, he has now become fully able to save eternally all who obey him. ¹⁰ God has designated him to be our high priest in the way that Melchizedek was a high priest.

¹¹ I want to tell you much about the many ways in which Christ resembles Melchizedek. This is hard for me to explain to you because you find it so difficult to understand. ¹² You became Christians long ago. So by now you should be teaching God's truths to others. But you still need someone to teach you again the elementary truths of the words of God from the scriptures, starting from the beginning. You need those basic truths like babies need milk. You are not ready to learn more difficult things, things that are like the solid food that mature people need. ¹³ Remember that those who are still learning these elementary truths do not understand what God says about becoming righteous. Neither do they yet know right from wrong. They are just like babies who need milk! ¹⁴ But the more difficult spiritual truth is for people who know God better, just like solid food is for people who are adults. They can tell the difference between what is good and what is evil, because they have trained themselves by learning what is right and what is wrong.

Chapter 6

¹⁻³ So, we must not keep discussing what we first learned about Christ, things that

all believers must learn at first. Some of these things are how to stop doing sinful deeds, those that lead to death, and how to start trusting in God. There are also important things we teach: various kinds of baptism, why we often pray while putting our hands on each other; and also about how God will raise us all from the dead and judge everyone in a way that will last forever. Indeed, we will discuss these things again later, if God gives us the chance to do it. But now we must discuss things that are harder to understand; these are things that will help us to trust in Christ in all times, no matter what happens. ⁴ I will explain why it is important to do this. Some people have at one time understood the message about Christ. They learned what it was like for God to forgive them and for Christ to love them, and they received gifts from the Holy Spirit. ⁵ They found for themselves that God's message is good, and they learned how God will work powerfully in the future. ⁶ But now, if these people reject Christ, no one will be able to persuade them to stop sinning and to trust in him again! That is because it is as though these people have nailed the Son of God to his cross again! They are causing people to despise Christ in front of others. ⁷ Think about this: God has blessed land on which rain has frequently fallen and on which plants grow for the farmers. ⁸ But what will happen to believers who do not obey God is like what happens to land on which only thorns and thistles grow. Such land is worthless. It has become land that the farmer will curse and whose plants he will burn away.

⁹ You can see that I am warning you, dear friends, not to reject Christ. At the same time, I am certain that you are doing better than that. You are doing the things that are in conformity with the fact that God is saving you. ¹⁰ Since God always

acts justly, he will not overlook all you have done for him; he will not overlook how you have loved and helped your fellow believers, and how you are still helping them. ¹¹ We greatly desire that each of you continue to show the same effort you are showing now, so that to the very end of your lives, you will be sure you will receive all that God promised to give you. ¹² I do not want you to be lazy. Instead, I want you to do what other believers have done, those who are receiving what God promised them, because they trusted in him and were patient.

¹³ When God promised to do great things for Abraham, there was no one greater than himself whom he could ask to force himself to do those things. So he asked himself. ¹⁴ Then he said to Abraham, "I will certainly bless you and I will certainly greatly increase the number of your descendants." ¹⁵ So after Abraham patiently waited for God to do what he promised, God did for him what he had promised. ¹⁶ Keep in mind that when people promise something, they ask a more important person to punish them if they do not do what they promise. This is how they often settle disputes. ¹⁷ So when God wanted to demonstrate very clearly to us who would receive what he had promised that he would not change what he had planned to do, he said that he would declare himself guilty if he did not do what he promised. ¹⁸ He did that to strongly encourage us, because he has done two things that cannot change: He promised to help us, and he told us that he would declare himself guilty if he did not help us. Now, God cannot lie. That is why we have trusted in him, just as he has encouraged us to do. ¹⁹ Yes, we confidently expect to receive what God has promised to do for us. It is as if we were a ship, whose anchor is holding us firmly in one place. The one we confidently expect to hold us is Jesus,

because he has gone into God's very presence. This is why he is just like the high priests who go behind the curtain into the innermost part of the temple, where God is present. ²⁰ Jesus went into God's presence ahead of us to allow us to enter in that same place with God, too. Jesus has become a high priest forever, in the way that Melchizedek was a high priest.

Chapter 7

¹ Now I will say more about this man Melchizedek. He was the king of the city of Salem and was also a priest of God, who rules the universe. He met Abraham and his men who were returning home from defeating the armies of the four kings. Melchizedek blessed Abraham. ² Then Abraham gave to him one tenth of all the things he took after winning the battle. Now Melchizedek's name means first, "king who rules righteously," and, since Salem means "peace," his name also means "the king who rules peacefully." ³ The scriptures provide us with no record of Melchizedek's father, mother, or ancestors; nor do the scriptures tell us when he was born or when he died. It is as if he continues to be a priest forever. In this way, he is a little like the Son of God.

⁴ You can realize how great this man Melchizedek was from the fact that Abraham, our famous ancestor, gave him a tenth of the best things he took from the battle with the kings. ⁵ According to the laws God gave Moses, the descendants of Abraham's great-grandson Levi, who were priests, should take tithes from God's people who were their relatives, even though those people also were fellow descendants of Abraham. ⁶ But this man Melchizedek, who was not among the descendants of Levi, received a tenth

of everything from Abraham. He also blessed Abraham, the man to whom God promised many descendants. ⁷ Now everyone knows that the more important people bless the less important people, just as Melchizedek blessed Abraham. So we know that Melchizedek was greater than Abraham. ⁸ In the case of the priests who are descendants of Levi, they are all men who will die one day, but even they received tithes. However, in the case of Melchizedek, who received a tenth of everything from Abraham—it is as if God testified that Melchizedek keeps on living, since scripture does not speak about him dying. ⁹ And it was as though Levi himself, and all the priests descended from him—those who received tithes from the people—paid tithes to Melchizedek because their ancestor Abraham paid tithes to him. When Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek it was as though Levi and all the priests descended from him acknowledged that Melchizedek was greater than Abraham. ¹⁰ This is true because we can say that Levi and his descendants were still in Abraham's body when Melchizedek met Abraham.

¹¹ God gave the law to his people at the same time he gave regulations about the priests. So if the priests who were descended from Aaron and his ancestor Levi could have provided a way for God to forgive people for disobeying those laws, those priests would have been adequate. In that case, no other priest like Melchizedek would have been necessary. ¹² But we know those priests were not adequate, because a new type of priest like Melchizedek has come. And since God has appointed a new type of priest, he also had to change the law. ¹³ Jesus, the one about whom I am saying these things, is not a descendant of Levi. Instead, he came from the tribe of Judah, which never gave any person who served as priest. ¹⁴ The

scriptures clearly state this. And in fact, Moses never said that any of Judah's descendants would become priests.¹⁵ Furthermore, we know that the priests descended from Levi were inadequate, since it is even more obvious that another priest has appeared who is like Melchizedek.¹⁶ This priest is Jesus; he became a priest, but not because he fulfilled what God's law required about being a descendant of Levi. Instead, he has the kind of power that came from a life that nothing can destroy.¹⁷ We know this since God confirmed it in the scripture passage in which he said to his Son,

"You are a priest eternally, just as Melchizedek was a priest."

¹⁸ God withdrew what he had first commanded about the priests because those priests are unable to make sinful people holy.¹⁹ No one was able to become good by obeying the laws that God gave Moses. On the other hand, God gave us a better reason to have confidence in him, because he makes it possible for us to come near to him.

²⁰ Furthermore, when God appointed Christ as a priest, he solemnly declared it. When God appointed former priests, he did not do this.²¹ But when he appointed Christ to be a priest, it was by these words that the psalmist wrote in scripture:

"The Lord has solemnly declared
—and he will not change his mind:
'You will be a priest forever!'"

²² Because of that, Jesus himself guarantees that the new covenant will be better than the old one.

²³ And formerly, priests could not keep serving as priests because they would always die. So there were many priests to take the place of the ones who died.²⁴ But because Jesus lives eternally, he will con-

tinue to be a high priest forever.²⁵ So Jesus can completely and eternally save those who come to God, since he lives forever to plead with God to forgive them and keep them safe.

²⁶ Jesus is the kind of high priest that we need. He was holy, he did no wrong, and he was innocent. God has now separated him from living among sinners, and has now taken him up to the highest heaven.²⁷ The Jewish high priests need to sacrifice animals day by day as well as year by year. They do this, firstly, to cover their own sins, and then to cover the sins of other people. But because Jesus never sinned, he does not need to do that. The only thing he needed to do to save people was to sacrifice himself once, and that is exactly what he did!²⁸ We need a high priest like Jesus, because the priests, who were appointed as commanded in the law, sinned like all humans sin. But God solemnly declared after he had given his laws to Moses that he would appoint his Son to be high priest. Now his Son, who is God the Son, Jesus, is forever the only perfect high priest.

Chapter 8

¹ The most important part of everything that I have written is that we have a high priest who has sat down to rule in the place of greatest honor in heaven, beside God himself.² He serves in the sanctuary, that is, in the true place of worship in heaven. That is the true sacred tent, for the Lord set it up, not Moses.

³ God appoints every high priest to offer gifts and sacrifices for the people's sins. So since Christ became a high priest, he also had to offer something.⁴ Since there are already priests who offer gifts as God's law requires, if Christ were now living on the

earth, he would not be a high priest at all.
⁵ The priests in Jerusalem perform rituals that are only a copy of what Christ does in heaven. This is because when Moses was about to set up the sacred tent, God told him, "Be sure that you make everything according to what I showed you on Mount Sinai!" ⁶ But now Christ serves in a much better way than the Jewish priests do. In the same way, the new covenant that he established between God and people is better than the old one. When he established the new covenant, he promised us better things than the laws that God gave Moses.

⁷ God needed to make this new covenant, because the first covenant had not done everything well. ⁸ Because God declared that the Israelites were guilty of not obeying the first covenant, he wanted a new covenant. This is what a prophet wrote about that:

"The Lord says, 'Listen! There will soon be a time

when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and the people of Judah.

⁹ That covenant will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors

when I led them out of Egypt like a father leads his young child.

They did not continue to obey my covenant,

so I let them alone,' says the Lord.

¹⁰ 'This is the covenant that I will make with the Israelites,

after the first covenant has ended,' says the Lord:

'I will enable them to understand my laws,

and I will enable them to obey them sincerely from their hearts.

I will be their God, and they will be my people.

¹¹ No one will need to teach a fellow citizen

or tell his fellow kinsmen, 'You acknowledge that the Lord is God,'

because all my people will acknowledge me.

Everyone among my people, from the least important to the most important, will know me.

¹² I will mercifully forgive them for the wicked things they have done.

I will no longer consider that they are guilty for their sins."

¹³ Since God said that he was making a new covenant, we know that he considered that the first covenant was no longer in use, and that it would soon disappear.

Chapter 9

¹ In the first covenant God regulated how people of Israel should worship, and he told them to make a place to worship him.

² The sanctuary that the Israelites set up was the sacred tent. In its outer room there were the lampstand and the table on which they put the bread on display before God. That room was called the holy place. ³ Behind the curtain on one side of the holy place there was another room. That was called the very holy place.

⁴ It had an altar covered with gold for burning incense. It also had the sacred chest. All its sides were covered with gold. In it was the golden pot which contained pieces of the food they called manna. In the chest there was also Aaron's walking stick that had budded to prove that he was God's true priest. In the chest were also the stone tablets on which God had

written the Ten Commandments. ⁵ On top of the chest were figures of winged creatures that symbolized God's glory. Their wings overshadowed the sacred chest's lid where the high priest sprinkled the blood to atone for the sins of the people. I cannot now write about these things in detail.

⁶ After they have arranged all these things in this way, the Jewish priests habitually go into the outer room of the tent to do their tasks. ⁷ But into the inner room only the high priest goes once a year. He always takes the blood of animals that they have slaughtered. He offers the blood to God for his own sins and for the sins that the other Israelites have committed. This includes the sins they committed but they did not know they were committing sins.

⁸ By those things the Holy Spirit indicated that God did not reveal the way for ordinary people to enter into the inner room, the very holy place, while the outer room still existed. In a similar way, he did not reveal the way for ordinary people to enter the presence of God while the Jews offered sacrifices in the old way. ⁹ This was a symbol for the time in which we are now living. The gifts and sacrifices offered in the sacred tent cannot make a person always know right from wrong or always do right from our hearts and in a way that he pleases God. ¹⁰ Those rules about what to eat and drink, and about what to wash—all those rules are no longer any good because God has made a new covenant with us. This new covenant is a much better system.

¹¹ But when Christ came as our high priest, he brought the good things that we have now. Then he went into God's presence in heaven, which is like the sacred tent, but it is not part of the world that God created. It is better than the tent Moses set up here on earth because it is perfect.

¹² When a high priest goes into the in-

ner room in the tent each year, he takes goats' blood and calves' blood to offer as a sacrifice. But Christ did not do that. It was as though he went into that very holy place only once because he gave his own blood on the cross, just one time. By doing that, he redeemed us forever, because his blood flowed from himself. ¹³ The priests sprinkle on people goats' blood and bulls' blood and the water that has been filtered through the ashes of a red heifer that they have completely burned. By performing that ritual, they then say that God will now accept that the people should worship him. ¹⁴ If all that is true, then it became even more true when Christ, who had never sinned, sacrificed himself to God—he did this by the power of God's eternal Spirit. Because he sacrificed himself, God now forgives us for having sinned, for having done things that would have made us die forever. Now it is as though we had never sinned; now we can worship the true God.

¹⁵ By dying for us, Christ made for God a new covenant with us. We were trying to please God by means of the first covenant, but we were still guilty of having sinned. When he died, he freed us from having to die for our own sins. As a result, all of us whom God has called to know him will receive what he has promised to give us forever. ¹⁶ A covenant is like a will. In the case of a will, in order to put its provisions into effect, someone must prove that the one who made it has died. ¹⁷ A will goes into effect only when the one who makes the will has died. It is not in effect when the one who made it is still alive. ¹⁸ And so God put the first covenant into effect only by means of animals' blood that flowed when the priests sacrificed them. ¹⁹ After Moses had declared to all the Israelites everything that God commanded in the laws that God gave him, he took calves' and goats' blood mixed with water.

He dipped into this blood scarlet wool that he tied around a sprig of hyssop. Then he sprinkled with some of the blood the scroll itself containing God's laws. Then he sprinkled more of that blood on all the people. ²⁰ He said to them, "This is the blood that brings into effect the covenant that God commanded that you obey." ²¹ Likewise, he sprinkled that blood on the sacred tent and on every object that they used in working there. ²² It was by sprinkling blood that they cleansed almost everything. That was what was stated in God's laws. If blood does not flow when they sacrifice an animal, God does not forgive the sins of those people.

²³ So by animal sacrifices it was necessary for the priests to cleanse the things that symbolized what Christ does in heaven. But God has to cleanse the things in heaven by means of much better sacrifices than those. ²⁴ Christ did not enter the very holy place that humans made, which only represented the true very holy place. Instead, he entered heaven itself, in order to now be in God's presence to plead with God for us. ²⁵ The high priest enters the very holy place once every year, taking blood that is not his own, to offer it as a sacrifice. But when Christ entered heaven, it was not in order to offer himself repeatedly like that. ²⁶ If that were so, he would have needed to suffer and shed his blood repeatedly since the time when God created the world. But instead, in this final age, Christ has appeared once so that by sacrificing himself, God will forgive all our sins and will not condemn us any more because we have sinned. ²⁷ All people must die once, and after that God will judge them for their sins. ²⁸ Likewise, when Christ died, God offered him once to be a sacrifice, to punish him in the place of the many people who had sinned. He will come to earth a second time, not in order to sacrifice himself again for those

who have sinned, but in order to save us who wait for him and expect him to come.

Chapter 10

¹ The law does not show very well the good things that God will give us later. The law is like a shadow of something else. If people come to worship God by offering the same kinds of sacrifices every year, they can never become perfect.

² If God had removed the guilt of those who brought these sacrifices, they would not feel that they were still guilty. So they would certainly have stopped offering those sacrifices! ³ But rather, the fact that they offer those sacrifices each year reminds them that they are still guilty for their sins. ⁴ So we know that even if we offer animals such as bulls or goats to God, even if he sees their blood flow, that will not stop us from being guilty.

⁵ That is why, as Christ was coming into the world, he said to his Father,

"It is not sacrifices and offerings that you have wanted,

but you have prepared for me a body to offer.

⁶ Animals that completely burn up when people offer them to you, these animals have not pleased you,

and neither do other sacrifices please you.

⁷ Because of this, I said, 'My God, listen!

I have come here in order to do what you want me to do,

just as they have written about me in the scriptures."

⁸ First Christ said, "It is not sacrifices and offerings and animals that the priests have completely burned up and other offerings to atone for those who have sinned

that you have really wanted. They have not pleased you.” He said that even though those things were offered according to the laws that God gave Moses! ⁹ Then, concerning his offering himself as a sacrifice to atone for people’s sin, he said, “Listen! I have come here to do what you want me to do!” Thus Christ got rid of the first way of atoning for sin, in order to establish the second way of atoning for sin. ¹⁰ Because Jesus Christ did what God wanted him to do, God set us apart for himself. This happened when Jesus Christ offered his own body once as a sacrifice, a sacrifice that he will never need to repeat.

¹¹ As every priest stands daily in front of the altar, he performs rituals and offers the same kind of sacrifices that could never remove the guilt for anyone’s sins.

¹² But Christ offered a sacrifice that will be enough forever, and he offered it only one time! After that, he sat down to rule beside God in the place of highest honor.

¹³ From now on, he is waiting for God to completely defeat all his enemies. ¹⁴ By offering himself once as the sacrifice for sin, he perfected forever those in whom God has worked his cleansing and purity.

¹⁵ The Holy Spirit also confirms to us that that is true. First he says:

¹⁶ “When the time of the first covenant with my people has finished,

I will make a new covenant with them.

I will do this for them:

I will cause them to understand my laws
and I will cause them to obey them.”

¹⁷ Then he said:

“I will forgive them for their sins,

and I will consider that they are no longer guilty for having sinned.”

¹⁸ When God has forgiven someone’s sins, that person does not need to make any more offerings to make up for his sin!

¹⁹ So, my fellow believers, because we trust in what Jesus accomplished when his own blood flowed for us, we can confidently go into God’s very presence that was symbolized by the very holy place in the sacred tent. ²⁰ He has enabled us to go into God’s presence by making a new way in which we can live forever. This new way is Jesus, who died for us. ²¹ Christ is a great priest who rules over us, we who are God’s people. ²² So we must approach God sincerely by confidently trusting in Jesus. It is he who has made our hearts pure from having sinned. It is as if he sprinkled his own blood over our hearts, and as if he had washed our bodies in pure water. ²³ We must unwaveringly keep stating what we believe. Since God faithfully does all he promised to do, we must confidently expect him to do these things. ²⁴ And let us think how each of us can best encourage each other to love one another and to do good deeds. ²⁵ We must not cease assembling ourselves to worship the Lord, as some people have done. Instead, each one of us must encourage the others. Let us do that all the more since we know that the time that the Lord will return is near.

²⁶ If we deliberately and habitually sin after we have known the true message about Christ, no other sacrifice will help us. ²⁷ Instead, we must fearfully expect that God will judge us, and then he will righteously punish all his enemies in a furious fire. ²⁸ Everyone who rejected the laws that God gave Moses had to die without mercy when at least two or three people testified against him. ²⁹ That was severe punishment. But Christ is God’s Son, and he is also God. If anyone rejects the covenant that he has made and despises the blood that flowed from him—if that person rejects the blood in exchange for which God forgave him—if that person rejects the Spirit of God, who acted so kindly toward him—then God will punish him

very, very severely. ³⁰ We can be sure of this, since we know that God said, “The right and power to give people what they deserve for having sinned belongs to me. I will punish them as they deserve.” And Moses wrote, “The Lord will judge his people.” ³¹ It will be a terrible thing if the all-powerful God who really lives seizes and punishes you!

³² Remember the earlier times when you first understood the truth about Christ. You endured much hardship, and when you suffered, you continued to trust God.

³³ At times people insulted you in public; at other times they made you suffer. At other times you suffered with other believers in their hardships. ³⁴ You not only were kind to those who were in prison because they believed in Christ, but you also accepted it joyfully when unbelievers took away your possessions. You accepted it because you yourselves knew very well that you had possessions in heaven forever, possessions that are much better than those that they took from you! ³⁵ So do not become discouraged when they cause you to suffer, because if you continue to trust in God, he will greatly reward you. ³⁶ You must patiently continue to trust in him in order that, because of your doing what God wants you to do, he will give you what he has promised. ³⁷ A prophet wrote in the scriptures that God said about the Messiah:

”In just a short time the one I promised would come will surely come;

he will not delay coming.

