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1 Samuel

Chapter 1

¹There was a man named Elkanah, {a descendant of} Zuph, who {lived} in {the city of} Ramah in the hill country, where {the people of the tribe of} Ephraim {lived}. His father was Jeroham, his grandfather was Elihu, his great-grandfather was Tohu, and his great-great-grandfather was Zuph, who lived in the territory of Ephraim. ²He had two wives: Hannah and Peninnah. Now Peninnah had {several} children, but Hannah had no children.

³{Once} every year Elkanah went up {with his family} from Ramah to the city of Shiloh. He would go there to worship Yahweh, {commander of the angel} armies, and offer sacrifices to him. The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, {helped their father to do the work as} priests of Yahweh there. ⁴Each time Elkanah offered sacrifices {there}, he would give some of the {meat} to Peninnah and some to each of her sons and daughters. ⁵But he gave a larger amount of {meat} to Hannah because he loved her {very much}, even though Yahweh had not {permitted} her to give birth to any {children}. ⁶But his other wife, Peninnah, would mock Hannah to make her feel miserable, reminding her Yahweh had not allowed her to bear children. ⁷This happened every year. When they went up to the temple of Yahweh at Shiloh, Peninnah always ridiculed Hannah so much that Hannah cried and would not eat.

⁸Then Elkanah would say to her, "Hannah, why are you crying? Why are you eating nothing? You are so sad! Surely it is better for you to have me as your husband than to have even ten sons!"

⁹One year, after they had finished eating and drinking at Shiloh, Hannah stood up to pray. Eli the priest was {nearby}, sitting on a chair by the doorway of the sacred tent of Yahweh. ¹⁰Hannah was very distressed, and she cried very sorrowfully as she prayed to Yahweh. ¹¹She made a solemn promise, saying, "O Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, if you will look at me and see how miserable I am, and think kindly about me and allow me to give birth to a son, then I will dedicate him to you for the rest of his life. And {to show that he is dedicated to you}, no one will ever be allowed to cut his hair."

¹²As she was praying like that to Yahweh, Eli the priest saw Hannah's lips moving {as she was praying}. ¹³But Hannah was only praying silently; she was not making any sound. So Eli thought that she was drunk. ¹⁴He said to her, "You should not be getting drunk. Get rid of your wine!"

¹⁵Hannah replied, "Sir, I am not drunk! I have not been drinking wine or any other alcoholic drink. I feel very miserable and I have been telling Yahweh about how I feel. ¹⁶Do not think that I am a worthless woman. I have been praying like this because I am so ashamed and upset."

¹⁷Eli replied, "I wish that things may go well for you. I desire that God, the one we Israelite people worship, may give you what you asked of him."

¹⁸She replied, "I want you to think highly about me." Then she returned to her family and after she ate something, she was sad no more.

¹⁹Early the next morning, Elkanah and his family got up and worshiped Yahweh again, and then they returned to their home at Ramah. Then Elkanah slept with Hannah, and Yahweh answered her prayer. ²⁰She became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, which sounds like the words in the Hebrew language that mean "heard by God," because she said, "Yahweh heard me when I requested a son from him."

²¹The following year, Elkanah went up to Shiloh with his family to make the kind of sacrifice he made each year, and also to give a special offering to God that he had promised to give him previously. ²²But Hannah did not go with them. She said to her husband, "After I have weaned the baby, I will take him to Shiloh and present him to Yahweh, and he will stay there for the rest of his life."

²³Elkanah said, "Do what you think is best. Stay here until you have weaned him. What I desire is that Yahweh may enable you to do what you have promised." So Hannah stayed at home and nursed her son until she weaned him.

²⁴After she weaned him, even though Samuel was very young, she took him to the house of Yahweh that was at Shiloh. She took along with her and her son a three year old bull, about twenty liters of flour, and a container of wine. ²⁵After Hannah and Elkanah had slaughtered the bull and offered it to Yahweh on the altar, they brought the boy to Eli. ²⁶Then Hannah said to him, "Sir, do you remember me? I am the woman who prayed as I stood here beside you several years ago. ²⁷I prayed that Yahweh would enable me to give birth to a child, and this is that child! ²⁸So now I am presenting him to Yahweh. He will belong to Yahweh as long as he lives." Then Elkanah and his family worshiped Yahweh there.