³⁸ But those who belong to me, who act righteously, will continue to live trusting in me.

If they are cowards and stop trusting in me,

I will not be pleased with them.

³⁹ But we are not people who are cowards

and cause God to destroy us. Instead, we are people who trust in him, so that he will save us forever.

Chapter 11

¹ Faith is when people trust God and they are sure they will receive the things they confidently expect him to give them. Faith is when people are certain they will see those things happen, though, for now, those things cannot be seen. ² Because our ancestors trusted in God, he approved of them. ³ Because we trust in God, we understand that God formed the universe by commanding that it exist. So the things we see were not made from things that already existed.

⁴ Because Adam’s son Abel trusted God, he sacrificed something better to God than what his older brother Cain offered to God. So God spoke well about what Abel sacrificed, and God declared that Abel was righteous. And although Abel is dead, we still learn from him about trusting God.

⁵ Because Enoch believed God, God took him up to heaven. Enoch did not die, but no one could find him. Before God took him away, he testified that Enoch pleased him well. ⁶ Now it is possible for people to please God only if they trust him, because anyone who wants to come to God must first believe that God exists and that he rewards those who try to know him.

⁷ God warned Noah that he would send a flood, and Noah believed him. He honored God by building a ship to save his family. In this way he showed that the rest of the people deserved for God to punish them. So Noah became a person whom God made right with himself, because Noah trusted him.

⁸ God called Abraham to go to the land

that he would give his descendants. Because Abraham trusted him, he obeyed God and left his country, even though he did not know where he was going.⁹ Because Abraham trusted God, he lived as though he were a foreigner in a land that God had promised to give his descendants. Abraham lived in tents, and his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob did also. God promised to give to Isaac and Jacob the same things that he promised to give Abraham.¹⁰ Abraham was waiting to live in the permanent city that God himself would design and build.¹¹ And even though Sarah was unable to have children because of her old-age, Abraham received the ability to father a child, because he considered Yahweh to be faithful because he had made the promise to him that he would have a son.¹² So, although Abraham was too old to have children, from that one man people descended who are as many in number as the stars in the sky and are as countless as the grains of sand along the shore, just like God promised him.

¹³ While they still trusted in God, all these people died. Even though they had not yet received the things that God had promised to give them, it was as though they had seen those things in the distance, and they were glad. It was as though they had admitted that they did not belong to this earth, but that they were only here temporarily.¹⁴ As for people who say such things, they clearly show that they long for a place that will become their true native land.¹⁵ If they had been thinking that their true native land was the place from which they had come, they could have simply returned there.¹⁶ But, instead, they desired a better place in which to live. They desired a home in heaven. So God has prepared a city for them to live with him, and he is pleased for them to say that he is their God.

¹⁷ Because Abraham trusted God, he was ready to kill his son Isaac as a sacrifice when God tested him. Abraham, to whom God promised to give a son, was going to sacrifice the very son whom he had given him, the only son whom his own wife had borne!¹⁸ It was about this son that God had said, "It is only from Isaac that I will consider your family to descend."¹⁹ Abraham considered that to fulfill that promise, God could make Isaac live again even if he died after Abraham had sacrificed him! The result was that when Abraham did receive Isaac back after God told him not to harm Isaac, it was as though he received him back even after he died.

²⁰ Because Isaac trusted God, he prayed that God would bless his sons Jacob and Esau after he died.

²¹ Because Jacob trusted God, as he was dying, he prayed God would bless each of the sons of his own son Joseph. He worshiped God as he leaned upon his walking stick before he died.²² Because Joseph trusted God, when he was about to die in Egypt, he thought ahead to the time when the Israelites would leave Egypt, and he instructed his people to carry his bones with them when they left Egypt.

²³ Because Moses' father and mother trusted God, they hid their son for three months shortly after he was born, because they saw that the child was beautiful. They were not afraid of disobeying what the king of Egypt had commanded, that all the Jewish male babies must die.

²⁴ The daughter of the king, whom they called Pharaoh, raised Moses, but when Moses had grown up, because he trusted God, he refused to accept the royal privileges that would have been his if people considered him as "the son of Pharaoh's daughter."²⁵ He decided that it was better for others to mistreat him for a time along with God's people, than to temporarily en-

joy living sinfully in the king's palace. ²⁶ He decided that if he suffered for Christ, it would be worth far more in God's sight than owning the treasures of Egypt that he would receive as one of Pharaoh's family. He looked forward to the time when God would give him an eternal reward. ²⁷ Because he trusted God, Moses left Egypt. He was not afraid that the king would be angry because he left. He kept going because it was as though he kept seeing God, whom no one can see. ²⁸ Because Moses believed God would save his own people, he obeyed God's commands about Passover, which became a yearly festival. He commanded the people to kill lambs and sprinkle their blood on their doorposts so that the angel who causes people to die would not kill the oldest male Israelites with the oldest sons in each Egyptian family.

²⁹ Because the Israelites trusted God when they walked through the Sea of Reeds, it was as though they were walking on dry land! But, when the army of Egypt also attempted to cross where the sea had been, they drowned, because the sea came back and flooded them!

³⁰ Because the Israelite people trusted God, the walls around the city of Jericho collapsed, after the Israelites marched around the walls for seven days.

³¹ Rahab was a prostitute, but because she trusted God, she did not perish with those inside Jericho who disobeyed God. Joshua had sent spies into the city to find ways to destroy it, but God saved Rahab because she welcomed those spies peacefully.

³² I do not know what more I should say about others who trusted in God. It would take too much time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the other prophets. ³³ Because they trusted God, some of them did great deeds for him. Some conquered

lands ruled by powerful men. Some ruled Israel and justly treated men and nations. Some received from God the things that he promised to give them. Some forced lions to keep their mouths shut. ³⁴ Some escaped from burning up in fire. Some escaped from others who tried to kill them with swords. Some became well again after being sick. Some became powerful when they fought wars. Some caused armies that came from foreign lands to run away from them. ³⁵ Some women who trusted God received their relatives back again when God made them live again after they had died. But others who trusted God were tortured until they died. They were tortured because they refused to agree when their enemies said, "We will release you if you deny that you believe in God." They refused to do that, because they wanted to live with God forever, which is better than continuing to live on earth. ³⁶ Other people who trusted God were mocked. Some had their backs cut open by being struck with whips. Some were chained and put in prison. ³⁷ Some of those believers were stoned to death. Others were sawn completely in two. Others were killed with swords. Others of these people who trusted God wandered around the land wearing garments made only of skins from sheep and goats. They did not have any money. People constantly oppressed them and harmed them. ³⁸ The people on earth who caused those who trusted in God to suffer like this were so bad that they did not deserve to live with people like those who trusted God. Some who trusted God wandered in deserts and mountains. Some lived in caves and in other large holes in the ground.

³⁹ Although God approved of all these people because they trusted him, he did not give them what he had promised them.

⁴⁰ God knew ahead of time that what he

would give us and them later would be better than giving them immediately what he promised. What God intends is that only when they and we are together will we have all that God intends us to have.

Chapter 12

¹ We know about many people like these who proved that they trusted in God. Let us put off everything that weighs us down and so we put away the sin that clings to us. Then let us run our race patiently and do everything God gives us to do until we make it to the finish line. ² And let us keep thinking about Jesus and give him all our attention. He is the one who leads us and he makes our faith complete. He is the one who endured the terrible suffering on the cross and he paid no attention to the people who tried to shame him. He did this because he knew how joyful God would make him later. He now sits at the place of highest honor beside the throne where God rules in heaven.

³ Jesus patiently endured it when sinful people hatefully acted against him. Strengthen your hearts and minds with Jesus' example so that you will not give up trusting God or become discouraged.

⁴ While you have struggled against being tempted to sin, you have not yet bled and died because of resisting evil, as Jesus did. ⁵ Do not forget these words that Solomon spoke to his son, which are the same with which God encourages you as his children:

"My son, pay attention when the Lord is disciplining you,

and do not be discouraged when the Lord punishes you,

⁶ because everyone the Lord loves he also disciplines,

and he severely corrects everyone he calls his own."

⁷ God may discipline you by requiring you to endure difficult things that happen to you. When God disciplines you, he is treating you as a father treats his children. All fathers discipline their children. ⁸ So if you have not experienced God disciplining you like he disciplines all his children, you are not true children of God. You are like illegitimate children who have no father to correct them. ⁹ Furthermore, our natural fathers disciplined us when we were young, and we respected them for doing that. So we should certainly more readily accept God our spiritual Father disciplining us so we will live eternally! ¹⁰ Our natural fathers disciplined us for a short time as they considered right, but God always disciplines us to help us share in his holy nature. ¹¹ During the time God is disciplining us, it does not seem to be anything about which we can rejoice. Instead, it pains us. But later it causes those who have learned from it to live righteously, which produces peace in us.

¹² So, instead of acting as though you were spiritually tired out, trust God's discipline to renew you. ¹³ Go straight forward following Christ so that believers who are weak in trusting Christ will gain strength from you and not become crippled. Instead, they will be spiritually restored as an injured and useless limb becomes well again. ¹⁴ Try to live peacefully with all people. Do your best to be holy, since no one will see the Lord if he is not holy.

¹⁵ Beware that none of you stops trusting in God, who has done kind things for us that we did not deserve. Be on guard so that none of you act in an evil way toward others, because that will grow like a root grows into a big plant, leading many believers to sin. ¹⁶ Do not let anyone be immoral or disobey God like Esau. He

exchanged the rights he had as a first-born son for only one meal. ¹⁷ Esau later wanted to get back his birth rights and all that his father Isaac's blessing would give him. But Isaac refused to do what Esau requested. So Esau found no way to get back his birth rights and blessing, even though he sought it tearfully.

¹⁸ In coming to God, you have not experienced things like what the Israelite people experienced at Mount Sinai. They approached a mountain that God commanded them not to touch because he himself had come down to that mountain. They approached a blazing fire, and it was gloomy and dark, with a violent storm. ¹⁹ They heard a trumpet sound, and they heard God speak a message. It was so powerful that they pleaded for him not to speak to them like that again. ²⁰ For God had commanded them, "If a person or even an animal touches this mountain, you must kill him." The people were terrified. ²¹ Truly, because Moses was terrified after seeing what happened on the mountain, he said, "I am trembling because I am very afraid!" ²² Instead, you have come to the presence of God who truly lives in heaven, to the "New Jerusalem." That is like what your ancestors did when they came to worship God on Mount Zion in Israel, upon which the earthly Jerusalem was built. You have come to where there are countless angels who are rejoicing as they have gathered together. ²³ You have joined the assembly of all the believers who have privileges as firstborn sons, whose names God has written down in heaven. You have come to God, who will judge everyone. You have come to where the spirits of God's people are, people who lived righteously before they died, and whom God has now made perfect in heaven. ²⁴ You have come to Jesus, who arranged a new covenant between us and God by the blood that flowed when he

died on the cross. Jesus' blood made it possible for God to forgive us, and his blood is better for us than Abel's blood.

²⁵ Beware that you do not refuse to listen to God who is speaking to you. The Israelite people did not escape God punishing them when Moses warned them here on earth. So we shall surely not escape God punishing us if we reject what he says when he warns us from heaven! ²⁶ The earth shook when he spoke at Mount Sinai. But now he has promised, "I will shake the earth again, one more time, and I will shake the heavens, too." ²⁷ The words "again, one more time" indicate that God will remove those things on earth that he will shake, everything that he has created. He will do this in order that the things in heaven that cannot shake may remain forever. ²⁸ So let us thank God that we are becoming members of a kingdom that nothing can shake. Let us worship God by gratefully thanking him and by being greatly in awe of his great power and love. ²⁹ Remember that the God we worship is like a fire that burns up everything that is impure!

Chapter 13

¹ Continue to love your fellow believers.

² Do not forget to be hospitable to needy travelers. By caring for strangers, some people have welcomed angels into their home without knowing it. ³ Remember to help those who are in prison because they are believers, as though you were in prison with them and were suffering physically as they are doing.

⁴ Men and women who are married to each other must respect each other, and they must be faithful to each other. God will surely condemn those who act immorally or adulterously. ⁵ Live without

constantly wanting money, and be happy no matter how much or little you own. Remember what Moses wrote that God said:

”I will never leave you;

I will never stop providing for you.”

⁶ So we can say confidently as the psalmist said,

“Since the Lord is the one who helps me, I will not be afraid! People can do nothing to me that will keep God from helping me.”

⁷ Your spiritual leaders have told you the message about Christ. Remember how they have conducted their lives and imitate how they have trusted in Christ. ⁸ Jesus Christ is the same now as he always has been, and he will be the same forever.

⁹ So do not let other people persuade you to believe other things about God, strange things that you have not learned from us. For example, do not let anything make you obey various rules about what to eat and not to eat. These rules cannot help us.

¹⁰ Those who serve in the sacred tent have no right to eat at the sacred altar where we worship Christ. ¹¹ After the high priest brings into the very holy place the blood of animals that they have sacrificed to atone for sins, other people burn the bodies of those animals outside the camp. ¹² Similarly, Jesus suffered and died outside the gates of Jerusalem in order that he might make us, his people, special for God. He did this by offering his own blood as a sacrifice for our sins.

¹³ So we must go to Jesus to be saved; we must allow others to insult us just like people insulted him. ¹⁴ Here on earth, we believers do not have a city such as Jerusalem. Instead, we are waiting for the heavenly city that will last forever.

¹⁵ Because Jesus has died for us, we must continually praise God no matter what

happens. That will be something we can sacrifice to him instead of animals. We must be ready to openly say to others that we trust in Christ.

¹⁶ Always be doing good deeds for others and sharing the things you have, because doing things like that will be as though you are offering sacrifices that will please God.

¹⁷ Obey your leaders and do what they tell you, since they are the ones who are guarding your welfare. Some day they will have to stand before God so that he can say if he approves of what they have done. Obey them in order that they can do the work of guarding you joyfully and not have to do it sadly, because if you cause them to do it sadly, that will certainly not help you at all.

¹⁸ Pray for me and those with me. I am certain that I have not done anything that displeases God. I have tried to act well toward you in every way. ¹⁹ I urge you earnestly to pray that God will quickly remove the things that stop my coming to you.

²⁰ Jesus provides for us, protects us, and guides us as a great shepherd does for his sheep. And God, who gives us inner peace, raised our Lord Jesus from the dead. By doing that God confirmed his eternal covenant with us by the blood that flowed from Christ when he died on the cross. ²¹ So I pray that God may equip you with everything good that you may do what he desires. May he accomplish in us what pleases him, as he watches us follow Jesus, who offered up himself for us. May all people praise Jesus Christ forever. Amen!

²² My fellow believers, since this is a short letter that I have written to you, I ask you that you patiently consider what I have just written to encourage you.

²³ I want you to know that our fellow believer Timothy has gone free from prison. If he comes here soon, he will accompany me when I go to see you.

²⁴ Tell all your spiritual leaders and all your other fellow believers who belong to God in your city that I greet them. The believers in this area who have come from Italy greet you also.

²⁵ May God continue to love you and protect you by his kindness.

JAMES

Chapter 1

¹ I, James, serve God and am bound to God through the Lord Jesus Christ. I am writing this letter to the twelve Jewish tribes who trust in Christ and who are scattered throughout the world. I greet you all.

² My fellow believers, consider it something to greatly rejoice over when you experience various kinds of hardships. ³ Understand that as you trust God in hardships, they help you to endure even more hardships. ⁴ Endure hardships to their very end, so that you may follow Christ in every way. Then you will not fail to do well.

⁵ If anyone of you needs to know what to do, let him ask God, who gives generously and is not angry at anyone who asks. ⁶ But when you ask God, trust him to answer you. Do not doubt that he will answer and always help you, because people who keep doubting God cannot follow him, like a wave of the sea that is blown back and forth by the wind and thus cannot continue in the same direction. ⁷ Indeed, people who doubt should not think that the Lord God will do anything that they request him to do. ⁸ For they are people who cannot decide whether they will follow Jesus or not follow Jesus. These people do not do what they say they will do.

⁹ Believers who are poor should be glad because God has honored them. ¹⁰ And believers who are rich should be glad that God has humbled them, which helps them trust in Jesus Christ, because they and their riches will pass away, just as wild flowers wither. ¹¹ When the sun rises, the scorching hot wind dries the plants and

causes the flowers to fall and no longer be beautiful. Like the flower that dies, rich people will die while they are earning money.

¹² God honors those who endure hard trials, because God will reward them by making them live forever, as he has promised to do for all who love him.

¹³ When we are tempted to sin, we must not think it is God who is tempting us, because no one can persuade God to do evil, and he never tries to persuade anyone to do evil. ¹⁴ But everyone wants to do evil, and so they do it, just as if they are falling into a trap. ¹⁵ After that, their evil thoughts lead them to commit sin, and this sin takes over their minds until it destroys them. Then, when evil desires come together, sin is born, which means the person commits sin and can only be forgiven by Jesus. And when sin produces its final result, death comes, both the death of the body and the death of the spirit, meaning the sinner is separated from God forever. Only Jesus can save us from this final death.

¹⁶ My fellow believers whom I love, stop deceiving yourselves. ¹⁷ Every truly good and perfect gift comes from God the Father, who is in heaven. He is the true God who gives us light. God does not change like created things change, like shadows that appear and disappear. God never changes and He is always good! ¹⁸ God chose to give us spiritual life when we trusted in his true message. So now believers in Jesus have become the first people to have true spiritual life, which only Jesus can give.

¹⁹ My fellow believers whom I love, you know that every one of you should be eager to pay attention to God's true message. You should not quickly speak your own thoughts, nor quickly get angry, ²⁰ because when we get angry we cannot do the

righteous things that God wants us to do.

²¹ So stop doing all kinds of evil, and humbly accept the message that God planted in your inner beings, because he is able to save you if you accept his message. ²² Do what God commands in his message. Do not only listen to it, because people who only listen to it and do not obey it think wrongly that God will save them. ²³ Some people hear God's message but do not do what it says. They are like someone who looks at his face in a mirror. ²⁴ Although he looks at himself, he goes away from the mirror and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵ But other people look closely at God's message, which is perfect and which sets people free to voluntarily do what God wants them to do. And if they continue to examine God's message and do not just hear it and then forget it, but do what God tells them to do, God will bless them because of what they do.

²⁶ Some people think that they worship God rightly, but they habitually speak evil talk. Those people are wrong in thinking that they worship God rightly. The fact is that they worship God in vain. ²⁷ One of the things that God has told us to do is to take care of orphans and widows who suffer hardship. Those who do that, and who do not think or act immorally like those who do not obey God, truly worship God, who is our Father, and God approves of them.

Chapter 2

¹ My brothers and sisters, do not think of honoring some people more than others as you at the same time trust in our Lord Jesus Christ, the one who is greater than anything. ² For example, suppose that a person who wears gold rings and fine

clothes enters your meeting place. Then suppose that a poor person who wears shabby clothes also comes in. ³ And suppose that you show special attention to the one dressed in fine clothes by saying, "Please sit here in this nice seat!" and you say to the poor one, "You stand over there or sit on the floor!" ⁴ You have then judged one another for wrong reasons. ⁵ Listen to me, my brothers and sisters whom I love. God has chosen poor people who seem to have nothing of value, to trust in him very much. So he will give them great things when he rules everyone everywhere. This is what he has promised to do for everyone who loves him. ⁶ But you dishonor the poor people. Think about it! It is the rich people, not the poor people, who are causing you to suffer! It is the rich people who forcibly take you to court to accuse you in front of judges! ⁷ And they are the ones who speak evil against the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who is worthy of praise, to whom you belong! ⁸ If you follow the royal law, as they are written in the scriptures, you will see the command, "Love your neighbor as you love yourself." If you love others, you are doing what is right. ⁹ But if you honor some people more than others, you are doing wrong. And because you do not do what God commanded us to do, he condemns you because you disobey his laws.

¹⁰ Those who disobey only one of God's laws, even if they obey all his other laws, God considers to be as guilty as anyone who has disobeyed all of his laws. ¹¹ For example, God said, "Do not commit adultery," but he also said, "Do not murder anyone." So if you do not commit adultery but you murder someone, you have become a person who disobeys God's laws.

¹² Always speak and act toward others as people should whom God will judge using the law that frees us from being punished

for our sins. ¹³ Because when God judges us, he will not act mercifully toward those who do not act mercifully toward others. But if we are merciful to others, then we will not fear God when he judges us.

¹⁴ My brothers and sisters, some people say, "I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," but they do not do good things. What they say will do them no good. If they only believe with words, God will certainly not save them. ¹⁵ To illustrate, suppose that a brother or sister is continually lacking clothes or food for each day. ¹⁶ And suppose one of you says to them, "Do not worry, go away, get warm, and find the food you need!" But if you do not give them the things that they need for their bodies, then that will be no help to them! ¹⁷ Similarly, if you do not do good deeds to help others, what you say about believing in Christ is as useless as a dead person! You do not really believe in Christ.