Chapter 2

¹Then Hannah prayed, saying,

"In my inner being I rejoice in what you, Yahweh, have done.

I am strong because I belong to you.

I laugh at my enemies

because you, Yahweh have rescued me from being mocked by them.

²There is no one who is holy like you, Yahweh.

There is no other god like you.

There is no one like you, our God, who can protect us as though you were putting us on top of a huge rock where we can be safe from danger.

³You people who oppose God, stop boasting!

Yahweh is a God who knows everything,

and he will evaluate everyone's actions.

So do not speak so arrogantly!

⁴Yahweh, you destroy the weapons of mighty soldiers,

but you give strength to those who stumble because they are weak.

⁵Many people who previously had plenty to eat, now have to work for other people to earn money to buy food, but many who were always hungry are not hungry anymore.

The woman who could not have any children before, now has given birth to many children,

and the woman who had many children before, now is very lonely because they have all died.

⁶Yahweh, you cause some people to die,

and you restore some people who were almost dead.

For some people, it seems that they will soon go to where dead people go, but you cause them to become healthy again.

⁷Yahweh, you cause some people to be poor, and you cause some people to be rich,

you humble some people, and you honor some people.

⁸Sometimes you lift poor people up so that they are no longer sitting in the dust,
and you raise up needy people so that they are no longer sitting on heaps of ashes;
you cause them to sit next to princes;
you cause them to sit on seats where people who are highly honored sit.

Yahweh, you are the one who laid the foundations of the earth,
and you have set the whole world on those foundations.

⁹You will protect your loyal people,
but you will cause the wicked to die and to descend to the dark place where the dead go.
We do not defeat our enemies by our own strength.

¹⁰Yahweh, you will break into pieces those who oppose you.

You will cause thunder in the sky to show that you oppose them.

Yahweh, you will judge people everywhere, even those who live in the most remote places on the earth.

You will give strength to the king whom you will appoint, and give him great power over his enemies."

¹¹Then Elkanah and his family returned to their home in Ramah, but Samuel, the little boy, stayed to help Eli the priest serve Yahweh.

¹²Eli's two sons, who were also priests, were very wicked. They were not faithful to Yahweh. ¹³The custom was that while the people were boiling the meat from their sacrifices in the huge pot at the temple, a priest would send his servant, who would come with a large three-pronged fork in his hand. ¹⁴He would stick the fork into the meat in the pot, and whatever meat fastened onto the fork, he would take and give it to the priest who sent him.

¹⁵However, before the man who was making the sacrifice could cut the fat off the meat and burn the fat as a sacrifice to Yahweh, the servant of Eli's sons would come to him and say to him, "Give me some meat now to take to the priest for him to roast! He wants raw meat; he does not want boiled meat."

¹⁶If the man said to the servant, "Let the priests cut off and burn the fat first; then you can take what you want," the servant would reply, "No, give it to me now; if you do not give it to me, I will take it forcefully!"

¹⁷Yahweh considered that the young sons of Eli were committing a very great sin, because they were treating very disrespectfully the offerings that were being given to Yahweh.

¹⁸As for Samuel, who was still a very young boy, he continued to do work for Yahweh, wearing a little sacred apron made out of linen, like the high priest wore. ¹⁹Each year his mother made a new little robe for him and took it to him when she went up to Shiloh with her husband to offer a sacrifice. ²⁰Then Eli would ask God to bless Elkanah and his wife, and he would say to Elkanah, "I hope that Yahweh will enable your wife to give birth to other children, to take the place of the one whom she dedicated to Yahweh." Then Elkanah and his family would return home.

²¹Yahweh was indeed very kind to Hannah, for he enabled her to give birth to three other sons and two daughters. Their son Samuel grew up while he was doing work for Yahweh in his temple.