¹⁸ But someone may say to me, "God saves some people only because they trust in him, and he saves others because they do good deeds for people." I would answer that person, "You cannot prove to me that people truly trust in God if they do not do good deeds for others! But by doing good deeds for others I will prove to you that I truly trust in God! ¹⁹ Think about it! You believe that there is only one real God who truly lives, and you are right to believe that. But the demons also believe that, and they tremble because they also know that God truly lives, and that He will punish them. ²⁰ Also, you foolish person, I will give you proof that if someone says, "I trust in God," but does not do good deeds, what that person says does not help him in any way. ²¹ We all honor Abraham, our ancestor. He tried to obey what God told him to do; he tried to give his son Isaac to God on the altar. God considered Abraham to be a righteous person for trying to

obey him. ²² In this way, Abraham trusted in God and obeyed him. When he obeyed him, he finished doing what he was trusting God for. ²³ And so it happened as it is written in the scriptures, "Because Abraham truly trusted in God, God viewed him as someone who did the right thing." God also said about Abraham, "He is my friend." ²⁴ From the example of Abraham you can realize that it is because people do good deeds that God considers them to be righteous, and not only because they trust in him. ²⁵ Similarly, it was certainly because of what Rahab did that God considered her to be good. Rahab had been a prostitute, but she cared for the messengers who came to spy out the land, and she helped them to escape by sending them home on a different road from the one that they came on.

²⁶ Just as when a person no longer breathing is dead and his body is useless, in the same way, someone who says he trusts in God but does nothing good trusts in God uselessly.

Chapter 3

¹ My brothers and sisters, not many of you should desire to become teachers of God's word, because you know that God will judge us teachers more severely than he will judge other people. ² In many ways we do what is wrong. But those who control what they say will be all that God intends them to be. They will be able to control all their actions. ³ To illustrate, if we put a small metal bit into the mouth of a horse in order to cause the horse to obey us, we can turn the horse's large body and cause it to go where we want it to. ⁴ Think also about ships. Although a ship may be very large and although it can be moved by strong winds, by turning a very small

rudder people can direct the ship wherever they want it to go. ⁵ In the same way, although our tongues are very small, if we do not control them, we can harm people by talking big. Think also about how just a small flame of fire can cause a large forest to burn.

⁶ Just like a fire burns a forest, when we say things that are evil, we can destroy many people. What we say reveals that there is much evil within us. What we say contaminates all that we think and do. Just like a flame of fire easily causes the whole surrounding area to burn, what we say can cause sons and daughters and their descendants to want to do evil for the rest of their lives. It is the devil himself who influences us to speak what is evil. ⁷ Although people are able to tame all kinds of wild animals, birds, reptiles and creatures that live in the water, and people have tamed them, ⁸ no one is able to control what he says. The words we speak are an uncontrolled evil. Our words can do great harm, just like poison that kills. ⁹ We use our tongue to praise God, who is our Lord and Father, but we also use our same tongue to ask God to do evil to people. That is very wrong, because God made people like himself. ¹⁰ We praise God, but with our same mouth we also ask for evil things to happen to others. My brothers and sisters, this should not be! ¹¹ Surely bitter water and good water do not come out of the same spring! ¹² My brothers and sisters, a fig tree cannot produce olives. Nor can a grapevine produce figs. Neither can a salty spring produce good water. Similarly, we should speak only what is good, and we should not speak what is evil.

¹³ If any of you thinks that you are wise and know much, you should always act in a good way to show people that your good deeds are the result of your being truly

wise. Being wise helps us to act gently toward others. ¹⁴ But if you are very envious of other people and lie against them and do them wrong, you should not pretend that you are wise. By boasting like that you are saying that what is true is actually false. ¹⁵ Those who think like this are not wise as God wants them to be. Instead, they are only thinking and acting as people who do not honor him. They think and act according to their own evil desires. They do what the demons want them to do. ¹⁶ Remember that people who think like this do not control themselves. They envy other people and act as if what they were doing were right, but it is wrong. They do every sort of evil. ¹⁷ God in heaven makes us wise. First of all, he teaches us to be morally pure. He teaches us how to make peace with others. He teaches us to be kind to others and to help them. He teaches to be kind to those who do not deserve it. He teaches us to do good things that have lasting results. He teaches us to never stop doing what is right and to be honest. ¹⁸ Those who act peacefully toward others cause them to also act peacefully, with the result that they all live together and act in the right way.

Chapter 4

¹ Now I will tell you why you are fighting among yourselves and quarreling with each other. It is because each of you wants to do the evil things that you enjoy doing, things that do not please your fellow believers. ² There are things that you very much desire to have, but you do not get those things, so you want to kill those who hinder you from getting them. You desire what other people have, but you are unable to get what you desire, so you quarrel and fight with one another. You do not have what you desire because you do not

ask God for it. ³ Even when you do ask him, he does not give you what you ask for because you are asking for the wrong reason. You are asking for things in order that you may use them just to enjoy yourselves in bad ways.

⁴ Like a woman who is unfaithful to her husband, you are being unfaithful to God and not obeying him anymore. Those who behave as evil people do belong to this world and are enemies against God. Perhaps you do not realize that. ⁵ Surely you do not think that it is for no reason that God told us in the scriptures that the Spirit he placed in us yearns for us to live our lives in ways that please him. ⁶ But God is powerful and very kind to us, and he wants very much to help us stop sinning. That is why the scripture says, “God opposes those who are proud, but he helps those who are humble.”

⁷ So submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and as a result he will run away from you. ⁸ Come near spiritually to God. If you do, he will come near to you. You who are sinners, turn away from doing what is wrong and do only what is good. You who cannot decide whether you will commit yourselves to God, stop thinking wrong thoughts, and think only his thoughts. ⁹ Be sorrowful and weep because of the wrong that you have done. Do not laugh, enjoying only what you selfishly desire. Instead, be sad because you have done what is wrong. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord; if you do, he will honor you.

¹¹ My brothers and sisters, stop speaking evil against one another, because those who speak evil against a fellow believer and thus condemn one who is like a brother or sister to them are really speaking against the law that God gave us to obey. If you speak against his law, you are acting like a judge who condemns it. ¹² But

in fact, there is only one who has the authority to forgive our evil and to condemn people, and that is God. He alone is able to save people or to destroy people. You certainly have no right to take God's place and judge others.

¹³ Some of you are arrogantly saying, “Today or tomorrow we will go to a certain city. We will spend a year there and we will buy and sell things and earn a lot of money.” Now, you listen to me! ¹⁴ You should not talk like that, because you do not know what will happen tomorrow, and you do not know how long you will live! Your life is short, like a mist that appears for a short time and then disappears. ¹⁵ Instead of what you are saying, you should say, “If the Lord is willing, we will live and do this, or we will do that.” ¹⁶ But what you are doing is boasting about all the things that you plan to do. Your boasting like that is evil.

¹⁷ So if anyone knows the right thing that he should do, but he does not do it, he is sinning.

Chapter 5

¹ Now I have something to say to you rich people who say you believe in Christ. Listen to me! You should weep and wail loudly because you will experience terrible troubles! ² Your wealth is worthless, as though it were rotted. Your fine clothes are worthless, as though moths had ruined them. ³ Your gold and silver are worthless, as though they were corroded. When God judges you, this worthless wealth of yours will be evidence that you are guilty of being greedy, and as rust and fire destroy things, God will severely punish you. You have in vain stored up wealth in a time when God is about to judge you. ⁴ Think about what you

have done. You did not pay the wages you promised to the workmen who harvested your fields for you. The pay you kept for yourself shows me your guilt and how unfair you were to them. The workers cry out to God because of the way you treat them. And the Lord God of the angel armies listens to their loud cries. ⁵ You have bought anything you wanted so you could live like kings. Just like cattle fatten themselves, not realizing that they will be slaughtered, you have lived just to enjoy things, not realizing that God will severely punish you. ⁶ You have arranged for others to condemn innocent people. You have arranged for others to kill people, even though those people had not done anything wrong. They were not able to defend themselves against you. My brothers and sisters, that is what I say to the rich people who oppress you.

⁷ So, my brothers and sisters, although rich people cause you to suffer, be patient until the Lord Jesus Christ comes back. Remember that when farmers plant a field, they wait for their valuable crops to grow. They must wait patiently for the rain that comes at the planting season and for more rain that comes just before the harvest season. They wait for the crops to grow and mature before they can harvest them. ⁸ Similarly, you also should wait patiently and trust the Lord Jesus firmly, because he is coming back soon and will judge all people fairly. ⁹ My brothers and sisters, do not complain against each other, in order that the Lord Jesus may not condemn and punish you. It is he who will judge us, and he is ready to appear. ¹⁰ My brothers and sisters, as an example of how to be patient, consider the prophets whom the Lord God sent long ago to speak his messages. Although people caused them to suffer much, they endured it patiently. ¹¹ We know that God honors and helps those who endure suffering for him. You have

also heard about Job. You know that although he suffered much, the Lord God planned to bring good to Job because he endured that suffering. And from that we know that the Lord is very compassionate and kind.

¹² Also, my brothers and sisters, I want to say something important about how you talk. You must not take an oath by calling on heaven or by calling on the earth to stand as a witness for the promise you make. All you need to say is "Yes" or "No." God will judge you when you say more than that.

¹³ Whoever among you is experiencing trouble should pray that God would help him. Whoever is cheerful should sing songs of praise to God. ¹⁴ Whoever among you is sick should call the leaders of the congregation to come to pray for him. They should put olive oil on him and, with the Lord's authority, pray. ¹⁵ The prayer that is offered to God with faith will heal the person who is sick, and the Lord will restore his health. If that person has sinned, God will forgive him. ¹⁶ So, because the Lord is able to heal the sick and to forgive sins, tell each other the sinful things that you have done, and pray for each other in order that you may be healed. If righteous people pray and ask fervently for God to do something, God will act powerfully and will certainly do it. ¹⁷ Although the prophet Elijah was an ordinary person like us, he earnestly prayed that it would not rain. And it did not rain for three and a half years. ¹⁸ Then he prayed again, asking God to send rain, and God sent rain, and plants grew and produced crops again.

¹⁹ My brothers and sisters, if anyone of you stops obeying the true message from God, some other person among you should persuade that person to once again do what God has told us to do. If he stops

doing what is wrong, ²⁰ all of you should remember that because of that other person, God will save the sinner from spiritual death and will forgive his many sins.

1 PETER

Chapter 1

¹ I, Peter, whom Jesus Christ made an apostle, am writing this letter to you who believe in him, you whom God has chosen to belong to himself. I am writing to you who live in the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, far away from your true home in heaven. ² God our Father chose you as he himself decided previously, and his Spirit has set you apart in order that you may obey Jesus Christ, and in order that his blood may make you acceptable to God. May God act very kindly to you, and may he make you live more and more peacefully.

³ Praise God, who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! It is because he is kind to us and he has shown us great mercy, by causing us to experience the new birth that gives us a living hope, and we receive the new life because God raised Jesus Christ to life from the dead ones. ⁴ He has enabled us to expect to receive things that he has kept for us in heaven, things that will last forever. ⁵ God, by his mighty power, is guarding you as you trust in Jesus. He is guarding you so that he may, at the end of the time in which we now live, completely rescue you from Satan's power. ⁶ You rejoice because of what will happen then, but now you are grieving for a short time while you suffer many different hardships. God is allowing you to be tested, as precious metals are tested to see if they are pure. These trials that you are experiencing are necessary. ⁷ These hardships happen in order to prove that you really do trust in Jesus. This means more to God than all the gold in the world, which fire can destroy. Because you trust in Jesus, God will honor you very highly when

Jesus Christ comes again. ⁸ You love Jesus, although you have not seen him. Although you do not see him now, you rejoice very much; ⁹ because you trust in him, God is saving you from the guilt of your sins.

¹⁰ Long ago prophets spoke messages that God had shown them about how he would one day save you. They investigated very carefully these things. ¹¹ They wanted to know whom the Spirit of Christ that was in them was referring to. They also wanted to know what time he was talking about. This was because the Spirit was telling them beforehand that the Christ would suffer and die, and that glorious things would happen to him afterwards. ¹² God told them that it was not for their own sake that he was revealing these things to them, but that it was for your sake. They proclaimed them to you because the Holy Spirit whom God sent from heaven enabled them to do that. And even angels would like to know more about these truths about how God saves us.

¹³ Therefore, prepare your minds to obey God. What I mean is that you should discipline your minds. Be confident that you will receive the good things that God will kindly do for you when Jesus Christ returns from heaven. ¹⁴ And because you should obey your heavenly Father, just as children ought to obey their fathers here on earth, do not do the evil deeds that you previously wished to do, when you did not know the truth about God. ¹⁵ Instead, just like God, the one who chose you to belong to him, is holy, you also must be holy in everything that you do. ¹⁶ Be holy, because it is written in the scriptures that God said, "You must be holy because I am holy."

¹⁷ God is the one who judges what each one does, and he does this very fairly. Since you call him 'Father,' behave in a right way while you are living here on

earth. You are like people whom others have driven from their homes, because you are living away from heaven, your true home.

¹⁸ Live reverently because you know that it was not with things like gold and silver—things that will not last forever—that God bought you, so you could stop behaving foolishly, as you learned to do from your ancestors. ¹⁹ Instead, it was with the precious blood of Christ that flowed from his body when he died that God bought you. Christ was a like the lambs that the Jewish priests sacrificed: Perfect, without any blemishes or spots. ²⁰ God chose him to do this before he created the world. But it was not until now, when the world will soon end, that God revealed him to you. ²¹ Because of what Christ has done, you are trusting in God, who caused him to become alive again after he died, and who greatly honored him. As a result, God is the one in whom you are trusting and expecting that he will do great things for you.

²² Because you have obeyed the truth about God and have allowed him to make you pure and to love our fellow believers, continue to love each other earnestly and sincerely. ²³ I ask you to do this, because you now are living a new life. It was not by means of something that will perish that you received this new life. Instead, it was by means of something that will last forever: The promises of God, which you have believed. ²⁴ We know that this is true because, as the prophet Isaiah wrote,

“All people will perish like grass perishes. And all the greatness that people have will not last forever,

like the flowers in the grass do not last long.

The grass withers and the flowers die,

²⁵ but God’s message endures forever.”

This message that endures is the message

about Christ that we proclaimed to you.

Chapter 2

¹ Therefore, do not act maliciously in any way or deceive others. Do not be hypocrites, and do not envy others. Do not ever speak evil about anyone untruthfully.

² Just as newborn babies long for their mothers’ pure milk, you should desire to learn true things from God, so that by learning it you may become like adults in trusting him. You must do this until the time when God sets you completely free from all the evil in this world. ³ Also, you must do this because you have experienced that the Lord acts very kindly toward you.

⁴ Come to the Lord Jesus. He is like the most important stone in the foundation of a building, but he is living, not lifeless like a stone. Many people rejected him, but God chose him and considers him to be very valuable. ⁵ And like men build houses with stones, God is joining you together like a building in which his Spirit lives. He is doing this in order that you—like the priests who offer sacrifices at the altar, might do things that please God because Jesus Christ has died for you. ⁶ What the scriptures say show us that this is true: “I am placing in Jerusalem someone who is like a very valuable stone, the most important stone in the building, and those who believe in him will never become ashamed.”

⁷ Therefore, God will honor you who believe in Jesus. But those who refuse to believe in him are like the builders that the scriptures talk about: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the most important stone in the building.”

⁸ It is also written in the scriptures:

"He will be like a stone that causes people to stumble,

and like a rock that people trip over.

Just as people are injured when they stumble over a rock,

people who disobey God's message injure themselves;

that is what God determined would happen to them."

⁹ But you are people whom God has chosen to belong to him. You are a group that worship God like priests, and you rule with God like kings. You are a people group that belongs to God, so that you might proclaim the wonderful things he has done. He has called you from your former ways, when you were ignorant of his truth, and he has made you understand the marvelous true things about him. ¹⁰ What the scriptures say is true about you:

"Formerly, you were no people group at all,

But now you are God's people group.

At one time God had not acted mercifully toward you,

But now he has acted mercifully toward you."

¹¹ You people whom I love, I urge you to think about this: You are like foreigners whose real home is in heaven. So you should not do the sinful things you used to want to do, because if you do them, you will not be able to live well with God. ¹² Keep behaving in a good way among those who do not know God. If you do that, although they may say that you do what is evil, they will see that you are doing good things, and at the time when God comes to judge everyone, they will honor him.

¹³ Because you wish to honor the Lord Jesus, obey everyone who has proper authority. This includes the king, because he

has the greatest power. ¹⁴ It also includes governors, because God sends them to punish those who do what is wrong and to praise those who do what is right. ¹⁵ What God wants is for you to do good. If you do that, you will cause foolish people who do not know God to be unable to say that you have done wrong. ¹⁶ Behave as though you were free from having to obey any master, but do not think that you can do evil because of that. Instead, behave as servants of God should. ¹⁷ Act respectfully toward everyone. Love all your fellow believers. Honor God, and honor the king.

¹⁸ You slaves who are believers, submit yourselves to your masters and completely respect them. Submit yourselves not only to those who act in a good and kind way toward you, but also submit yourselves to those who act in a harsh way toward you. ¹⁹ You should do that because God is pleased with those who know what he wants and obey him, and who, for this reason, accept to suffer pain because their masters treat them unjustly. ²⁰ God will certainly not be pleased with you if you do something that is wrong and then they beat you for that. But if you do what is good and still suffer harm, you are suffering for doing what is good. If you endure that, God will praise you. ²¹ One of the reasons why God chose you is that you might suffer. When Christ suffered for you he became an example for you, in order that you would imitate what he did. ²² Remember how Christ conducted himself,

He never sinned,

And he never said anything to deceive people.

²³ When people insulted him, he did not insult them in return.

When people caused him to suffer, he did not threaten to get revenge.

Instead, he decided to let God, who always judges justly, prove that he was innocent.

²⁴ He himself endured the punishment for our sins in his body when he died on the cross, in order that we would stop sinning and start living rightly.

It is because they wounded him that God has healed you. ²⁵ Truly you were like sheep that had become lost, but now you have returned to Jesus, who cares for you as a shepherd cares for his sheep.

Chapter 3

¹ You women believers should submit yourselves to your husbands. Do this in order that if any of them do not believe the message about Christ, they may become believers without your having to say anything to them. ² They will believe in Christ when they see that you honor them and that you are completely faithful to them. ³ Do not try to do this by decorating the outside of your bodies, such as having fancy hair arrangements or wearing gold jewelry and fine clothes. ⁴ Instead, make your inner beings beautiful in a way that will not fade. I mean, have a humble and quiet attitude, which is something that God considers to be very valuable. ⁵ The women who honored God, who lived long ago, made themselves beautiful in this way. They trusted in God and obeyed their husbands. ⁶ Sarah, for example, obeyed her husband Abraham and called him master. God will consider you to be her daughters if you do what is right and are not afraid of what your husbands or anyone else may do to you because you are believers.

⁷ You men who are believers, just as your wives should respect you, you should conduct your lives in an appropriate way

with them. Treat them respectfully, realizing that they are usually weaker than you are. But also realize that God is making them to live forever, just like you. Do this so that nothing will hinder you from praying.

⁸ To end this part of my letter, I say to all of you, agree with each other in what you think. Be sympathetic toward each other. Love each other as members of the same family should. Act compassionately toward each other. Be humble. ⁹ When people do evil things to you or insult you, do not do the same to them. Instead, ask God to help them, because that is what you have been chosen by God to do, in order that he may help you. ¹⁰ Consider what the psalmist wrote about the proper way of conducting our lives:

”As for those who want to enjoy life and for good things to happen to them,

they must not say what is evil or speak words that deceive others.

¹¹ They must continually refuse to do evil, and do what is good instead.

They must try to help people act peacefully toward each other;

they must earnestly urge people to act in a peaceful way,

¹² because the Lord accepts what righteous people do.

He listens to righteous people when they pray, and he answers them.

But he rejects those who do evil.”

¹³ Who is going to harm you if you are making every effort to do what is good?