²²Now Eli became very old. He often heard about all the evil things that his sons were doing to the Israelite people. He heard that they sometimes slept with the women who worked at the entrance to the tent where God spoke to his people. ²³He said to them, "It is terrible that you do such things! Many people keep telling me about the evil things that you do. ²⁴My sons, stop it! The reports about you that the people who belong to Yahweh tell others are terrible! ²⁵If one person sins against another person, God can intercede between them. But if someone sins

against Yahweh, who will speak up for him?" But Eli's sons would not listen to what their father said. This was because Yahweh had decided that someone needed to kill them.

²⁶The boy Samuel continued to grow up, and the things that he did pleased Yahweh and the people. ²⁷One day, a prophet came to Eli and told him, "This is what Yahweh has told me: 'When your ancestors were slaves of the king of Egypt, I appeared to Aaron. ²⁸From all the tribes of the Israelite people, I chose him and his male descendants to be priests for me. I appointed them to go up to my altar, to burn incense, to wear a sacred apron as they worked for me. And I declared that they could take and eat some of the meat that the Israelite people burned on the altar. ²⁹So why do you show disrespect for the sacrifices and offerings that I commanded the people to bring to me? You are honoring your sons more than you are honoring me, by allowing them to get fat from eating the best parts of all the sacrifices that the Israelite people bring to me!'

³⁰Therefore, this is what Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, declares: 'I definitely promised that Aaron and his descendants would continue to serve me forever. But now I declare this: It will not continue like that! I will honor those who honor me, but I will despise those who despise me. ³¹Listen carefully! There will soon be a time when I will cause all the strong young men in your family to die. The result will be that no men in your family will live long enough to become old men. ³²You will be distressed and envious as you see the blessings that I will give to the other people in Israel. And I repeat that no men in your family will ever live long enough to become old men. ³³There is one of your descendants whom I will spare; I will not prevent him from serving me as a priest. But he will become blind from weeping; he will always be sad and grieving. But all your other descendants will die violently. ³⁴And your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, will both die on the same day. And that will prove to you that all that I have said will come true.

³⁵I have chosen another man to be my priest. He is one who will serve me faithfully: He will do everything I want. I will make sure that his descendants will be priests and will always serve me by helping the king whom I will choose. ³⁶All of your descendants who remain alive will have to go to that priest and ask him to give them money and food, and they will each have to say, "Please allow me to help the other priests, in order that I may earn some money to buy some food.'"

Chapter 3

¹While he was still a boy, Samuel was serving Yahweh while Eli supervised him. At that time there were very few messages that anyone received from Yahweh, and very few people saw visions that Yahweh gave them.

²By that time Eli's eyes were very weak; he was almost blind. One night he was sleeping in his room, ³and Samuel was sleeping in the temple of Yahweh, where the sacred chest was kept. There was a lamp there that represented the presence of God, and it was still burning. ⁴Just then Yahweh called, "Samuel! Samuel!" Samuel replied, "I am here!"

⁵Then he got up and ran to Eli. He said to him, "I am here, because you called me!" But Eli replied, "No, I did not call you. Go back to your bed." So Samuel went and lay down again.

⁶Then Yahweh called again, "Samuel!" So Samuel got up again and went to Eli and said, "I am here, because you called me!" But Eli said, "No, my son, I did not call you. Go back and lie down."

⁷At that time Samuel had not yet known what it was like for Yahweh to speak to him, because Yahweh had not previously revealed anything to him.

⁸After Samuel lay down again, Yahweh called him a third time. So again Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "I am here, because you called me!"

Then Eli realized that it was Yahweh who was calling the boy. ⁹So he said to Samuel, "Go and lie down again. If someone calls you again, say 'Speak to me, Yahweh, because I am listening!'" So Samuel went and lay down again.

¹⁰Then Yahweh came and stood and called as he had done the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak to me, because I am listening!"