¹⁴ But even if you suffer because you did what was right, God will bless you. “Do not be afraid of the things that other fear; and do not be troubled when people treat you badly.” ¹⁵ Instead, acknowledge in your inner beings that Christ is your master, whom you love. Always be ready to

answer anyone who demands that you tell them about what you are confidently expecting God to do for you. But answer them humbly and respectfully, ¹⁶ and make sure that you do nothing wrong, in order that those who speak evil about you may be ashamed when they see the good way in which you are conducting yourselves because you are joined to Christ. ¹⁷ It may be that God wants you to suffer. If so, it is better to do good deeds, even if you suffer for doing them, than to do evil deeds. ¹⁸ I say that because Christ died once for the sake of people who have sinned. He was a righteous person who died for unrighteous people. He died in order that he might bring us to God. During the time that he had an ordinary body, he was killed, but God's Spirit caused him to become alive again. ¹⁹ The Spirit also enabled him to go proclaim God's victory to the evil spirits whom God had imprisoned. ²⁰ Long ago, during the time that Noah was building a big boat, those evil spirits disobeyed God when he waited patiently to see if people would turn from their evil behavior. Only a few people were saved in that boat. Specifically, God brought only eight persons safely through the waters of the flood, while all the others drowned in it. ²¹ That water represents the water in which we are baptized, by which God saves us because he raised Jesus Christ from the dead. This water, of course, removes no dirt from our bodies. Instead, it shows that we are requesting God to assure us that he has removed our guilt for having sinned. ²² Christ has gone into heaven and is ruling in the place of highest honor next to God, after God caused all the evil and powerful spirit beings to be made obedient to him.

Chapter 4

¹ Therefore, because Christ suffered in his body, you also be willing to suffer. Those who suffer in their bodies have stopped their sinning. ² As a result, during their remaining time here on earth, they do not do the things that sinful people desire to do, but instead they do the things that God wants them to do. ³ I say that to you because you have already spent too much of your time here on earth doing what the people who do not know God like to do. In the past you committed all kinds of sexually immoral acts, you got drunk and then participated in orgies and carousing, and you worshiped idols, which is disgusting to God. ⁴ Now your friends are surprised that you do not join with them anymore when they do these things. As a result, they say bad things about you. ⁵ But one day they will have to admit to God everything they have done. He is the one who will judge them. ⁶ That is the reason why Christ preached the good news to the dead. He did that so that, although God had judged them when they were alive, they might by the power of the Holy Spirit live forever as God lives. ⁷ All things on this earth will soon come to an end. Therefore, keep thinking sensibly, and control what you think so that you can pray well. ⁸ Most importantly of all, love each other sincerely, because if we love others we will not try to find out what they have done wrong. ⁹ Provide food and a place to sleep for those Christian travelers who come among you, and do it without complaining. ¹⁰ Believers should all use the gifts that God has given them to serve others. They should manage well the various gifts that God has kindly given them. ¹¹ Those who speak to the assembly of believers should do that as if they were speaking the very words of God. Those who do kind deeds for others should do it with the

strength that God gives them, in order that you might honor God as Jesus Christ enables us to do so. May we all praise God because he has all authority to rule everything forever. May it be so! ¹² You whom I love, do not be surprised about the painful things that you are suffering because you belong to Christ. Those things are testing you as people test metal by putting it into a fire. Do not think that something strange is happening to you. ¹³ Instead, rejoice that you are suffering the same kinds of things that Christ endured. Rejoice when you suffer, in order that you may also be very glad when Christ returns and shows everyone how glorious he is. ¹⁴ If others insult you because you believe in Christ, God is pleased with you, because it shows that the Spirit of God, the Spirit who reveals how great God is, lives within you. ¹⁵ If you suffer, do not let it be because you murdered anyone, or stole anything, or did some other kind of evil thing, or because you interfered in someone else's affairs. ¹⁶ But if you suffer because you are a Christian, do not be ashamed about it. Instead, praise God that you are suffering because you belong to Christ. ¹⁷ I say this, because it is now time for God to begin judging people, and first he will judge those who belong to him. Since he will judge us believers first, think about the terrible things that will happen to those who do not obey the good news that comes from him! ¹⁸ That will be as it is written in the scriptures:

"Many righteous people will have to suffer many difficult trials before going to heaven.

So ungodly and sinful people will surely have to suffer much severe punishment from God!"

¹⁹ Therefore, those who suffer because God wishes it, should trust God to keep them—God is the one who created them

and he is the one who always does what he promises to do. And so they should continue to do what is right.

Chapter 5

¹ Now I will say this to those among you who are elders, you who lead the assemblies of believers: I am also an elder. I also am one of those who saw Christ suffer, and I will also share some of the glory that Christ has in heaven. ² I appeal to you elders to take care of the people who are in your assemblies. Do this as if you were shepherds who take care of their flocks of sheep. Do this, not because you must do it, but instead do it willingly, as God desires. Do not be greedy to get money for doing it, but instead do it enthusiastically. ³ Do not act like domineering bosses over the people whom God has assigned to you, but instead be examples to them by the way in which you conduct your lives. ⁴ If you do that, when Jesus, who is like our chief shepherd, appears, he will give each of you a splendid reward. That reward will be like the wreaths that are given to athletes who win races, but your reward will never wither like those wreaths do.

⁵ Now I will say this to you young men. You must obey the older men in the assembly. All of you believers should act humbly toward each other, because it is true that God opposes those who are proud, but he acts kindly toward those who are humble.

⁶ Therefore, realizing that God has great power to punish proud people, humble yourselves in order that he may honor you at the time that he has determined. ⁷ Because he takes care of you, let him take care of all the things that you are worried about.

⁸ Always be alert and pay attention, because the devil, who is your enemy, is going around, looking for people to destroy. He is like a lion that roars as it prowls around, seeking someone to kill and devour. ⁹ You must resist him by continuing to firmly trust in Christ and his message, remembering that your fellow believers all over the world are suffering similar hardships. ¹⁰ God is the one who kindly helps us in every situation, and he is the one who chose us to share his eternal glory in heaven because we are joined to Christ. And after you have suffered for a while because of things that people do to harm you, he will remove your spiritual defects, he will strengthen you to trust him more, and he will support you in every way. ¹¹ I pray that he will rule powerfully forever. May it be so!

¹² Silas has written this letter for me as I have dictated it to him. I consider that he is a faithful fellow believer. I have written this short letter to you to encourage you, and I want to assure you that what I have written is a true message about the things that God kindly does for us, things that we do not deserve. Continue to firmly believe this message.

¹³ In this city that we sometimes call 'Babylon,' the believers, whom God has chosen to belong to him just like he chose you, send you their greetings. Mark, who is like a son to me, also sends you his greetings. ¹⁴ Greet each other with a kiss on the cheek to show that you love each other. I pray that God will give peace to all of you who are joined to Christ.

2 PETER

Chapter 1

¹ I, Simon Peter, am writing this letter to you. I serve Jesus Christ, and I am an apostle that he appointed. I am sending this letter to you whom God has caused to believe in Christ just like he caused us apostles to believe in Christ. You and we have the same honor of believing in Jesus Christ. He is God, he is completely just, he is the one whom we worship, and he is our Savior. ² I pray that God will continue to act very kindly toward you and give you a deep peace, because you truly know God and Jesus, who is our Lord.

³ God has given us everything that we need in order that we might live forever and honor him. He does this by his power as God, and he does this because we know him. He has also given it to us as a result of our knowing him. He is the one who chose us to be his people because he is powerful and good. ⁴ Because he is this way, he has promised us that he will do very great and priceless things for us. He has also said to you that as you believe in what he has promised, you will be able to act in a right way, just like God acts in a right way, and that you will no longer be on the way to perish because of desiring to do evil things, as the unbelievers are.

⁵ Because God has done all that, do your best not only believe in Christ, but to live good lives. And make sure that you are not only living good lives, but that you also learn more and more about God. ⁶ In addition, do your best, not only to know more and more about God, but also to control yourself in what you do and say. And make sure that you not only control what you do and say, but also that you are faithful to him. And make sure that

you are not only faithful to him, but that you also honor him. ⁷ And make sure that you do not only honor him, but that you also have a concern for your fellow believers, as brothers and sisters ought to have for each other. And make sure that you not only have a concern for your fellow believers, but that you also love others. ⁸ If you do all these things, and if you do them more and more, that shows that knowing our Lord Jesus Christ produces very great results in your lives. ⁹ But if these things are not true about people, it means they are not aware that these things are important, just like a blind person is not aware of what is around him. They think only about earthly matters, just like a shortsighted person sees clearly only things that are near. It seems that they have forgotten that God has forgiven them for their former sinful lives. ¹⁰ Instead of acting like those people, try to behave so as to make everyone know that God has chosen you to be his people. If you do that, you will certainly never become separated from God, ¹¹ and God will very wholeheartedly welcome you into the place where our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will rule his people forever.

¹² I intend to keep on reminding you very frequently about these matters, even though you already know them and are firmly convinced that they are true. ¹³ I consider it right that I should help you to continually think about these matters by reminding you about them as long as I am alive, ¹⁴ because I know that I shall die soon, just like our Lord Jesus Christ clearly has revealed to me. ¹⁵ Moreover, I will make every effort by writing these things down to enable you to remember them at all times after I have died.

¹⁶ We apostles told you that our Lord Jesus Christ is powerful and that he is coming back some day. We were not basing what

we told you on stories that we had cleverly invented. Instead, we told you what we ourselves saw with our own eyes, that the Lord Jesus is supremely great. ¹⁷ God, our Father, greatly honored him when God's great light surrounded him, and he said, "This is my Son, whom I love very much; I am very pleased with him." ¹⁸ We ourselves heard God say that from heaven when we were with Christ on that holy mountain. ¹⁹ We are even more sure that what the prophets wrote about Christ long ago is completely reliable. Pay attention to what they wrote, because it is like a lamp that is shining in a dark place that helps people see where they are going. That light will shine until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰ It is important that you understand that no prophet could interpret by his own imagination. ²¹ No prophecies come from the decision of a human being. Those who spoke messages from God did so when the Holy Spirit helped them do it. Therefore the Spirit must also help us understand what they mean.

Chapter 2

¹ Long ago, various people among the Israelites pretended to give true messages from God, and people will do the same with you. At first you will not know who they are, and they make some stop trusting in Christ; they will start thinking that the Lord is not important—although he is the one who redeemed them. But soon, God will make these false prophets perish. ² And many believers will imitate how these false prophets live. In this way they will insult what is true about God. ³ They will tell you lies in such a way that they will make a profit off of you. God will not wait very long before he punishes them; they will soon perish.

⁴ God destroyed the angels who sinned. He threw them into the worst place in hell and imprisoned them there in darkness in order to keep them there until he judges and punishes them. ⁵ He also destroyed the people who lived in the world long ago. He saved only eight of them, including Noah, who was a righteous preacher. He did this when he destroyed by a flood all the ungodly people who were living then. ⁶ He also condemned Sodom and Gomorrah cities and then burned them completely to ashes. This is a warning to those who afterwards would live so as to dishonor God. ⁷ But he rescued Abraham's nephew, Lot, who was a righteous man. Lot was greatly distressed because the people in Sodom were doing very immoral deeds. ⁸ That righteous man was in agony because every day he saw and heard those wicked people do things against God's law. ⁹ And since the Lord God rescued Lot, you can be sure that he knows how to rescue people who honor him, and how to keep those who do not honor him ready for the time when he will punish them. ¹⁰ He will punish especially severely those who do what they themselves want to do, things that make them displeasing to God. They boldly do whatever they wish to do; they even insult God's powerful angels. ¹¹ But God's angels, even though they are much more powerful than those people, do not insult anyone in front of God, not even them! ¹² Those people who teach false things—who are like animals that cannot think like us—they say bad things about God, whom they do not even know. So he will destroy them like we hunt down and destroy wild animals that even nature has no use for. ¹³ The wrong things they do harm them themselves: They party and get drunk by day and night. They are like stains and spots on clothing that once was clean. ¹⁴ They want to sleep with every

woman whom they see. They can never sin enough. They persuade people who are not very faithful to God to join with them. As athletes train for sports, these people train themselves to be greedy. But God has cursed them! ¹⁵ They refuse to live like God wants them to. They have imitated what the prophet Balaam, the son of Beor, did long ago. He thought he would act in a wicked way and gain a reward for it. ¹⁶ But God rebuked him for sinning. And even though donkeys do not speak, God used Balaam's own donkey to speak to him with a human voice and stop his insane action.

¹⁷ These people who teach falsely are like springs that give no water; they are like clouds that quickly pass overhead before they can give rain. Therefore, God has reserved the darkness of hell for those teachers. ¹⁸ They boast about themselves, but what they say is worth nothing. They persuade people who have recently become believers and who have just now ceased to do wicked things. They persuade them to sin again by doing whatever sinful people like to do. ¹⁹ They tell them that they are free to do whatever they like. But they themselves are slaves who must obey whatever their evil minds tell them to do. Certainly a person is a slave to whatever controls him. ²⁰ But suppose that you began to know our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and that you stopped doing the things that kept God from accepting you. Then suppose that you began doing those same wicked things again, then you would be even worse off now than you were at first. ²¹ It would have been better for them if they had never learned how to live in the right way. But God will punish them even more, since they have rejected what he instructed them to do, what we apostles passed on to them. ²² The way in which they are behaving again is just like the proverbs that people say: "They

are like dogs that return to eat their own vomit," and, "They are like pigs that have washed themselves and then roll again in the mud."

Chapter 3

¹ This letter that I am now writing to you whom I love, is the second letter that I have written to you. I have written both these letters to you in order that by reminding you about the things you already know, I may stimulate you to think sincerely about those things. ² I want you to remember the words that were spoken by the holy prophets long ago, and also to remember what our Lord and Savior commanded, things that we, your apostles, told you about.

³ It is important for you to understand that in the time immediately before Christ comes back, people will ridicule you for saying that Christ will come back. Those people will do whatever evil deeds they wish to do. ⁴ They will say, "Although Christ promised that he would come back, he has not. Since the ancestors died, everything has remained the same. Things are as they always have been since God created the world!" ⁵ They will say this because they deliberately overlook the fact that God, by commanding long ago that it should be so, caused the heavens to exist, and he caused the earth to come up out of water and to be separate from the water. ⁶ And God, by commanding that it should be so, later destroyed the world that existed at that time, by causing the earth to be flooded with water. ⁷ Furthermore, God, by commanding that it should be so, has set apart the heavens and the earth that exist now, and they are being kept until the time when he will judge ungodly people. And at that time he will de-

stroy the heavens and the earth by burning them. ⁸ Dear friends, I want you to understand well that the Lord God is willing to wait a long time to judge the people in the world! How much time passes before the Lord God judges the people in the world does not matter to him! He considers that one day passes no more quickly than a thousand years, and he also considers that a thousand years pass as quickly as one day passes to us! ⁹ Therefore, you should not think that because Christ has not yet come back to judge people, the Lord God is delaying what he promised. Some people think that this is so, and they say that Christ never will come back. But you should understand that the reason why Christ has not yet come back to judge people is that God is being patient toward you, because he does not want anyone to be lost eternally. Instead, he wants everyone to turn away from their sinful behavior. ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord's return will come unexpectedly. He will come like a thief comes—without warning. At that time there will be a great roaring sound. The heavens will cease to exist. The elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it that anyone has ever done will be revealed to God for him to judge.

¹¹ Because God will certainly destroy all these things like I just said, you certainly know how you should behave. You should behave in a way that honors God, ¹² while you eagerly wait for Christ to return on the day that God has appointed, and you should try to make that day come soon. Because of what God will do on that day, the heavens will perish. The elements will melt and burn up. ¹³ Although all those events will happen, we rejoice because we are waiting for the new heavens and new earth that God has promised. The only people who will be in the new heavens and on this new earth will be people who

are righteous.

¹⁴ Therefore, dear friends, because you are waiting for these things to happen, do all that you can to conduct your lives in a way that honors God, in order that Christ may see that you do not sin and that you are living peacefully with each other. ¹⁵ And think about this: Our Lord Jesus Christ is patient because he wants to save people. Our dear brother Paul also wrote wise words to you about these same matters, because God enabled him to understand these events. ¹⁶ In the letters that Paul wrote there are certain things that are difficult for people to understand. People who know nothing about God and who speak at random interpret these things wrongly, as they also interpret the other parts of the scriptures wrongly. The result is that they will lead God to punish them. ¹⁷ Therefore, dear friends, since you already know about these false teachers, guard against them. Do not let these wicked people deceive you by telling you things that are wrong. Do not let them persuade you to doubt what you now firmly believe. ¹⁸ Instead, live in such a manner that you experience more and more our Savior Jesus Christ acting kindly toward you, and that you get to know him better and better.

I pray that everyone will honor Jesus Christ both now and forever! May this truly be so!

1 JOHN

Chapter 1

¹ I, John, am writing to you about the one who existed before there was anything else. He is the one whom we apostles listened to as he taught us. We saw him. We ourselves looked at him and touched him. He is the one who taught us the message about eternal life. ² (Because he came here to the earth and we have seen him, we proclaim to you clearly that the one whom we have seen is the one who has always lived. He was previously with his Father in heaven, but he came to live among us.) ³ We are proclaiming to you the message about Jesus, the one whom we saw and heard, in order that you may join together with us. The ones with whom we have joined are God our Father and his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ I am writing to you about these things so that you will be convinced that they are true, and that as a result we may be completely joyful.

⁵ The message that we heard from God and that we are proclaiming to you is this: He never sins. He is like a brilliant light that has no darkness at all. ⁶ If we claim to have joined together with God, but if we conduct our lives in an impure manner, that is like living in evil darkness. We are lying. We are not conducting our lives according to God's true message. ⁷ But living in a pure manner, as God is living in a pure manner in every way, is like living in God's light. If we do that, we can join together with each other, and God forgives us and accepts us because Jesus died for us. ⁸ Those who say that they have never sinned are deceiving themselves and are refusing to believe what God says about them. ⁹ But God always does what he says he will do, and what he does is al-

ways right. So if we admit to him that we have sinned, he will forgive us for our sins and will free us from the guilt of everything we have done wrong. Because of that, we should admit to him that we have sinned. ¹⁰ Because God says that everyone has sinned, those who say that they have never sinned talk as though God lies! They reject what God says about us!

Chapter 2

¹ You who are as dear to me as my own children, I am writing this to you to keep you from sinning. But if any of you believers does sin, remember that Jesus Christ, the righteous one, pleads with the Father for him to forgive us. ² Jesus Christ voluntarily sacrificed his own life for us, so that as a result God forgives our sins. Yes, God is able to forgive our sins, but not only ours. He is also able to forgive the sins of people everywhere!

³ I will tell you how we can be sure that we know God. If we obey what he commands us to do, that shows us that we are joined together with him. ⁴ Those who say, "We know God," and do not obey what God commands us to do, are liars. They are not conducting their lives according to God's true message. ⁵ But those who obey what God commands them to do are the people who love God in every way. This is how we can be sure that we are joined with God. ⁶ If we say that we are in union with God, we should conduct our lives as Christ did.

⁷ Dear friends, I am not writing that you must do something new. Instead, I am writing something that you have known to do since you first believed in Christ. This is part of the message that you have always heard. ⁸ But I will say something again to you on this same topic: I can say

that I am telling you to do something new. It is new because what Christ did was new, and what you are doing is new. This is because you are ceasing to do evil and you are doing more and more good. It is like when night passes away and day dawns, the true day of Christ. ⁹ Those who claim that they are like people who live in the light, but who hate any of their fellow believers, are still like people who live in darkness. ¹⁰ But those who love their fellow believers behave like people who are living in the light; they have no reason to sin. ¹¹ Those who hate any of their fellow believers are still like people who are living in darkness, unaware of what is true about God.

¹² I am writing this to you whom I love as though you were my own children. God has forgiven your sins because of what Christ has done for you. ¹³ I am writing to you believers who are older than the others. You have known Christ, who has always lived. I am also writing to you young men; you have defeated Satan, the evil one. And I am writing to you little children, because you know God the Father. ¹⁴ I will say it again: I am writing this to you older men because you have come to know Christ, the one who has always existed. And I am writing to you young men, because you are strong and you continue to obey what God commands, and because you have defeated Satan, the evil one.

¹⁵ Do not behave like the people in the world who do not honor God. Do not desire the things they want to have. If anyone lives like they live, they are proving they do not love God our Father. ¹⁶ I am writing this, because all the wrong things that people do, all the things that people see and try to obtain for themselves, and all the things that they boast about—all these things have nothing to do with our Father in heaven. They belong to the

world. ¹⁷ The people in the world who do not honor God, along with everything that they desire, will disappear. But those who do what God wants them to do will live forever!

¹⁸ You who are very dear to me, it is now just before Jesus returns to earth. You have already heard that the person who will pretend to be Christ is coming; actually, many such persons have already arrived—but they are all against Christ. Because of this, we know that Christ will return very soon. ¹⁹ These people refused to remain in our congregations, but they never really belonged with us in the first place. When they left us, we clearly saw that they had never joined with us. ²⁰

But as for you, Christ, the one who is holy, has given you his Spirit; it is his Spirit who teaches you all the truth. ²¹ I am writing this letter to you, not because you do not know the truth about God, but because you do know what it is. You also know that God teaches us nothing that is false; instead, he teaches us only what is true.

²² The worst liars are the ones who deny that Jesus is the Christ. All who do this are against Christ, because they refuse to believe in the Father and the Son. ²³ Those who refuse to acknowledge that Jesus is God's Son are in no way joined with the Father, but those who acknowledge that Christ is the Son of God are also joined with Father. ²⁴ So, as for you, you must continue to believe the truth about Jesus Christ that you first heard, and to live according to it. If you do that, you will stay joined to the Son and the Father. ²⁵ And what God told us is that he will cause us to live forever!

²⁶ I have written this to you to warn you about those who want to deceive you concerning the truth about Christ. ²⁷ As for you, God's Spirit, whom you received from Christ, remains in you. So you do

not need anyone else to be your teacher. God's Spirit is teaching you everything that you need to know. He always teaches the truth and never says anything that is false. So continue to live in the way that he has taught you, and remain joined with him.

²⁸ Now, my dear ones, I urge you to continue to remain joined with Christ. We need to do that in order that we may be confident that he will accept us when he comes back again. If we do that, we will not be ashamed when we stand before him when he comes. ²⁹ Since you know that Christ always does what is right, you know that all those who continue doing what is right are the ones who have become God's children.

Chapter 3

¹ Think about how much our Father loves us: He allows us to say that we are his children. And this is indeed true. But people who are unbelievers have not understood who God is. So they do not understand who we are, that we are God's children. ² Dear friends, even though at present we are God's children, he has not yet shown us what we will be like in the future. However, we know that when Christ comes back again, we will become like him, because we will see him face to face. ³ So all those who confidently expect to see Christ face to face, will keep themselves from sinning, just like Christ, who never sins. ⁴ But everyone who continues to sin is refusing to obey God's laws, because that is what sin is, refusing to obey God's laws. ⁵ You know that Christ came in order to completely remove the guilt of our sins. You know also that he never sinned. ⁶ Those who continue doing what Christ wants them to do, do not continue sinning

repeatedly. But those who repeatedly sin have not understood who Christ is, nor have they truly joined with him. ⁷ So I urge you who are very dear to me, do not let anyone deceive you by telling you that it is all right to sin. If you continue doing what is right, you are righteous, just like Christ is righteous. ⁸ But anyone who continues to sin repeatedly is like the devil, because the devil has always been sinning since the world began. And the reason why God's Son became a human being was to destroy what the devil has done. ⁹ People do not continue sinning repeatedly if they have become children of God. They cannot continually sin because God has made them his children, and he has put into them what he himself is like. ¹⁰ Those who are God's children are clearly different from those who are the devil's children. The way that we can know who are Satan's children is this: Those who do not do what is right are not God's children. And those who do not love their fellow believers are not God's children.

¹¹ The message that you heard when you first believed in Christ is that we should love each other. ¹² We should not hate others as did Adam's son, Cain, who belonged to Satan, the evil one. Because Cain hated his younger brother, he murdered him. I will tell you about why he murdered his brother. It was because Cain habitually behaved in an evil way, and he hated his younger brother because his younger brother behaved in the right way. ¹³ You should not be amazed when unbelievers hate you. ¹⁴ Because we love our fellow believers, we know that God has made us to live forever with him. But God regards anyone who does not love their fellow believer as a person who is not living in life but is living under the power of death. ¹⁵ God treats anyone who hates their fellow believers as though they had done something just as bad as committing murder.

Anyone who does not love his brother is living for death, not life. ¹⁶ The way that we now know how to truly love our fellow believers is by remembering that Christ died for us of his own free will. So in the same way, we should do anything for our fellow believers, even die for them.

¹⁷ Many of us have the things that are necessary for us to live in this world. If we become aware that any of our fellow believers do not have what they need and if we refuse to provide for them, it is clear that we do not love God as we claim to do. ¹⁸ I am saying to you whom I love dearly, let us not merely say we love each other; let us love each other by helping each other.

¹⁹ If we truly love our fellow believers, we can be sure that we are living according to the true message about Christ. As a result, we will not feel guilty in the presence of God. ²⁰ We can pray confidently, because although we might feel guilty because we have done wrong, God deserves for us to trust him. He knows everything about us.

²¹ Dear friends, if our minds do not accuse us of having sinned, then we can pray confidently to God. ²² When we confidently pray to him and request something from him, we receive it because we do what he commands us to do, and because we do what pleases him. ²³ I will tell you what he commands us to do: We must believe that Jesus Christ is his Son. We must also love each other, just as God commanded us to do. ²⁴ Those who do what God commands are those who are joined with God, and God is joined with them. And it is because we have his Spirit, whom he gave to us, that we can be sure that God is joined with us.

Chapter 4

¹ Dear friends, many people who have a false message are teaching it to peo-

ple. But you must think carefully about what you hear them teach, so that you may know whether they are teaching the truth that comes from God or not. ² I will tell you how to know whether someone is teaching truth that comes from the Spirit of God. Those who affirm that Jesus Christ came from God to become a human like us are teaching a message that is from God. ³ But those who do not affirm that truth about Jesus are not teaching a message from God. They are teachers who oppose Christ. You have heard that people like that are coming among us. Even now they are already here.

⁴ As for you who are very dear to me, you belong to God, and you have refused to believe what those people teach, because God, who enables you to do what he wants, is greater. ⁵ As for those who are teaching what is false, they belong with all the people in the world who refuse to honor God. That is why what they say comes from those same people, and those same people listen to them. ⁶ As for us, we belong to God. Whoever knows God listens to what we teach, but whoever does not belong to God does not listen to what we teach. This is how we can distinguish between people who teach truth about God, and those who deceive others.

⁷ Dear friends, we must love each other, because God enables us to love each other, and because those who love their fellow believers have become God's children and know him. ⁸ God shows his love to people. So those who do not love their fellow believers do not know God. ⁹ I will tell you how God has shown us that he loves us: He sent his only Son to live on the earth to enable us to live eternally because of him. ¹⁰ And God has shown us what it means to truly love another person: It does not mean that we loved God, but that God loved us. So he sent his Son to

sacrifice himself, in order that he—God—may forgive us when we sin. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God loves us like that, we certainly ought to love each other!

¹² No one has ever seen God. Nevertheless, if we love each other, it is clear that God lives within us and that we love others just like he intends us to do. ¹³ I will tell you how we can be sure that we are joined with God and that God is joined with us: He has put his Spirit within us. ¹⁴ We apostles have seen God's Son, and we solemnly tell others that the Father sent him to save the people in the world from suffering eternally for their sins. ¹⁵ So God remains joined with those who say the truth about Jesus. They say, "He is the Son of God." And so they remain joined with God. ¹⁶ We have experienced how God loves us and we believe that he loves us. As a result, we love others. Because God's nature is to love people, those who continue to love others are joined with God, and God is joined with them. ¹⁷ We should love others completely. And if we do that, when the time comes for God to judge us, we will be confident that he will not condemn us. We will be confident of that because we are living in this world joined to God, as Christ himself is joined to God. ¹⁸ We will not be afraid of God if we truly love him, because those who love God completely cannot possibly be afraid of him. We would be afraid only if we thought that he would punish us. So those who are afraid of God certainly are not loving God completely. ¹⁹ We love God and our fellow believers because God loved us first. ²⁰ So those who say "I love God" but hate a fellow believer are lying. Those who do not love one of their fellow believers, whom they have seen, certainly cannot be loving God, whom they have not seen. ²¹ Keep in mind that this is what God has commanded us: If we love him, we must also love our fellow believers.

Chapter 5

¹ All those who believe that Jesus is the Christ are children of God, born from God. And whoever loves anyone who is a father certainly loves his child also. ² We can be sure that we truly love God's children when we love God and do what he commands us to do. ³ I am saying this because what loving God really means is that we do what he commands. Also, it is not difficult to do what he commands. ⁴ All of us whom God has caused to become his children have been able to refuse to do what unbelievers want us to do. We are stronger than everything that is against God. We are able to refuse to do wrong because we trust in Christ. ⁵ Who is the person who is stronger than everything that is against God? It is anyone who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

⁶ Think about Jesus Christ. He is the one who came to earth from God. God showed that he had truly sent Jesus when John baptized Jesus in water, but also when Jesus' blood flowed from his body when he died. And God's Spirit declares truthfully that Jesus Christ came from God. ⁷ These three are like three witnesses who give testimony: ⁸ God's Spirit, the water and the blood. These three all tell us the same thing. ⁹ We usually believe what other people tell us. But we can certainly trust much more in what God says. And he has certainly testified about his Son. ¹⁰ Those who trust in the Son of God know within their inner beings what is true about him. But those who do not believe what God says call him a liar, because they have refused to believe what God has testified about his Son. ¹¹ This is what God says to us: "I have given you eternal life." We will live forever if we are joined with his Son. ¹² Those who are joined with God's Son will live forever with God. Those who

are not joined with him will not live forever.

¹³ I have written this letter to you who believe that Jesus is the Son of God, in order that you may know that you will live forever. ¹⁴ Because we are joined with him, we are very confident that he hears us when we ask him to do anything he approves of. ¹⁵ Also, if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—then we can be sure that we will receive whatever we asked from him.

¹⁶ Suppose you see one of our fellow believers sinning in a way that would not separate them from God, and when you see sinning, you should ask God and pray that God will give that person life—that is, to that person who is not committing a sin that would separate him from God. But there are some people who sin in a way that causes them to be separated from God forever. I am not saying you should ask God to help people who sin in that way. ¹⁷ Everything that is wrong is a sin against God, but not every bad thing we do can separate us from God forever. ¹⁸ We know that if a person is a child of God, he does not keep sinning again and again. Instead, the Son of God protects him so that Satan, the evil one, does not harm him. ¹⁹ We know that we belong to God, and we know that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. ²⁰ We also know that the Son of God has come among us and has enabled us to understand the truth; we are joined to him who is true, God's Son Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is truly God, and he is the one who enables us to have eternal life.

²¹ I say to you who are very dear to me, guard yourselves from worshiping gods that have no real power.

2 JOHN

Chapter 1

¹ You all know me as the chief Elder. I am writing this letter to you believers, the congregation that I love so much. God has chosen you, and I love you because what we know about Christ is true! Not only do I myself love you, but all those who know and accept the true message that Jesus taught also love you! ² This is because all of us believe God's true message. It is in our inner beings and we will continue to believe it forever! ³ God the Father and Jesus Christ, who is his Son, will continue to act kindly and mercifully toward us because they love us. They will enable us to have peace, because they truly love us.

⁴ I am very happy because I have learned that some of you are living according to the truth that God has taught us. This is just what our Father commanded us to do.

⁵ And now, dear congregation, I beg you to obey what he has commanded us to do. This is why I am writing to you. What he commanded—that we should love each other—is nothing new; instead, it was when we first believed in Christ that we learned that we should love each other.

⁶ This is what it means to love God and each other—we should obey what God commands us to do. What he commands us to do is love him and each other.

⁷ Many people who deceive others have left your congregation and have now gone out among other people in your area. They are the ones who refuse to believe that Jesus Christ became human. They are the ones who deceive others and oppose Christ himself. ⁸ So be careful that you do not let those teachers deceive you! If you let them deceive you, you will lose

the reward which we, together with you, have been working for, and you will not receive the complete reward of being eternally united to God! ⁹ Those who change what Christ taught and do not continue to believe what he taught are not joined with God. But those who continue to believe what Christ taught are joined with both God, our Father, and with his Son. ¹⁰ So when anyone comes to you who teaches something different from what Christ taught, do not welcome him into your homes! Do not encourage him by greeting him or wishing him well in any way! ¹¹ I say that because if you treat people like that as you would treat a fellow believer, you are helping them do their evil deeds.

¹² Even though I have much more that I want to tell you, I have decided not to say it in a letter. Instead, I expect to be with you soon and talk directly with you. Then we can be completely joyful together. ¹³ Your fellow believers in the congregation here, whom God has also chosen, all greet you.

3 JOHN

Chapter 1

¹ You know me as the chief Elder. I am writing this letter to you, my dear friend Gaius, whom I truly love. ² Dear friend, I ask God that things may go well for you in every way, and that you may be physically healthy just as you are healthy in respect to God. ³ I am very happy because some fellow believers have come here and told me that you live in accordance with the true message about Christ. They said that you are behaving in a manner that is consistent with God's truth. ⁴ I am very happy when I hear that people whom I helped to believe in Christ are living in a way that matches God's truth! ⁵ Dear friend, you are serving Jesus loyally whenever you do things to help fellow believers, even strangers whom you do not know, who are traveling around doing God's work. ⁶ Some of them have reported before the congregation here how you have showed that you love them. You should continue to help such people do their work in a way that honors God.

⁷ When those fellow believers went out to tell people about Jesus, they received no money from people who do not believe in Christ. ⁸ So we who believe in Christ ought to give food and money to such people as these, to work with them to help others know God's true message.

⁹ I wrote a letter to your group of believers to tell them to help those other believers. However, Diotrephes does not accept my letter, because he wants to dominate you. ¹⁰ So when I arrive there I will publicly tell everyone what he does: He tells others evil nonsense about us in order to harm us by what he says. He is not content with only doing that, but he

himself also refuses to welcome the fellow believers who are traveling around doing God's work. And those who want to welcome them—he stops them by making them leave the congregation.

¹¹ Dear friend, do not imitate a bad example like that. Instead, keep imitating good examples. Remember that people who do good deeds truly belong to God. Anyone who keeps doing what is bad has never seen God.

¹² All the believers who know Demetrius say that he is a good person. If the truth were a person, he would say the same thing! We also say he is a good person, and you know that what we say about him is true.

¹³ When I began to write this letter, I had much more that I intended to tell you. But now I do not want to say it in a letter.

¹⁴ Instead, I expect to come and see you soon. Then we will talk directly with one another. ¹⁵ May God give his peace to you. The friends here send you greetings. Please give our greetings to all our friends there, personally and by name.

JUDE

Chapter 1

¹ I am Jude. I am a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother to James. I am writing to you whom God has called to him, to you whom God the Father loves, to you whom he is keeping for Jesus Christ. ² May God have much mercy on you. May he give you much peace, and may he love you very much.

³ You whom I love, I tried very hard to write a letter to you about how God has saved us all together. I needed to write to encourage you to do your best to speak for the true things that we believe. These are things that God has taught to all those who trust in Christ. These things will never change. ⁴ There are men who are creeping into your assemblies; they are like the wicked men the prophets wrote about long ago—they teach false things and they twist the grace of God into giving permission to commit sexual sin. In this way they oppose what is true about Jesus Christ, our only Master and Lord.

⁵ Although you previously knew all these things, there are certain things about which I desire to remind you. Do not forget that although the Lord rescued his people from Egypt, he later destroyed most of those same people, those people who did not believe in him. ⁶ Also, there were many angels to whom God assigned positions of authority in heaven. But they did not continue to rule with authority in those positions. Instead, they abandoned those places. So God has put those angels in chains forever in darkness in hell. They will stay there until the important day in which God will judge and punish them. ⁷ Similarly, the people who lived in Sodom and Gomorrah cities and the

nearby cities committed sexual immorality. They sought all kinds of sexual relations that differ from what God permits. So God destroyed their cities. What happened to those people and those angels in heaven shows that God will punish people, such as the ones who teach false doctrine, in the eternal fire of hell. ⁸ Similarly, these people in your midst also defile their own bodies by living immorally. They say that God has sent them visions that tell them to do this. But they do not obey God's commands, and they insult his wonderful angels.

⁹ Even when Michael the archangel argued with Satan about who would take possession of Moses' body, he kept from insulting and condemning him; he merely said, "May the Lord punish you!" ¹⁰ But these people about whom I am writing say evil words about everything good that they do not understand. They are just like wild animals that cannot think, because all the things that they are naturally able to understand destroy them.

¹¹ God will punish very severely those who do these things. They behave like Cain did. They commit the same sin as the sin Balaam committed for money, and they will die like Korah, who rebelled against Moses. ¹² These people are like rocks under the water that ships crash against. When they share in your love feasts, they have no shame, because they eat only to please themselves. They are like clouds that give no rain, clouds that the wind pushes along. They do no good deeds, for they are like trees in late autumn that bear no fruit. They are like people who have died two times; they are like trees that have been uprooted. ¹³ They do not control themselves. They are like the sea's strong waves in a storm, and they pollute others with their shame, just as the waves bring up foam and dirt onto the

beaches. They are like stars that do not stay where they should in the sky. God will put them in very great darkness forever.

¹⁴ Enoch, the seventh person in the line of people who descended from Adam, said this about those teachers of false doctrine: "Listen carefully to this: The Lord will certainly come with a countless number of his saints. ¹⁵ They will judge everyone and will punish all wicked people, and all who dishonor God. The angels will do this, because of all the harsh things that these people have spoken against God." ¹⁶ These teachers of false doctrine grumble about the things that God does. They complain about what happens to them. They do the evil things because they wish to do them. They talk boastfully. They praise people in order to get things from them.

¹⁷ But you people whom I love, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ said long ago. ¹⁸ They told you, "Just before the last day, some people will laugh at the true things that God has told us. They will commit the sins with their bodies that they wish to commit because they dishonor God." ¹⁹ These are the people who make believers angry with each other. They do all the wicked things that they want to do. The Spirit of God does not live within them.

²⁰ But you people whom I love, strengthen each other using the truth about God that you believe. Let the Holy Spirit guide you in the way to pray. ²¹ Keep conducting your lives in a way that is right for those whom God loves. Keep constantly expecting that our Lord Jesus Christ will act mercifully toward you. Keep expecting that until the time when we begin living eternally with him.

²² Be kind to those who are not certain about what teachings they should believe, and help them. ²³ Keep others from going

into the fire of everlasting punishment. Be kind to people who sin, but be afraid to join them in those sins. Instead, hate even their clothing, because it is made dirty by their sins.

²⁴ God is able to keep you trusting in him. He will also take you into his presence, where there is brilliant light. You will rejoice very much and be free from sin. ²⁵ He is the only true God. He has saved us as a result of what Jesus Christ our Lord did for us. God was glorious, great, and mighty, and he ruled with great authority before time began. He is still like that, and he will remain like that forever! Amen!

REVELATION

Chapter 1

¹ This book has the things that Jesus Christ showed to me, John. God showed these things to Jesus in order that he might pass them on to his servants. These things will happen soon. Jesus communicated these things by sending his angel to me, his servant John. ² As a witness I, John, reported everything I saw and heard about the word of God, and the true accounts that were given about Jesus Christ. ³ God will do good to anyone who reads these words and to any who hear them when they are being read aloud. He will do good to those who listen carefully to them and obey them, for the time when these things happen is approaching quickly.

⁴ I, John, am writing this letter to the seven groups of believers in the province of Asia. May God be kind to you and give you peace, for he is the one who has always existed, who exists now, and who will always exist in the future. May the seven spirits who are sitting in front of his throne do these things for you, too. ⁵ May Jesus Christ—who has faithfully told us the truth about God and—also be kind to you and give you peace. For he is the first one whom God raised from the dead, and he is the one who rules the kings of the earth. He is the one who loves us and who has freed us from the guilt of our sins by his blood when he died on the cross. ⁶ He is the one who has begun to rule over his kingdom; he has set us apart to be priests who worship God his Father as he commanded. It is Jesus Christ whom we must honor and praise forever. This is the truth.

⁷ Look! Christ is coming in the clouds. Everyone will see him, including those who

killed him by nailing him to a cross. Every tribe on the earth will be in sorrow and grief when they see him coming. That is the truth! ⁸ The Lord God declares, “I am the one who began all things, the Alpha, and I am the one who will cause all things to end, the Omega. I am the one who exists, who has always existed, and who will always exist. I am the One who rules over everything and everyone.”

⁹ I, John, your fellow believer, am suffering as you are because Jesus rules over us. We share together the call to suffer for our faith. We are part of his reign and rule over all things, and we are patiently enduring every trial and test that comes. I was imprisoned and sent to the Island of Patmos because I kept telling people about God’s message and the truth about Jesus.

¹⁰ On one of the days we worship the Lord with other believers, God’s Spirit took control of me. Then I heard behind me someone speaking. His voice was like a trumpet that was being played. ¹¹ He said to me, “Write on a scroll what you see, and send it to seven groups of believers. Send it to the believers in the cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.” ¹² When I heard these words, I turned to see who was speaking. Then I saw seven golden lampstands.

¹³ In the middle of the lampstands there was someone who looked like a human being. He wore a robe that reached to his feet and a golden sash around his chest.