¹¹Then Yahweh said to Samuel, "Listen carefully. I am about to do something here in Israel that will shock everyone who hears about it. ¹²When that happens, I will punish Eli and his family. I will do to them everything that I said that I would do. ¹³His sons have shown great disrespect for me by the disgraceful things they have done, and Eli did not keep them back from doing it. So I told him that I would punish his family forever. ¹⁴I solemnly promised to Eli's family, 'You will never be able to avoid the consequences for your sin, even if you give me sacrifices or offerings.'"

¹⁵Samuel lay down again until morning. Then he got up and opened the doors of the building as usual. He was afraid to tell Eli about the vision that Yahweh had given him. ¹⁶But Eli called him and said, "Samuel, my son!" Samuel answered, "I am here!"

¹⁷Eli asked him, "What was it that Yahweh told you? Do not conceal it! I want God to punish you severely if you do not tell me everything that he said to you."

¹⁸So Samuel told him everything. He did not refuse to tell him anything. Then Eli said, "He is Yahweh. I am willing for him to do what he thinks is best."

¹⁹As Samuel grew up, Yahweh helped him; he made everything that Samuel predicted to come true. ²⁰So all the people of Israel, from the northern end of the country to the southern end, realized that Samuel was truly a prophet of Yahweh. ²¹Yahweh continued to appear to Samuel in Shiloh and give messages to him.

Chapter 4

¹Samuel told to all the people of Israel the messages that God gave him.

At that time the Israelite army went to fight against the army of the Philistine people. The Israelite army set up their tents at Ebenezer, and the Philistine army set up their tents at Aphek. ²The Philistine army attacked the Israelite army, and as the battle continued, the Philistines defeated the Israelites and killed about four thousand of their soldiers. ³When the remaining Israelite soldiers returned to their camp, the Israelite elders said, "Why did Yahweh allow the Philistine army to defeat us today? We should bring the sacred chest here from Shiloh, in order that Yahweh will go with us when we go to the battle again, so that our enemies will not defeat us again!"

⁴So the soldiers sent some men to Shiloh, and those men brought back the sacred chest, the chest of Yahweh, who sat on a throne between the statues of winged creatures that were on top of the chest. The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, went with them.

⁵When the Israelite people saw the men bringing the sacred chest into their camp, they were so happy that they shouted loudly. They shouted so loudly that the ground shook! ⁶The Philistines asked, "What are the people in the Hebrew camp shouting about?" Someone told them that they were shouting because the sacred chest of Yahweh had been brought to them. ⁷Then they became very afraid. They said, "Their God has come into their camp to help them! We are in big trouble now! Nothing like this has happened to us before! ⁸No one can save us now! This is the God who made the people of Egypt suffer with many plagues before the Israelites left Egypt and traveled through the desert. ⁹You Philistine men, be courageous! Fight very hard! If you do not do that, they will defeat us, and then you will become their slaves, just as they have been our slaves previously!"

¹⁰So the Philistine men fought very hard, and they defeated the Israelites. They killed thirty thousand Israelite soldiers, and the other Israelite soldiers fled and ran away to their tents. ¹¹The Philistines captured the sacred chest, and they killed Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas.

¹²On that same day, one man of the tribe descended from Benjamin ran from the place where the armies were fighting. He tore his clothes and threw soil on his head to show that he was very sad. He arrived at Shiloh late that afternoon. ¹³Eli was waiting beside the road. He wanted to hear news about the battle, and he was also very anxious to know if anything bad had happened to God's sacred chest. When the messenger arrived and told people what had happened, everyone in the town started to cry loudly.

¹⁴Eli asked, "Why are they making all that noise?" The messenger ran over to Eli and told him the news.

¹⁵At that time, Eli was ninety-eight years old, and he was blind. ¹⁶The messenger said to Eli, "I have just come from where the armies were fighting. I left there earlier today." Eli asked, "What happened?"

¹⁷The man replied, "The Philistines defeated our army. They killed thousands of our soldiers, and the others ran away. The Philistines killed your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. They also captured God's sacred chest."

¹⁸Eli was very old, and he was very fat; and when he heard what had happened to the sacred chest, he fell backward from his seat beside the city gate. His neck was broken and he died. He had led the Israelite people for forty years.