¹⁴ The hair on his head was as white as wool or fresh fallen snow. His eyes were like a brilliant flame. ¹⁵ His feet looked like gleaming bronze. When he spoke, his voice had the volume and depth of a great river of rushing water. ¹⁶ He was holding seven stars in his right hand. A sword with two sharp edges was coming out of his mouth. His face shone as bright as the sun at midday. ¹⁷ When I saw him,

I fell down at his feet as though I were

dead. But he put his right hand on me and said to me, "Do not be afraid! I am the First One who began all things and the Last One who causes all things to end. ¹⁸ I am alive, even though I died once, and indeed, I am alive forever! I have power over death and I control the place of the dead. ¹⁹ So write down what you have seen. And write down what is happening now. And write down what will happen in the future. ²⁰ The meaning of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars represent the angels who watch over the seven groups of believers in Asia, and the seven lampstands represent the seven groups that are there."

Chapter 2

¹ "Write this message to the angel of the group of believers in the city of Ephesus: The one who holds the seven stars in his right hand, and the one who walks among the seven golden lampstands says this: ² 'I know all you have done. I know that you work hard for me. I know you are patient when you go through hard times. I also know that you cannot tolerate people who are evil, and that you question people about their faith, and you know those who claim to be apostles, but they are not. ³ I know also that you endure patiently when you suffer for believing in me and that you continue to serve me steadfastly, even when people caused you to suffer because you followed me. You have continued to serve and hold to my words even when it was difficult. You did not give up or stop, even though it has been difficult for you. ⁴ Nevertheless, you have done something wrong: You no longer love each other and me as you did when you first came to trust. You do not have the same love for me now that you had at first. ⁵ So, I tell you to re-

member how you used to love me. Love me again like you did at the first. If you do not, I will come to you and remove your lamp so you will no longer be my people together. ⁶ But you do one thing very well: Those Nicolaitans, the people who say you can worship idols and act immorally—you hate what they do, just as I hate it. ⁷ Everyone who wants to understand my message must listen carefully to the message that God's Spirit is saying to the groups of believers assembled together. The message is this: I will allow those who are victorious to eat fruit from the tree that gives eternal life, the tree that is in God's garden."

⁸ "Write this message to the angel of the group of believers in the city of Smyrna: 'I am saying these things to you. I am the first, the one who began all things and I am the last, who causes all things to end. I am the one who died and became alive again. ⁹ I know about how you have suffered. I know about how you are poor and lack many things that you need (but you are really rich in the things that are eternal and that can never be taken from you). You know what it is like to have people curse you and say terrible things about you because you follow Christ. Those Jews (who are not real Jews) who curse you and say terrible things about you, they are members of the gathering of Satan, and not the gathering of God's people. ¹⁰ Do not be afraid of any of the things that you are about to suffer. The truth is that the devil is about to put some of you in prison, to put you in a difficult place where you are being tested to see what kind of faith you have. For a short period of time you will suffer. Continue to trust in me, even if they kill you because you trust in me, and I will put a wreath on your head that will be a sign that you have eternal life and that you have overcome. ¹¹ Listen carefully to the message that God's Spirit

speaks to the groups of believers assembled together. All who conquer will never die a second time.”

¹² “Write this message to the angel of the group of believers in the city of Pergamum: ‘I am saying these things to you. I am the one who has the sword with two sharp edges. ¹³ I know that you live where Satan’s power is strong and his influence is everywhere. I know that you firmly believe, and you hold on to what I love and what is important to me—even when they killed my faithful servant Antipas, who had kept telling people who I am and what I did for them. ¹⁴ But, even so, I see some matters that are hurting your testimony and weakening your obedience. You permit some of your members to teach things like Balaam taught long ago. He taught Balak to eat food that had been offered to idols and that sexual immorality was permitted among God’s people. ¹⁵ In that way, you are also permitting some of your members to practice what the Nicolaitans teach, that sexual immorality is permitted, which, of course, it is not permitted. ¹⁶ Stop doing this and change your direction, or I will come to you suddenly and I will make war against them with the sword in my mouth, the word of God. ¹⁷ Listen carefully to the message that God’s Spirit speaks to the groups of believers. To him who conquers, I will give the hidden manna, that will feed and strengthen you and I will also give him a white stone, on which I will engrave a new name for him, and the name I give him only he will know.”

¹⁸ “Write this message to the angel of the group of believers assembled together in the city of Thyatira: ‘I, the Son of God, whose eyes shine like a flame of fire and whose feet shine like gleaming bronze, am saying these things to you. ¹⁹ I know all the good things that you do. I know that

you love me and each other, and that you trust in me. I know that you serve others and that you steadfastly endure a lot of difficulties. I know that you are doing these things more now than you did in the past. ²⁰ Nevertheless, you have done something wrong: You tolerate that woman among your people who is like that wicked Queen Jezebel who lived long ago. She says that she is a prophetess. However, by what she teaches, she is deceiving my servants. She is urging them to commit sexual immorality and to eat food that they have offered to idols. ²¹ Although I gave her time to turn away from her sexual immorality and pagan practices, she did not want to stop. ²² As a result, I will cause her to become very ill. I will also cause those who act immorally as she does to suffer greatly, if they do not stop doing what she does. ²³ Some have become like her children by accepting what she teaches, and I will certainly kill them. Then all the groups of believers will learn that I am the one who finds out what everyone thinks and desires. I will reward each of you according to what you have done. ²⁴ But I have something good to say about the rest of you believers in the city of Thyatira. It is good that you do not accept these wrong things. It is good that you reject what those teachers call their “secret practices” that Satan taught them. I will not burden you with any other commands. ²⁵ Just keep believing firmly in me and obey me until I come. ²⁶ As for those who conquer Satan and who keep on doing what I command until they die, I will give them my authority over all people. ²⁷ They will control them as if they were striking them with an iron rod. They will destroy evil-doers just as people shatter clay pots. ²⁸ I do all of this with the authority my Father gave me, and I will give the morning star to those who rule with me so that we may have great joy in our victory. ²⁹ Everyone

who wants to understand must listen carefully to the message that God's Spirit is saying to the groups of believers assembled together."

Chapter 3

¹ "Write this message to the angel of the group of believers assembled in the city of Sardis. 'I am saying these things to you. I am the one who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know everything that you have done. You appear to be alive, but you are dead. ² Be alert! Do more work for me, or what you have already done will become worthless. You must do this because my God knows that you have not done enough. ³ So then, keep remembering God's message and the truth that you accepted when you heard it. Always obey it and turn away from your sinful behavior. If you do not do this, I will come to you when you are not expecting me, as a thief comes. You will never know at what time I will come to judge you. ⁴ Nevertheless, you have a few believers there in the city of Sardis who have not been doing what is wrong. It is as though they have not dirtied their garments. As a result, because they are worthy to live with me, they will live with me and will be pure in every way, like people who are dressed in pure white clothing. ⁵ Those who conquer Satan I will dress in these same white garments. I will never erase their names from the Book of Life that contains the names of the people who have eternal life. Instead, I will acknowledge in the presence of my Father and his angels that they belong to me. ⁶ Everyone who wants to understand must listen carefully to the message that God's Spirit is saying to the groups of believers assembled together."

⁷ "Write this message to the angel of the

group of believers assembled in the city of Philadelphia: 'I am saying these things to you. I am the One who is holy, the True One. Just as King David had authority to allow people to enter the ancient city of Jerusalem, so I have the authority to allow people to enter my kingdom. I am the one who opens doors so that no one can close them and the one who closes doors so that no one can open them. ⁸ I know everything you have done. Be aware that I have opened a door for you that no one can close. I know that although you have little power, you have obeyed what I say, and you have not denied that you believe in me. ⁹ Be careful! I am aware that some of your people meet together with those who follow Satan. They claim to be Jews, but I know that they are not true Jews. They are lying. I will cause them to come to you and to bow down humbly at your feet and to acknowledge that I love you.

¹⁰ Because you have obeyed me when I commanded you to endure suffering patiently, I will keep you safe from those who will try to make you disobey me. They will soon do this to everyone in the entire world. ¹¹ I am coming soon. So continue to do what I have told you, in order that no one may cause you to lose your reward that God has reserved for you. ¹² I will make those who conquer Satan secure. They will be firm like the pillars in the temple of my God, and they will remain there forever. I will mark them with the name of my God, showing that they belong to him. I will also mark them with the name of the city of my God, the New Jerusalem, the city that will descend out of heaven from my God. I will also mark them with my new name, showing that they belong to me. ¹³ Everyone who wants to understand must listen carefully to the message that God's Spirit is saying to the groups of believers assembled together."

Chapter 4

¹⁴ "Write this message to the angel of the group of believers assembled in the city of Laodicea: 'I am saying these things to you. I am the one who guarantees all of God's promises. I am the one who testifies about God reliably and accurately. I am the ruler over all of God's creation. ¹⁵ I know everything that you have done: You do not deny that you trust in me, but you do not love me much. You are like water that is neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot! ¹⁶ Because you were not hot and also you were not cold, I am about to reject you, as if I were spitting lukewarm water out of my mouth. ¹⁷ You are saying, 'I am rich and have acquired a lot of wealth. I lack nothing!' But you do not realize that you are lacking in many ways. You are like people who are very wretched and pitiful, poor, blind, and naked. ¹⁸ I advise you to obtain from me all that you need, as though you were buying from me pure gold so that you may be truly rich. Let me make you righteous, as though you were buying from me white garments so that you might wear clothes instead of being naked and ashamed. Let me help you to understand the truth, as though you were buying from me eye salve to put on sick eyes. ¹⁹ Since I rebuke and correct all those whom I love, turn away with all your heart from your sinful behavior. ²⁰ I am here! I am calling each one, and I am standing and waiting at your door and knocking on the door. If you hear my voice and you open the door, I will come in and we will eat together as friends. ²¹ I will permit everyone who conquers Satan to sit and rule with me on my throne, just as I conquered Satan and now sit and rule with my Father on his throne. ²² Everyone who wants to understand must listen carefully to the message that God's Spirit is saying to the groups of believers assembled together."

¹ After these things I, John, saw in the vision that there was a door open in heaven. The one whose voice was like a loud trumpet, the one who had spoken to me previously, said to me, "Come up here! I will show you events that must happen later."

² Immediately I experienced that God's Spirit was specially controlling me. There was a throne there in heaven, and on the throne someone was sitting and ruling. ³ His appearance shone like a brilliant crystalline jasper jewel and like a brilliant red carnelian jewel. Around the throne was a rainbow that shone like a brilliant green emerald jewel. ⁴ Around the throne

there were twenty-four other thrones. On these thrones twenty-four elders were sitting. They were wearing pure white garments and had golden crowns on their heads. ⁵ From the throne there came lighting and rumblings and thundering. In front of the throne were burning seven torches, which represent the seven spirits of God. ⁶ In front of the throne there was also what looked like a sea made of glass. It was clear, like crystal. On each of the four sides of the throne there was a living creature. Each one was covered with eyes in front and behind. ⁷⁻⁸ The first living creature was like a lion. The second living creature was like an ox. The third living creature had a face like a man's face. The fourth living creature was like an eagle that was flying. Each of the four living creatures had six wings. These wings were covered with eyes both top and bottom. Day and night they constantly say:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, who rules over all.

He is the one who has always existed, who exists now, and who will always exist."

⁹⁻¹⁰ The living creatures praise, honor, and thank the one who sits on the throne, the one who lives forever. Whenever they do that, the twenty-four elders lie down on the ground before the one who sits on the throne. They worship him, the one who lives forever and ever. They lay their crowns in front of the throne and say:

¹¹ "Our Lord and God,

you are worthy that all beings should praise you;

you are worthy that all beings honor you; and

you are worthy that all beings acknowledge

that you are the powerful one.

Because you alone created all things.

Moreover, because you intended that they should exist,

you created them; as a result, they exist."

Chapter 5

¹ I saw that there was a scroll in the right hand of the one who was sitting on the throne. The scroll was written on its outside as well as on its inside, and it was sealed with seven seals. ² I saw a strong angel who was announcing in a loud voice, "The person who is worthy to break the seals of the scroll and then to open it should come and do it!" ³ But no created being in heaven, on the earth, or under it was able to open the scroll and see what was written on it. ⁴ I wept loudly because there was no one worthy to do that. ⁵ But one of the elders said to me, "Do not cry any longer! Look, the one who is called the Lion from the tribe of Judah, who is the descendant and heir of

King David, has overcome Satan! As a result, he is worthy to break the seven seals on the scroll and to open it!" ⁶ Then I saw a Lamb standing there in the midst of the four living creatures and the elders around the throne. Although he was alive, he had marks that showed that someone had killed him. He had seven horns, and he had seven eyes that are the seven spirits of God that God sends out over all the earth. ⁷ The Lamb came and took the scroll from the right hand of the one sitting on the throne. ⁸ When he took the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders prostrated themselves before him. They each had a harp, and they had golden bowls full of incense that represents the prayers of God's people. ⁹ The living creatures and the elders sang a new song. They sang:

"You are worthy to receive the scroll and to open its seals

because you were killed, and because you redeemed

people for God from every tribe, language, people,

and people group with your blood when you died.

¹⁰ You have caused them to become a people over whom our God rules

and to become priests who serve him; they will rule on the earth."

¹¹ As I continued to look, I heard the voices of many angels around the throne and around the living creatures and the elders. There were millions of them, a crowd so large that no one could count them. ¹² They were singing in a loud voice:

"The Lamb whom they killed—

it is right that we should praise his power, wealth, wisdom, and strength.

It is right that all created things should honor him and praise him!"

¹³ And I heard every creature in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea say,

“We must forever praise, honor, and glorify the one who sits on the throne and the lamb.

May they reign with complete power forever!”

¹⁴ The four living creatures said, “May it be so!” Then the elders prostrated themselves on the ground and worshiped God and the lamb.

Chapter 6

¹ I saw the Lamb open the first of the seven seals of the scroll. Then one of the four living creatures said in a voice as loud as thunder, “Come!” ² and a white horse appeared. There was someone riding it, and he had a bow and arrows. God gave him a wreath of leaves to wear on his head to show that he was to conquer evil. He went out to continue to do battle and to win. ³ Then the one looking like a Lamb opened the second seal, and I heard the second living creature say, “Come!” ⁴ When he said that, a red horse appeared. There was also someone riding it, and God had given him the power to cause people to no longer live peacefully, but instead to kill each other. For this purpose he carried a large sword. ⁵ Then the Lamb opened the third seal, and I heard the third living creature say, “Come!” This time, I saw a black horse appear. There was someone riding it, and he had a pair of balance scales in his hand. ⁶ Then I heard a voice that sounded like it was coming from among the four living creatures. It said to the person on the horse, “Make it happen that one liter of wheat will cost so much that a man must work a whole day to earn enough money

to buy it. Also make it happen that three liters of barley will sell for the same price. But do not reduce the supply of olive oil or wine.” ⁷ Then the Lamb opened the fourth seal, and I heard the fourth living creature say, “Come!” ⁸ This time I saw a pale horse appear. Someone was riding it; his name was “The one who causes people to die.” Someone else was following him; this person’s name was “The place where dead people go.” God gave these two persons power to kill one-fourth of all people on earth. They could kill them with weapons, or with famine, or with sickness, or with wild animals.

⁹ Then the Lamb opened the fifth seal, and I saw under the altar in heaven the spirits of God’s servants whom others had killed because these servants had believed God’s message, the message to which God himself bore witness. ¹⁰ They loudly asked God, “Sovereign Lord, you are holy and true. How long will it be before you condemn and punish the people on earth who murdered us?” ¹¹ Then God gave to each of them a white robe, and he told them to be patient a little longer. They should be patient until the number of those who also served the Lord with them—who were their brothers and sisters in Christ—would be killed just like they themselves had been killed because of their faith.

¹² Then I saw the Lamb open the sixth seal, and the earth shook violently. The sun became as black as cloth made of black wool. The whole moon became red like blood. ¹³ Stars fell to the earth in great numbers, just as immature figs fall when a fig tree shakes in a strong wind. ¹⁴ The sky split open and rolled up on either side just as an old scroll rolls up when it is split in two. Every mountain and island was shaken out of its place. ¹⁵ As a result, all the people on earth, including kings, high-ranking people, generals, rich peo-

ple, powerful people, along with everybody else, both slave and free, hid in caves and between the mountain rocks. ¹⁶ They shouted to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us so that the one who sits on the throne will not be able to see us, and so that the Lamb will not be able to punish us!" ¹⁷ This is the terrible day on which they will punish us. No one will be able to survive!"

Chapter 7

¹ After this I saw four angels standing on the earth. One was standing at the north, one at the east, one at the south, and one at the west. They were keeping back the winds from blowing and destroying things on the earth, on the ocean, or even on any tree. ² Then I saw another angel come up from the east. He was carrying God's seal. With this seal God, who is all-powerful, marks his own people to protect them. This angel called out with a loud voice to the four angels whom God had told to harm the earth and the ocean. ³ He said to them, "Do not harm the earth or the ocean or the trees until we have marked the servants of our God on their foreheads." ⁴ Then the angel and his fellow angels marked all God's servants. I heard the number of people whom they marked. The number was 144,000. They were people from every tribe of Israel. ⁵ The angels marked twelve thousand people from the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand from the tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand from the tribe of Gad, ⁶ twelve thousand from the tribe of Asher, twelve thousand from the tribe of Naphtali, and twelve thousand from the tribe of Manasseh. ⁷ In addition, there were twelve thousand from the tribe of Simeon, twelve thousand from the tribe of Levi, twelve thousand from the tribe

of Issachar, ⁸ twelve thousand from the tribe of Zebulun, twelve thousand from the tribe of Joseph, and twelve thousand from the tribe of Benjamin.

⁹ After these things happened, I saw a huge crowd. There were so many people that no one could count them. They were from every nation, every tribe, every people group, and every language. They were standing before the throne and before the lamb. They were wearing white robes and held palm branches to wave with their hands in order to celebrate. ¹⁰ They shouted loudly, "Our God, the one who sits on the throne, and the Lamb have rescued us from Satan's power!" ¹¹ All the angels were standing around the throne, around the elders, and around the four living creatures. They all lay before the throne with their faces to the ground and worshiped God. ¹² They said, "Yes, it is so! We praise, thank, and honor you, our God, forever! We acknowledge that you are completely wise, the powerful one, who is able to do all things forever! It is so!"

¹³ Then one of the elders asked me, "These people who are wearing white robes, do you know who they are and from where they come?" ¹⁴ I answered him, "Sir, I do not know. Surely you know who they are!" He said to me, "These are the people who have come through the great tribulation. The Lamb died for them, and God has forgiven them for their sins. It is as if they have washed their robes in his blood and made them clean. ¹⁵ Because of this, they are in front of God's throne, and they worship him day and night in his temple. God, the one who sits on the throne, will protect them. ¹⁶ As a result, they will never again be hungry. They will never again be thirsty. The sun will never again beat on them, nor will any heat scorch them. ¹⁷ This is because the Lamb who is at the throne will take care of them, just

as a shepherd takes care of his sheep. He will guide them to the source of eternal life, just as a shepherd leads his sheep to springs of water. God will cause them to no longer be sad. It will be as if he were wiping away all tears from their eyes.”

Chapter 8

¹ Then the Lamb opened the seventh seal, and there was no sound at all in heaven for a short time. ² I saw the seven angels who stand in front of God. He gave each of them a trumpet. ³ Another angel came and stood at the altar. He had a golden bowl for burning incense. God gave him a large quantity of incense in order that he might offer it, with the prayers of all God’s people, on the gold altar that is in front of God’s throne. Then he burned this incense on the altar. ⁴ From the bowl in the angel’s hand, the smoke of the incense, along with the prayers of God’s people, went up to God. ⁵ Then the angel took the golden bowl and filled it with coals of fire from the altar. He threw it all onto the earth. Thunder crashed and rumbled, lightning flashed, and the earth shook.

⁶ Then the seven angels, each of which had one of the seven trumpets, got ready to blow them. ⁷ The first angel blew his trumpet, and hail and fire mixed with blood poured down onto the earth. As a result, one-third of everything on the surface of the land was burned up: one-third of the trees burned up, and one-third of all the green grass was burned up. ⁸ Then the second angel blew his trumpet, and something that was like a huge mountain burning with fire fell into the ocean. As a result, one-third of the ocean became red like blood, ⁹ one-third of the living creatures in the ocean died, and one-third of the ships in the ocean were destroyed. ¹⁰ Then the

third angel blew his trumpet, and a huge star, which was burning like a torch, fell from the sky into one-third of the rivers and into one-third of the springs of water.

¹¹ The name of the star is Bitterness. As a result, the water in one-third of the rivers and springs became bitter. Many people died from drinking the water because it had become bitter. ¹² Then the fourth angel blew his trumpet, and God struck the sun, the moon, and the stars so that they lost their light for one-third of the time. The sun did not shine during one-third of the day, and the moon and stars did not shine during one-third of the night.