¹⁹The wife of Eli's son Phinehas was pregnant, and it was almost time for her to give birth to her baby. When she heard that God's sacred chest had been captured and that her husband and her father-in-law were dead, her labor pains suddenly began and were too much for her. She quickly gave birth to a boy, but she began to die. ²⁰As she was dying, the women who were helping her tried to encourage her by saying to her, "You have given birth to a son!" But she did not pay any attention to what they said.

²¹She named the boy Ichabod, which means "no glory," because she said, "God's glory has departed from Israel." She said that because God's sacred chest had been captured and because her husband and her father-in-law had died. ²²She said, "God's glory has left Israel, because God's sacred chest has been captured!" And then she died.

Chapter 5

¹After the army of the Philistia people group captured God's sacred chest in the town of Ebenezer, they took it to Ashdod, one of their largest cities. ²They carried it into the temple of their god Dagon and placed it alongside a statue of Dagon. ³But early the next morning, when the people of Ashdod went to see it, they saw that the statue had fallen on its face in front of Yahweh's sacred chest! So they set the statue up in its place again. ⁴But the following morning, they saw that it had fallen down in front of the sacred chest again. But this time, it was as if someone had cut the statue's head and hands off; they were lying in the doorway. Only its body remained in one piece. ⁵That is the reason that ever since that time, the priests of Dagon and everyone else who enters the temple of Dagon in Ashdod do not step on the doorsill where the hands and head of Dagon had fallen.

⁶Then Yahweh made the people of Ashdod suffer very much with tumors. Many sickened and died, both in the city and in the surrounding region. ⁷The people of Ashdod realized why this was happening, and they cried out, "The God of the Israelites is punishing us and our god Dagon. So we cannot allow the sacred chest of the God of the Israelites to remain here!" ⁸They summoned the five kings of the Philistia people group and asked them, "What should we do with the sacred chest of the God of the Israelites?"

The kings replied, "Take the sacred chest to the city of Gath." So they moved it to Gath. ⁹But after they took it to Gath, Yahweh powerfully struck the people of that city also, with the result that many men, including young men and old men, got tumors on their skins. Then the people became very afraid. ¹⁰So they took the sacred chest to the city of Ekron.

But when the men carried the sacred chest into Ekron, the people there cried out, "Why are you bringing the sacred chest of the God of the Israelites into our city? By doing that you will cause us and the rest of our people to die!" ¹¹So the people of Ekron also summoned the Philistine kings. When they came, the people said to them, "Take

this sacred chest of the god of the Israelites back to its own place! If you do not do that quickly, we will all die!" The people were terrified because they knew that God was starting to punish them severely. ¹²Some of the people in Ekron had already died, and the rest of the people were suffering because of tumors on their skins. So they all cried out to their gods to help them.

Chapter 6

¹The people of Philistia kept God's sacred chest in their area for seven months. ²Then they summoned their priests and their diviners. They asked them, "What should we do with the sacred chest of Yahweh? Tell us how we should send it back to its own land."

³Those men replied, "Send with it an offering to show Yahweh that you know that you are guilty for capturing the chest, in order that the plague will stop. If you do that, and then if you are healed, you will know that he is the one who caused the plague to strike you. And you will know why you have been suffering until now."

⁴The people of Philistia asked, "What kind of offering should we send?"

The men replied, "Make five gold models of the tumors on your skin, and five gold models of rats. Make five of each because that will be the same number as the number of your kings, and because the plague has struck both you people and your five kings. ⁵Make models that represent the tumors and the rats that are ruining your land. Make them in order to honor the god of the Israelite people. If you do that, perhaps Yahweh will stop punishing you, your gods, and your land. ⁶Do not be stubborn as Pharaoh and the Egyptians were. Remember that Yahweh finally made them suffer more than they could bear, and that they finally allowed the Israelites to leave their land.