¹³ As I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying high in the sky shouting in a loud voice, “Terrible things will happen to the people who live on the earth when the three remaining angels blow their trumpets! They are about to blow them!”

Chapter 9

¹ Then the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. God gave it the key to the shaft that went down but had no ending. ² When he opened that shaft, smoke rose from it like smoke from a great burning furnace. The smoke prevented anyone from seeing the light of the sun and the sky. ³ Locusts also came out of the smoke onto the earth. God gave them power to sting people as scorpions sting people. ⁴ God told the locusts that they should not harm the grass of the earth or any plants or any tree. God said that they should harm only those people who did not have the mark on their foreheads to show that they belonged to God. ⁵ God did not allow the locusts to kill those people. Instead, the locusts kept torturing people for five months. The pain those people felt was

like the pain that a scorpion causes when it stings someone. ⁶ During the time when the locusts torture rebellious people, the pain will be so bad that people will want to find a way to die, but they will not find any way. They will long to die, but they will not be able to die. ⁷ The locusts looked like horses that are ready for battle. They had on their heads what looked like golden crowns. Their faces were like the faces of people. ⁸ They had long hair like women's long hair. Their teeth were as strong as lions' teeth. ⁹ They wore breastplates made of metal. When they were flying, their wings made a noise like the roar of many horses pulling chariots as they are rushing into battle. ¹⁰ They had tails like tails of scorpions. With these tails they could sting people. Their power to harm people during those five months was in their tails. ¹¹ The king who ruled over them was the angel of the shaft that went down but had no ending. His name in the Hebrew language is Abaddon. In the Greek language it is Apollyon. Both of these names mean "Destroyer."

¹² That ended the first terrible event. But be aware that two more terrible events are still to come.

¹³ Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four corners of the golden altar that is in God's presence. ¹⁴ The voice was saying to the sixth angel, the one who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels whom I have bound at the great river Euphrates." ¹⁵ Then those four angels went free, those who had waited for that exact hour of that day, month, and year. They went free in order that they might enable their soldiers to kill one-third of the people. ¹⁶ The number of those soldiers riding on horses was two hundred million. I heard someone say how many there were. ¹⁷ In the vision I saw what the horses and the

soldiers who rode them looked like. The soldiers wore breastplates that were red like fire, dusky blue like smoke, and yellow like sulfur. The heads of the horses were like the heads of lions. From their mouths came fire, smoke, and fumes of burning sulfur. ¹⁸ Those three things—the fire, the smoke, and the burning sulfur from the horses' mouths—killed one-third of the people. ¹⁹ The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails. Their tails had heads like snakes by which they harmed people. ²⁰ But the rest of the people, those who were not killed by the plagues of fire and smoke and burning sulfur, did not turn from the sinful things they were doing. They did not stop worshiping demons or the idols that they themselves had made of gold, of silver, of bronze, of stone, and of wood. The people did not stop worshiping them, even though they were idols that could not see, hear, or walk. ²¹ They did not stop murdering people, or practicing sorcery, or acting in sexually immoral ways, or stealing things.

Chapter 10

¹ In the vision I saw another mighty angel come down out of heaven. A cloud surrounded him. There was a rainbow over his head. His face shone like the sun. His legs looked like columns of fire. ² He had in his hand a small scroll that was open. He set his right foot on the ocean and his left foot on the land. ³ He shouted something with a loud voice, a voice like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, it thundered seven times; in the thunder were words that I could understand. ⁴ I was about to write the words that I heard, but a voice from heaven said to me, "Keep secret what the thunder said! Do not write it down!" ⁵ Then the angel whom I had seen

standing on the ocean and the land raised his right hand toward heaven, ⁶ and he asked the one who lives forever—the one who created heaven and everything that is in it, who created the earth and everything that is on it, and who created the ocean and everything that is in it—to say that what he was going to say was true. The angel said that God would no longer delay in doing what he had planned to do. ⁷ He said that when the time came for the seventh angel to blow his trumpet, God’s secret plan would be finished, just as he had said long ago to his servants, the prophets.

⁸ The one whom I had heard speak from heaven spoke to me again. He said, “Go and take the open scroll from the hand of the angel who is standing on the ocean and on the land.” ⁹ So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, “Take it and eat it. In your mouth it will taste sweet like honey, but it will make your stomach bitter.” ¹⁰ I took the little scroll from the angel’s hand and ate it. In my mouth it tasted sweet like honey, but then it made my stomach bitter. ¹¹ Then someone said to me, “You must speak God’s messages again about many nations, people groups, speakers of many languages, and many kings.”

Chapter 11

¹ Then an angel gave to me a reed similar to a measuring stick. God said to me, “Go to the temple, measure it and the altar in it, and count the people who are worshipping there. ² But do not measure the courtyard outside of the temple building because I have given it to the non-Jewish people groups. As a result, they will trample the city of Jerusalem for forty-two months. ³ I will send two witnesses to announce

what I reveal to them for 1,260 days. They will show they are sad about the people’s sin by wearing rough clothes made from goat’s hair.” ⁴ Those witnesses are the ones that are represented by the two olive trees and the two lampstands that are in the presence of the Lord, who rules the earth. ⁵ If anyone tries to harm those witnesses, fire comes from the witnesses’ mouths and destroys them. If people want to harm them, the two witnesses certainly kill them in the same way. ⁶ Those witnesses will have authority over the sky in order to keep rain from falling during the time that they are announcing what God reveals to them. They also will have authority to cause water everywhere to become blood; they will also have authority to send down to the earth all kinds of plagues. They will do this as often as they wish. ⁷ When they have finished announcing to people the message from God, the beast that comes up from the shaft that went down but had no ending will attack them, overcome them, and kill them. ⁸ The dead bodies of the two witnesses will lie in the street of the great city where their Lord was crucified, the city that is symbolically called Sodom or Egypt because its people are very evil like the people who lived in Sodom and Egypt. ⁹ Individuals of many people groups, tribes, language groups, and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days. But they will not allow anyone to bury their bodies. ¹⁰ When the people who live on the earth see that the witnesses are dead, they will rejoice and celebrate. They will send gifts to each other because these two prophets had sent plagues that tormented them. ¹¹ But after three and a half days, God will cause them to breathe again and live. They will stand up, and the people who see them will be terrified. ¹² The two witnesses will hear a loud voice from heaven saying to them: “Come up

here!” Then they will go up into heaven in a cloud. Their enemies will watch them go up. ¹³ At that same time there will be a great earthquake, as a result of which a tenth of the buildings in the city will collapse, and seven thousand people will die. The rest of the people will be afraid and will acknowledge that the God who rules in heaven is awesome.

¹⁴ That will be the second terrible event. Be aware that the third terrible event will happen soon after.

¹⁵ Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet. Voices in heaven shouted loudly, “Our Lord God and the Christ whom he has appointed can now govern all the people in the world, and they will continue to rule those people forever!” ¹⁶ The twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones in God’s presence, bowed down their faces to the ground and worshiped him. ¹⁷ They said:

”Lord God, you are the one who rules over everything!

You are the one who exists now!

You are the one who has always existed!

We thank you that you have defeated with your power

everyone who has rebelled against you,

and you now rule over all the people in the world.

¹⁸ The unbelieving people of the nations were angrily raging at you.

As a result you have become very angry with them.

You have decided that this is the right time for you to judge all those who have died.

The time has come for you to reward all your servants who were the prophets and the others who believe in you,

and all those who honor you,

and this includes those who are small and those who are great.

It is time for you to destroy the people who destroy the earth.”

¹⁹ Then God opened his temple in heaven, and I saw in it the sacred chest. Lightning was flashing; it was thundering and rumbling; the earth shook, and large hailstones fell from the sky.

Chapter 12

¹ Then something very important appeared in the sky. It was a woman, whose clothing was the sun. The moon was under her feet. On her head was a wreath of victory that was made of twelve stars. ² She was about to deliver a child, and she cried out because she was suffering pain. ³ Something else very unusual appeared in the sky. It was a huge red dragon. It had seven heads and ten horns. On each of its heads was a royal crown. ⁴ The dragon’s tail dragged a third of the stars from the sky and threw them to the earth. The dragon set himself in front of the woman who was about to give birth in order that he might eat her child as soon as it was born. ⁵ Then she gave birth to a son who is destined to rule all groups of people with complete authority as if he were using an iron rod. God snatched away her child and took him to his throne. ⁶ But the woman fled into the wilderness. She has a place there that God has prepared for her in order that he may take care of her for 1,260 days.

⁷ Then there was a battle in heaven. Michael and the angels that he commanded fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back against Michael and his angels. ⁸ But the dragon did not win the battle; nor did God allow the dragon and his angels to stay

in heaven any longer. ⁹ Instead, God threw the huge dragon out of heaven. The dragon is the ancient serpent, the one whose names are the Devil and Satan. He is the one who deceives people all over the earth. He was thrown to the earth along with all his angels. ¹⁰ Then I heard someone in heaven shout loudly,

”Now our God has saved his people by his power, and he rules all people!

Now Christ has begun to rule!

This is because God has thrown the accuser of our fellow believers out of heaven.

He was the one who stood before God day and night and told him that they had done what is wrong.

¹¹ Our fellow believers overcame him because the Lamb had shed his blood and died for them

and because they spoke the truth about him to other people.

They did not seek to remain alive,

but were willing to let people kill them for speaking the truth about him.

¹² So everyone in heaven should rejoice.

But terrible things will happen to you people who live on the earth and on the ocean because the devil has come down to you.

He is very angry because he knows that he has only a short time before God judges and punishes him.”

¹³ When the dragon realized that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to a son. ¹⁴ But God gave to the woman two wings like the wings of a very large eagle in order that she might fly into the wilderness. There is a place there that God had prepared for her. There God took care of her for three and one-half years.

The serpent, that is, the dragon, was not able to reach her there. ¹⁵ Then the serpent poured water like a river from his mouth toward the woman in order to sweep her away with the water. ¹⁶ But the ground helped the woman by opening up and swallowing the river that the dragon poured out from his mouth. ¹⁷ Then the dragon was very angry with the woman, so he went away to fight against the rest of her descendants. They are the people who obey God’s commandments and who speak the truth about Jesus. ¹⁸ Then the dragon stood on the ocean shore.

Chapter 13

¹ Then I saw a beast come up out of the ocean. It had ten horns and seven heads. On each of its horns there was a royal crown. On each of its heads there was a name that insulted God. ² This beast was like a leopard. But its feet were like the feet of a bear, and its mouth was like the mouth of a lion. The dragon made the beast very powerful. He gave him the authority to rule over people as king. ³ One of the heads of the beast looked as if someone had wounded it so that it died. But its wound had healed. As a result, all the people of the earth marveled at the beast and followed it. ⁴ They also worshiped the dragon because he had given the beast authority to rule over them. They also worshiped the beast and said, “No one is as powerful as the beast! Who could ever fight against it?” ⁵ God allowed the beast to speak proudly and to insult him. God also allowed it to rule the people for forty-two months. ⁶ When it spoke, it insulted God, his name, the place where he lives, and all who live in heaven. ⁷ God also allowed the beast to fight against his people and conquer them. It had authority to rule over every tribe, over every nation,

over the speakers of every language, and over every people group. ⁸ All the people living on earth will worship it. They are the people whose names are not in the Book of Life that belongs to the Lamb who had been killed. These are the names of the people that he wrote in the book before God created the world, the names of those who belong to God. ⁹ Everyone who wants to understand must listen carefully to this message from God. ¹⁰ If God has decided that some people will be captured by their enemies, they will be captured. If God has decided that some people will die in war, they will die in war. So God's people must endure suffering and be faithful to him.

¹¹ Then I saw another beast come up from the earth. It had two small horns on its head as a sheep has. But it spoke harshly as a dragon does. ¹² It rules people with power in order to do what the first beast wants. It forces the people who live on the earth to worship the first beast, that is, the beast that almost died but whose wound was healed. ¹³ The second beast also did awesome miracles, even causing fire from the sky to fall to earth while people watched. ¹⁴ He did these miracles on behalf of the first beast. By doing that, he deceived the people on the earth so that they thought they should worship the first beast. But this happened only because God allowed it to happen. The second beast told the people living on earth to make an idol to represent the first beast, the one that was alive, even though someone had killed him with a sword. ¹⁵ God allowed the second beast to breathe life into that idol in order that the idol might speak. And the beast commanded that whoever refused to worship the idol should be killed. ¹⁶ The second beast also required that people should write the first beast's name on the right hand or on the forehead of everyone, whether these

were important people or unimportant people, rich or poor, free or slave. Everyone! ¹⁷ The second beast required this so that people could not buy anything or sell anything if they did not have the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number representing its name. ¹⁸ You must think wisely to understand the meaning of the mark. Anyone who thinks wisely should understand that the number represents mankind. It is 666.

Chapter 14

¹ But then I saw the Lamb standing on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. With him were 144,000 people. His name and his Father's name had been written on their foreheads. ² I heard a sound from heaven, which was as loud as the sound of a huge waterfall or mighty thunder. It also sounded like many people playing on harps. ³ The 144,000 people were singing a new song while they stood in front of the throne, in front of the four living creatures, and in front of the elders. Only the 144,000 people, the ones whom the Lamb had redeemed from among the people on the earth, could learn that song. No one else could learn that song. ⁴ Those 144,000 are the ones who did not corrupt themselves with women; for they never had sexual relations. They are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These are the ones whom the Lamb had redeemed for God from among the people of earth; they are the ones whom the Lamb had first offered to God and to himself. ⁵ These people never lied when they spoke, and they never acted immorally.

⁶ Then I saw another angel flying between the sky and heaven. He was bringing God's eternal good news to earth in order that he might proclaim it to people who

live on the earth. He will proclaim it to every nation, to every tribe, to speakers of every language, and to every people group. ⁷ He said in a loud voice, "Honor God and praise him because it is now time for him to judge everyone! Worship him because he is the one who created the heaven, the earth, the ocean, and the springs of water." ⁸ Another angel, a second one, came after him saying, "The very evil city of Babylon is now completely destroyed! Babylon made people of all the nations engage with her in the passion of sexual immorality. Babylon is like someone who gives another person too much wine to drink!" ⁹ Another angel, a third one, came afterward, saying in a loud voice, "If people worship the beast and its image or allow its mark to be put on their foreheads or on their hands, ¹⁰ God will be angry with them and his anger will be like strong wine that he will make them drink. He will torment them in burning sulfur in the presence of his holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹ The smoke from the fire that torments them will rise forever. God will torment them continually, day and night. This is what will happen to the people who worship the beast and its image or who allow its name to be written on them." ¹² So God's people, those who obey what God commands and who trust in Jesus, must faithfully continue obeying and trusting him. ¹³ Then I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: How fortunate from now on are those who die in union with the Lord." God's Spirit says, "Yes, after they die, they will no longer have to endure suffering. Instead, they will rest, and everyone will know the good things that they have done."

¹⁴ Then I saw another surprising thing. It was a white cloud, and on the cloud someone was sitting who looked like the Son of Man. He was wearing a golden crown on his head. In his hand he held a

sharp sickle. ¹⁵ Still another angel came out of the temple in heaven. In a loud voice, he said to the one who was sitting on the cloud, "The time has come to reap the grain on the earth, so with your sickle reap the grain because the grain is ripe." ¹⁶ Then the one who was sitting on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and he harvested the earth. ¹⁷ Another angel came out of the sanctuary in heaven. He also held a sharp sickle. ¹⁸ From the altar came still another angel. He is the one who takes care of the fire of the altar. He said in a loud voice to the angel who held the sickle, "With your sickle cut off the clusters of grapes in the vineyards on the earth! Then gather the clusters of grapes together because its grapes are ripe!" ¹⁹ So the angel swung his sickle on the earth. Then he threw the grapes into the huge place where God will angrily punish. ²⁰ God trampled the grapes in the winepress outside the city, and blood came out! The blood flowed in a stream so deep that it reached up to the bridles of the horses and extended for three hundred kilometers.

Chapter 15

¹ Something else very unusual appeared in the sky. I saw seven angels, whose duty it was to punish rebellious people in seven different ways. This is the last time that God will punish people this way, for it will fully show how angry he is.

² I saw what looked like an ocean that looked as though it was made of glass and mixed with fire. I also saw the people who had overcome the beast by not worshipping it or its image, and by not allowing its servant to mark them with the number that represents the beast's name. They were standing by the ocean (that was as clear as glass), and they were holding the

harps that God gave them. ³ They were singing a song like God's servant Moses sang long ago. They sang this to praise the Lamb in this way:

"Lord God, who rules over everything, whatever you do is powerful and marvelous!

You always act righteously and truthfully.

You are king forever over all the groups of people!

⁴ O Lord, everyone will fear you and honor you because you alone are holy.

All kinds of people will come and bow down before you

because you have shown that you have judged everyone in the right way."

⁵ After this I saw that the temple in heaven was open, where the sacred tent was. ⁶ The seven angels whose duty it was to punish rebellious people in seven different ways came out of the very holy place. The angels were dressed in clean, white linen garments; they wore gold bands around their chests. ⁷ One of the four living creatures gave each of the seven angels a golden bowl filled with wine. The wine symbolized that God, who lives forever, was very angry with the people who had rebelled against him and was going to punish them. ⁸ The temple was filled with smoke that symbolized the presence of the glorious and all-powerful God. No one was able to enter the temple until the seven angels finished punishing the people of the earth in seven different ways.

Chapter 16

¹ In the vision I heard someone in the temple speak in a loud voice to the angels who had the seven bowls. He said, "Go

from here and pour out on the earth the wine in the seven bowls. This will make the people suffer because God is angry with them." ² So the first angel went and poured out on the earth what was contained in his bowl. As a result, horrible and painful sores broke out on the people who had allowed the beast's servants to write the beast's name on them, those who had worshiped the beast's image. ³ Then the second angel poured out upon the ocean what was contained in his bowl. When he poured out his bowl, the water changed its appearance, and it turned into blood, but not living blood. It was like the blood of a dead man, and every creature that lived in the ocean died. ⁴ Then the third angel poured out upon the rivers and water springs what was contained in his bowl. When he poured out his bowl, the water in the rivers and springs turned into blood. ⁵ I heard the angel who has power over the waters say to God, "O God, you exist and have always existed. You are the holy one. You are a fair judge of people. ⁶ The people who rebelled against you murdered your holy people and the prophets. So you are just in punishing them by giving them blood to drink. This is what they deserve." ⁷ Then I heard someone at the altar answer, "Yes, Lord God, you who rule over everything, you punish people rightly and justly." ⁸ Then the fourth angel poured out on the sun what was contained in his bowl. He was given permission to make the sun so hot that it would scorch people with fire. ⁹ So the people were severely burned, and they said evil things about God because he had the power to make them suffer in these ways. But they still refused to turn away from their evil behavior and refused to praise him.

¹⁰ When the fifth angel poured out on the throne of the beast what was contained in his bowl, it became dark where the beast

ruled. So the beast and the people whom the beast ruled were biting their tongues because they were suffering intense pain. ¹¹ They insulted God who rules in heaven because their sores were so painful. But they refused to stop doing the evil things that they were doing. ¹² Then the sixth angel poured out on the Euphrates River what was contained in his bowl. The water in the river dried up so that the rulers from the eastern countries could cross it with their armies. ¹³ Then I saw evil spirits that looked like frogs. One came out of the mouth of the dragon, one from the mouth of the beast, and one from the mouth of the false prophet. ¹⁴ Those spirits were demons who were able to perform miracles. They went out to the rulers of the whole world in order to gather their armies. This is so that they will fight on the important day when Almighty God punishes his enemies. ¹⁵ (I heard the Lord Jesus say, "You must listen carefully to me: I am coming unexpectedly, like a thief. So I will be happy with those who stay alert and keep on living in the right way so that they will not be ashamed. They will be just like a person who keeps his clothes on so that he will not be ashamed in front of other people.") ¹⁶ The evil spirits will gather the rulers at a place named in the Hebrew language Armageddon.

¹⁷ Then the seventh angel poured out into the air what was contained in his bowl. As a result, someone said with a loud voice from the throne in the very holy place, "The time for God to punish rebellious people is finished." ¹⁸ When the angel emptied his bowl, lightning flashed, there were rumblings and thunder, and the earth shook. It shook more violently than it had ever shaken since people first lived on earth. ¹⁹ As a result, the very large city split into three parts. God also destroyed the cities in the other nations. God did not forget that the people of Babylon

had sinned very much. So he made them drink a cup of the wine that made them suffer because he was angry with them. ²⁰ Also as a result of the earthquake, every island disappeared, and the mountains became flat land. ²¹ Huge hailstones, each weighing thirty-three kilograms, fell from the sky onto the people. Then people blasphemed God because he had punished them in this terrible way, and because the hailstones were very large.

Chapter 17

¹ One of the seven angels, who had one of the seven bowls, came to me and said, "Come with me and I will show you how God will punish the prostitute, the woman who represents the city in which there are many canals of water. ² The kings of the earth have acted immorally and idolatrously with her. The people on the earth acted immorally in the same way. It was as if they had gotten drunk on wine that she gave them."

³ Then God's Spirit took control of me, and the angel carried me away to a desolate area. There I saw a woman who was sitting on a red beast. The beast had written names all over itself. They were names that insulted God. The beast had seven heads and ten horns. ⁴ The woman was wearing purple and red clothes. She had jewelry of gold, precious stones, and pearls; she held in her hand a golden cup. The cup was full of something to drink that stands for the detestable and filthy things that she does when she commits sexual immorality. ⁵ There was a name written on her forehead, a name with a secret meaning. It is "This woman is Babylon, the very evil city! She is the mother of all the prostitutes on the earth. She teaches them to do all the filthy, immoral things in the world." ⁶ I saw that

the woman had become drunk because she had drunk the blood of God's people, those who had suffered for proclaiming the truth about Jesus. When I saw her, I was completely amazed.

⁷ The angel said to me, "Do not be amazed. I will explain to you the hidden meaning of the woman and of the beast on which she rides, the beast with the seven heads and the ten horns. ⁸ The beast that you saw lived previously. Eventually God will destroy him, but now he is not alive. He is about to come up from the shaft that went down but had no ending. When that beast appears again, the people on the earth will be amazed. They are people whose names have not been written in the Book of Life before God created the world. ⁹ People need to think wisely to understand this: The seven heads of the beast on which the woman sits symbolize the seven hills of the city that the woman represents. They also symbolize seven rulers. ¹⁰ Five of those rulers have died. One is still alive. The seventh ruler has not yet come. When he comes, he must remain for only a short time. ¹¹ The beast that lived before and then was not alive will be the eighth ruler. He is actually one of those seven rulers, but God will certainly destroy him. ¹² The ten horns that you saw represent ten rulers who have not yet begun to rule. They will receive authority in order to rule people together with the beast, but they will rule for only a short time, as if it were for only one hour. ¹³ Those rulers will all agree to do the same thing. As a result they will give to the beast their right and authority to rule people. ¹⁴ The rulers and the beast will fight against the lamb. He will defeat them because he is the Lord who rules over all other lords and the King who rules over all other kings. The people who are with him are the ones whom God has chosen and called to himself, and who keep serv-

ing him faithfully." ¹⁵ Then the angel said to me, "The waters that you saw in the city represent many different kinds of people, and many different groups of people, and different languages that the people speak, where the prostitute sits. ¹⁶ The ten horns that you saw represent rulers. They and the beast will hate the prostitute. So they will take away everything that is in the city as if they were leaving it naked. They will destroy it as if devouring flesh, and they will burn it completely. ¹⁷ They will do that because God has caused them to decide to do what he wants them to do. As a result, they will let the beast have their power to rule until what God has said is fulfilled. ¹⁸ The prostitute that you saw represents the very evil city whose leaders rule over the kings of the earth."

Chapter 18

¹ After this I saw another angel, one who had great authority, coming down from heaven. The earth became bright because he was shining so intensely. ² He shouted with a very loud voice, "God is about to completely destroy the very evil city of Babylon. As a result, all kinds of evil spirits will live there, and all kinds of foul and detestable birds will live there. Babylon is like a prostitute ³ with whom all the people groups engaged with her in the passion of sexual immorality, which is like getting drunk on too much wine. Yes, and the kings of the earth have done the same things with her. The world's merchants became rich because she wanted to commit so much sexual immorality."

⁴ I heard Jesus speak from heaven. He said, "My people, flee from that Babylon in order that you do not sin as those people do. If you sin as they do, I will punish you in those seven different ways, just as

I will punish them. ⁵ It is as though their sins have been piled up to heaven and God remembers them, so now he will punish them.”

⁶ To the angels whom God assigned to punish Babylon, Jesus said, “Pay back the people of that city to the same extent that they harmed other people. Cause them to suffer twice as much as they caused other people to suffer. ⁷ To the same extent that Babylon, like a woman, has honored herself and done the things she wanted to do, to that extent torment her and cause her to grieve. Do that because in her mind she thought, ‘I rule as a queen! I am not a widow, and I will never mourn as widows do!’ ⁸ So in one day, terrible calamities will come upon her. The people in that city will die, others will mourn for them, people will be hungry because there will be no food, and the city will burn up. The Lord God is able to punish her because he is mighty.”

⁹ The kings on earth who have acted immorally with her and have done just what they wanted to do with her will weep and mourn for her when they see the smoke of the fire that will burn there. ¹⁰ They will stand far away from Babylon because they will be afraid that they will suffer just as she does. They will say, “How terrible it is for Babylon, that strong city! God is punishing her suddenly and swiftly!” ¹¹ The merchants of the earth will weep and will mourn for her because no one in her will ever again buy the things that they have to sell. ¹²⁻¹³ They sell ornaments made of gold, silver, precious stones, and pearls. They sell expensive cloth made of fine linen and silk, expensive cloth that is dyed purple and crimson. They sell all kinds of rare wood, all kinds of items made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron, and marble. They sell cinnamon, spice, perfume, frankincense, wine, olive oil, fine flour,

and grain. They sell cattle, sheep, horses, and chariots. They even sell human beings as slaves. ¹⁴ The good things you people longed to have are gone! All your luxurious and splendid possessions have vanished! They will be gone forever! ¹⁵ The merchants who sold these things and who had become rich will stand far away because they will be afraid that they will suffer just as the city has. They will weep and mourn, ¹⁶ and they will say, “Terrible things have happened to that great city! That city was like a woman, dressed in clothes made of fine linen cloth and expensive cloth dyed purple and crimson, and adorned with gold, precious stones, and pearls. ¹⁷ But suddenly and swiftly God has destroyed all these expensive things.”

Every ship’s captain, all people who travel by ship, all sailors, and all others who earn their living by traveling on the ocean will stand far away from the city.” ¹⁸ When they see the smoke of the fire that is burning there, they will shout, “No other city has ever been like that great city!” ¹⁹ They will throw dust on their heads to show that they are sad, and they will shout, weep, and mourn. They will say, “Terrible things have happened to Babylon. That city made many people rich, the people who had ships that sail on the ocean in order to sell their expensive things. God has suddenly and swiftly destroyed that city!”

²⁰ Then someone spoke from heaven saying, “You who live in heaven, rejoice over what has happened to Babylon! You who are God’s people, including you apostles and prophets, rejoice. You must rejoice; God has justly punished the people there because they acted so terribly toward you!”

²¹ Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large stone for grinding grain, and he threw it into the ocean.

Then he said, "You people in the great city of Babylon, God will throw down your city so that it will disappear just as that stone disappeared in the ocean! Your city will be gone forever! ²² In your city, there will never again be anyone playing harps, singing, playing flutes, or blowing trumpets. There will no longer be any skilled workers making things. There will never again be people grinding grain at the mills. ²³ No lamp will ever again shine there. There will never again be the happy voices of any bridegroom and his bride. God will destroy your city because your merchants were the most important men in the world. You used witchcraft to deceive people of all groups of people. ²⁴ You are also responsible for killing the prophets and others of God's people. Indeed, you are guilty of every murder committed on the earth!"

Chapter 19

¹ After these things I heard what sounded like a huge crowd in heaven. They were shouting things like,

"Hallelujah! He has saved us!

He is glorious and mighty!

² Praise him because he judges truly and justly!

He has punished the very evil city that was like a prostitute because their people persuaded the other people of earth to act immorally as they did.

Praise him because he has punished them for murdering his servants!"

³ The crowd shouted a second time, saying,

"Hallelujah! The smoke of the fire that is burning that city will rise forever!"

⁴ The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures prostrated themselves and worshiped God, who sits on the throne. They said:

"It is true! Hallelujah!"

⁵ Someone spoke from the throne and said,

"All you who are his servants, praise our God!

All you who honor him, whether you are important or not, everyone praise him!"

⁶ Then I heard something like the noise of a huge crowd of people, like the sound of a huge waterfall, and like the sound of loud claps of thunder. They were shouting:

"Hallelujah! Our Lord God, who rules over everything, reigns!

⁷ We should rejoice, we should be extremely glad, and we should honor him

because it is now time for the Lamb to be united with the woman he is marrying. She has made herself ready.

⁸ God has permitted her to dress herself in fine linen, bright and clean."

Fine, bright, and clean linen represents the righteous actions of God's people.

⁹ Then the angel said to me, "Write this: how fortunate are the people whom God invites to the feast when the Lamb marries his wife!" He also said to me: "These words that God declares are true!" ¹⁰ I immediately prostrated myself at his feet in order to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not worship me! I am just your fellow servant and the fellow servant of your fellow believers, those who speak the truth about Jesus. God is the one you should worship because it is the Spirit of God who gives people the power to speak the truth about Jesus!"

¹¹ Then I saw the heavens open up, and I was surprised to see a white horse. Je-

sus, the one who was riding on the horse, is called "Trustworthy and Genuine." He judges all people according to what is right; he fights in justice against his enemies. ¹² His eyes shone like a flame of fire. There were many royal crowns on his head. A name had been written on him. Only he knows the meaning of that name. ¹³ The cloak he was wearing was drenched with blood. His name is also "The Message of God." ¹⁴ The armies of heaven were following him. They were riding on white horses. They were wearing clothes made of clean white linen. ¹⁵ A sharp sword extends from his mouth; with it he will strike the rebellious people groups. He himself will rule them powerfully as though he had an iron rod. He will crush his enemies as a person crushes grapes in a winepress. He will do this for God, who rules over everything and who is furiously angry with them because of their sins. ¹⁶ On his cloak over his thigh a name had been written: "King who rules over all other kings and Lord who rules over all other lords."

¹⁷ Then I saw an angel standing in the light of the sun. He called loudly to all the flesh-eating birds flying high in the sky, "Come and gather for the large feast that God is providing for you!" ¹⁸ Come and eat the flesh of all God's enemies who are dead—the flesh of kings, of army commanders, of people who fought powerfully, of horses and of the soldiers who rode them, and the flesh of all other kinds of people, whether they were free or slave, important or not. All kinds!" ¹⁹ Then I saw the beast and the kings of earth with their armies; they had gathered together to fight against the rider on the horse and his army. ²⁰ The rider on the white horse captured the beast and the false prophet. The false prophet is the one who had performed miracles in the beast's presence. By doing that he had deceived the peo-

ple who had accepted the beast's mark on their foreheads and who had worshiped its image. Then God threw the beast and the false prophet alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. ²¹ The rider on the horse killed the rest of their armies with his sword, the one that extended from his mouth. All the birds gorged themselves on the flesh of the people and horses that he had killed.

Chapter 20

¹ Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven. He had the key to the deep, dark pit, and he was carrying a large chain in his hand. ² He seized the dragon. That dragon is the ancient serpent, the devil, that is, Satan. The angel bound him with the chain. That chain could not be loosed for one thousand years. ³ The angel threw him into the deep, dark pit. He shut the door of the pit, locked it, and sealed it to prevent anyone from opening it. He did that in order that Satan might no longer deceive all the many groups of people, until those one thousand years are ended. After that time, Satan must go free for a short time in order that he can do what God has planned.

⁴ I saw thrones on which people were sitting. God gave them authority to judge. I also saw the souls of other people whose heads had been cut off because they had spoken the truth about Jesus and had declared God's message. They were people who had refused to worship the beast or its image, and who had not allowed the beast's servants to put the beast's mark on them, either on their foreheads or on their hands. They became alive again, and they ruled with Christ during those one thousand years. ⁵ They were the ones who lived again the first time that God caused

dead people to live again. The rest of the believers who had died did not live again until after those one thousand years. ⁶ God will be pleased with those who live again this first time. God will consider them holy. They will not die a second time. Instead, they will be priests who serve God and Christ, and they will rule with Christ during those one thousand years.

⁷ When the one thousand years are ended, God will release Satan from his prison. ⁸ Satan will go out to deceive the rebellious people groups all over the earth. These are the nations that the prophet Ezekiel called Gog and Magog. Satan will gather them to fight against God's people. There will be so many of them fighting against God's people that no one will be able to count them, just as no one can count the grains of sand on the ocean shore. ⁹ They will march over the whole earth and will surround the camp of God's people in Jerusalem, the city that God loves. Then God will send fire down from heaven, and it will burn them up. ¹⁰ God will throw the devil, who had deceived those people, into the lake of burning sulfur. This is also where God had thrown the beast and the false prophet. As a result, they will continually suffer severely forever.

¹¹ Then I saw a huge white throne on which God was sitting. He was so fearsome that the earth and the sky disappeared from his presence completely; they were no more. ¹² I saw that the people who had died but now lived again were standing in front of the throne. They were both important and unimportant people! The books in which God records what people do were opened. Another book was also opened, which is the Book of Life in which God has written the names of people who have eternal life. God judged the people who had died and now lived again according to what they

had done, just as he had recorded it in the books. ¹³ The people whose bodies were buried in the sea became alive again in order to stand before God's throne. Everyone who had been buried on the land became alive again also in order to stand before the throne. God judged each one of them according to what each one had done. ¹⁴ All the unbelievers—those who had been in the place where they waited after they died—were thrown into the burning lake. The burning lake is the place in which people die the second time. ¹⁵ God also threw the people whose names were not in the book, the book where God has written the names of the people who have eternal life, into the lake of fire.

Chapter 21

¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth had disappeared, and the oceans no longer existed. ² I saw God's holy city, which is the new city of Jerusalem. It was coming down out of heaven from God. God had prepared it and decorated it, just as women decorate a bride in order to marry a man. ³ Then I heard a loud voice calling out from the throne of God saying, "Listen to this! Now God will live with people. He will live right in the midst of them! They will be his people. God himself will be with them, and he will be their God. ⁴ He will cause them to no longer be sad. He will stop them from weeping ever again. None of them will ever again die or mourn or cry or suffer pain because God has taken away those things and they are gone forever."

⁵ Then God, who sits on the throne, said, "Listen to this! I am now making everything new!" He said to me: "Write these things that I have told you because you

can trust that I will certainly cause them to happen.” ⁶ He also said to me, “I have completed all these things! I am the one who began all things and the one who will cause all things to end. To everyone who wants it, I will freely give water from the spring that causes people to live forever. ⁷ I will give this to all who are victorious over Satan. I will be their God, and they will be my children. ⁸ But those who are cowardly, those who do not believe in me, those who do detestable things, those who murder people, those who sin sexually, those who do witchcraft, those who worship idols, and every liar will all suffer in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur. That is what it means to die a second time.”

⁹ Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls of wine—the wine that caused the seven last ways of suffering—came and said to me, “Come with me and I will show you the people who have permanently united with the Lamb as a woman marries a man!”

¹⁰ Then God’s Spirit took control of me, and the angel took me to the top of a very high mountain. He showed me God’s holy city, the new Jerusalem, which was coming down out of heaven from God. ¹¹ It was shining with the brilliant light that came from God himself. The city was shining as a very precious jasper stone shines, and it was clear like crystal. ¹² Around the city was a very high wall. The wall had twelve gates. An angel was at each gate. The names of the twelve tribes of Israel were written over the gates. Each gate had the name of one tribe. ¹³ Three gates were on the east side, three gates were on the north side, three gates were on the south side, and three gates were on the west side. ¹⁴ The city wall had twelve foundation stones. On each foundation stone was the name of one of the

twelve apostles whom the Lamb had appointed.

¹⁵ The angel who was speaking to me carried a golden measuring rod, a rod that he used to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. ¹⁶ The city was square in shape; it was as long as it was wide. After the angel measured the city with his rod, he reported that it was 2,200 kilometers long, and that its width and height were each the same as its length. ¹⁷ He measured its wall and reported that it was sixty-six meters thick. The angel used the measure that people normally use.

¹⁸ The city wall was made of something like the green stone that we call jasper. The city itself was made of pure gold that looked like clear glass. ¹⁹ The foundations of the wall of the city were beautifully made with precious stones. The first foundation stone was jasper, the second foundation stone was sapphire, the third foundation stone was chalcedony, the fourth foundation stone was emerald, ²⁰ the fifth foundation stone was sardonyx, the sixth foundation stone was sardius, the seventh foundation stone was chrysolite, the eighth foundation stone was beryl, the ninth foundation stone was topaz, the tenth foundation stone was chryso-prase, the eleventh foundation stone was jacinth, and the twelfth foundation stone was amethyst. ²¹ The twelve gates of the city were something like huge pearls. Each gate was like a single pearl. The city streets appeared to be pure gold that looked like clear glass.

²² There was no temple in the city. The Lord God himself, who rules over all, and the Lamb are there, so there was no need for a temple. ²³ The city will not need the sun or the moon to light the city because the light coming from God will light the city, and the Lamb will also be its light. ²⁴ The people groups will live with the light

of the city shining on them. The kings of the earth will bring their wealth into the city to honor God and the lamb. ²⁵ The gates of the city will not be shut at the end of the day as they usually are shut because there will be no night there. ²⁶ The people of the world will also bring their wealth into the city. ²⁷ Nothing that is morally impure, no one who does deeds that God considers detestable, and no one who tells lies will ever enter that city. Only those people whose names are written in the book that belongs to the lamb, the book that has the names of people who have eternal life, will be there.

Chapter 22

¹ Then the angel showed me the river that causes people who drink from it to live forever. The water was sparkling and clear like crystal. The river was flowing out from the throne where God and the Lamb were sitting. ² It flowed down through the middle of the main street of the city. On each side of the river were trees with fruit that causes people who eat it to live forever. The trees bear twelve kinds of fruit; they produce one crop each month. The people groups use the leaves of the trees as medicine in order that their wounds may heal. ³ There will never be anyone or anything there that God will curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city. God's servants will worship him there. ⁴ They will see him face to face, and his name will be written on their foreheads. ⁵ There will never again be night. God's servants will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun because the Lord God will shine his light upon them. They will rule forever.

⁶ The angel said to me: "These things that God has shown you are true, and he will

certainly make them happen. The Lord God who inspires the prophets sent his angel to show the people who serve him the events that must happen soon." ⁷ Jesus says to all his people, "Listen to this! I am coming soon; God will abundantly bless everyone who obeys the message that has been written in this book."

⁸ I, John, am the one who heard and saw in a vision these things that I have written down. When I had heard and seen them, I immediately lay down in front of the angel who had shown me these things in order to worship him. ⁹ But he said to me, "Do not worship me! I am just a servant of God like you! I am also a servant like your fellow believers who are the prophets, and like those who obey the message in this book. Instead, worship God!" ¹⁰ He also said to me, "Do not keep secret the message about what God has foretold in this book because it is almost time for him to fulfill this message. ¹¹ Since that time is near, if those who act in an evil manner want to continue to act that way, let them continue to do so. God will soon pay them back for that. If those who are vile want to continue to be vile, let them continue to do so. God will soon pay them back for that. Those who are acting righteously should continue to act righteously. Those who are perfect should continue to be perfect."

¹² Jesus says to all people: "Listen! I am coming soon! And I will pay back and punish or reward everyone according to what each one has done. ¹³ I am the one who began all things and the one who will cause all things to end. I am before all things and I am at the end of all things. ¹⁴ God is very pleased with the people who wash their robes and make them clean because they will be able to eat the fruit of the tree that enables people to live forever and because they will be able to enter the gates into the

holy city. ¹⁵ Outside are people who are unholy. They include people who practice witchcraft, people who sin sexually, people who murder others, idol worshipers, and all people who enjoy telling lies and are continual liars. They can never enter that city.”

¹⁶ “I, Jesus, sent my angel in order that he might say to you people who are the groups of believers that all these things are true. I am the descendant of King David whom the prophets promised would come. I am the one who is like the bright morning star.”

¹⁷ God’s Spirit and his people, who are like the bride of Christ, say to each one who desires to believe, “Come!” Whoever hears this should also say to each one who desires to believe, “Come!” The people who want to come should come! Everyone who desires the water that enables

people to live forever should take it as a free gift!

¹⁸ I, John, solemnly warn everyone who hears the message about what I have foretold in this book: If anyone adds anything to this message, God will punish him in the ways that this book tells about. ¹⁹ If anyone takes away any of the message about what I have foretold in this book, God will take away that person’s right to eat fruit from the tree that enables people to live forever. He will also take away that person’s right to enter God’s city. Both these things are described in this book.

²⁰ Jesus, who says that all these things are true, says, “Certainly I am coming soon!” I, John, reply, “May it be so! Lord Jesus, come!”

²¹ I pray that our Lord Jesus will continue to act kindly to all of you who are God’s people. Amen!