⁷So you must build a new cart. Then get two cows that have very recently given birth to calves. They must be cows that have never been hitched to a cart. Hitch those cows to the new cart, and take the calves away from their mothers. ⁸Put their god's sacred chest on the cart. Also put in the cart the five gold models of the tumors on your skin and the five gold models of rats. Put them in a small box alongside the sacred chest. They will be an offering to show that you know that you deserved to be punished for capturing the sacred chest. Then send the cows down the road, pulling the cart. ⁹Watch the cart as the cows pull it. If they pull it to the town of Bethshemesh in Israel, we will know that it was their god who brought this plague on us. But if they do not take it there, we will know that it was not the god of the Israelites who has punished us. We will know that it happened by chance."

¹⁰So the people did what the priests and diviners told them to do. They made a cart, and hitched two cows to it. They took the calves from their mothers. ¹¹They put in the cart Yahweh's sacred chest and the box with the models of the gold rats and the tumors. ¹²Then the cows started walking, and they went straight toward Bethshemesh. They stayed on the road, and were mooing all the time. They did not turn to the left or to the right. The five kings of the region of Philistia followed the cows until they reached the edge of Bethshemesh.

¹³At that time, the people of Bethshemesh were harvesting wheat in the valley outside the city. When the cows came along the road, they looked up and saw the sacred chest. They were extremely happy to see it. ¹⁴⁻¹⁵The cows pulled the cart into the field of a man named Joshua, and they stopped alongside a large rock. Several men from the tribe of Levi lifted from the cart the sacred chest and the box containing the gold models of the rats and the tumors, and put them all on the large rock. Then the people smashed the cart and kindled a fire with the wood from which the cart had been made. They slaughtered the cows and burned their bodies on the fire to be an offering for Yahweh that would be completely burned. That day the people of Bethshemesh offered to Yahweh many sacrifices that were completely burned, and other sacrifices. ¹⁶The five kings from the region of Philistia watched all this, and then they returned to Ekron, that same day.

¹⁷The five gold models of tumors that they sent to be an offering to Yahweh to show that they knew that they deserved to be punished were gifts from those five kings who were rulers of the cities of Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron. ¹⁸The models of the five gold rats were gifts from the people of those five cities and the

surrounding towns. The large rock at Bethshemesh, on which the men of the tribe of Levi placed the sacred chest, is still there in the field that belonged to Joshua. When people see it, they remember what happened there.

¹⁹But some men from Bethshemesh looked into Yahweh's sacred chest, and because of that, Yahweh caused 50,070 of them to die. Then the people mourned very much because Yahweh punished those men like that. ²⁰They said, "Who can stand before Yahweh, our holy God? Where can we send away this sacred chest?"

²¹They sent messengers to the people of the city of Kiriath Jearim to tell them, "The people of Philistia have returned Yahweh's sacred chest to us! Come here and take it to your city!"

Chapter 7

¹When the men of Kiriath Jearim received the message, they came to Bethshemesh and took the sacred chest of Yahweh. They took it to the house of Abinadab, which was on a hillside. They set apart Abinadab's son Eleazar to take care of the chest.

²The sacred chest stayed in Kiriath Jearim for a long time. It stayed there for twenty years. During that time all the people of Israel mourned because it seemed that Yahweh had abandoned them, and they wanted to turn to him for help again.

³Then Samuel said to all the Israelite people, "If you truly want to honor Yahweh again, you must get rid of your statues of the goddess Ashtoreth and the idols of all the other foreign gods. You must decide to serve only Yahweh. If you do that, he will rescue you from the oppression of the Philistia people." ⁴So the Israelites got rid of all their statues of the gods Baal and Ashtoreth, and they began to worship only Yahweh.

⁵Then Samuel told them, "All you Israelite people must gather with me at Mizpah. Then I will pray to Yahweh for you." ⁶So they gathered at Mizpah, where Samuel acted as leader for the people of Israel. They had a big ceremony there. They fetched water from a well, and poured the water on the ground while Yahweh watched. To show that they were sorry for having worshiped idols, they did not eat any food on that day, and they confessed that they had sinned against Yahweh.

⁷When the kings of the region of Philistia heard that the Israelite people had gathered at Mizpah, they led their armies there to attack the Israelites. When the Israelites found out that the Philistine army was approaching them, they became very afraid. ⁸They told Samuel, "Pray to Yahweh to rescue us from the Philistine army, and do not stop pleading with him!" ⁹So Samuel took a very young lamb and killed it and offered it to Yahweh to be a sacrifice that was completely burned on the altar. Then he prayed and pleaded that Yahweh would help the Israelites, and Yahweh did help them.

¹⁰While Samuel was burning the offering, the Philistine army came near to attack the Israelites. But Yahweh caused it to thunder very loudly. The men of the Philistine army became very frightened, and then they panicked. So the Israelites were able to drive them back completely. ¹¹The Israelite men ran out of Mizpah and chased the Philistine soldiers almost to the town of Beth Kar. They killed many Philistine soldiers who were trying to run away.

¹²After that happened, Samuel took a large stone and set it up between the towns of Mizpah and Shen. He named the stone "Ebenezer," which means "stone of help," because he said "Yahweh has helped us until the present time."

¹³So the Philistine people were defeated, and for a long time they did not enter the Israelite land to attack them again. During the time that Samuel was alive, Yahweh powerfully protected the Israelite people from being attacked by the Philistine army.

¹⁴The Israelite army was able to capture again the Israelite towns between Ekron and Gath that the Philistine army had captured before. The Israelites were also able to take again the other areas around those cities that the Philistine army had taken from the Israelites previously. And there was peace between the Israelites and the Amor people group.

¹⁵Samuel continued to be the leader of the Israelite people until he died. ¹⁶Every year he traveled among the cities of Bethel and Gilgal and Mizpah. In those cities he listened to disputes between people and made decisions about them. ¹⁷After he made decisions in each of those cities, he returned to his home at Ramah, and he would listen to people's disputes there, also, and make decisions about them. He built an altar at Ramah to offer sacrifices to Yahweh.

Chapter 8

¹When Samuel became old, he appointed his two sons, Joel and Abijah, to lead the people of Israel. ²They judged people's disputes in the town of Beersheba. ³But they were not like their father. They wanted only to get a lot of money. They accepted bribes, and they did not make honest decisions about people's disputes.

⁴Finally, the Israelite leaders met in the town of Ramah to discuss the matter with Samuel. ⁵They said to him, "Listen! You are now old, and your sons are not like you. Appoint a king to rule over us, like the kings that other countries have!"

⁶Samuel was very unhappy with them for requesting that, so he prayed to Yahweh about it. ⁷Yahweh replied, "Do what they have requested you to do. But do not think that you are the one whom they are really rejecting. I have been their king, and I am the one they are really rejecting. ⁸Ever since I brought them out of Egypt, they have rejected me, and they have worshiped other gods. And now they are also rejecting you in the same way. ⁹Do what they are asking you to do. But warn them about how their kings will act toward them!"

¹⁰So Samuel told those people what Yahweh had said. ¹¹He said, "If a king rules over you, this is what he will do to you: He will force many of your sons to join the army. He will make some of them run in front of the chariots to clear things out of the way. ¹²Some of them will be commanders of his soldiers, but others will work for him like slaves. He will force some of them to plow his fields and then later harvest his crops. He will force others to make his weapons and equipment for his chariots. ¹³The king will take some of your daughters from you and force them to make perfumes for him and cook food for him and bake bread for him. ¹⁴He will take your best fields and vineyards and olive tree groves, and give them to his own officials. ¹⁵He will take a tenth of your harvests and distribute it among the officers and servants who work in his palace. ¹⁶He will take from you your male and female servants, your best cattle and donkeys, and force them to work for him. ¹⁷He will take one tenth of your sheep and goats. And you will become his slaves! ¹⁸When that time comes, you will complain loudly to the king, the king that you yourselves have chosen, but Yahweh will not pay attention to you."

¹⁹But the people refused to pay attention to what Samuel said. They said, "We do not care about what you say! We want a king! ²⁰We want to be like the other nations. We want a king to rule us and to lead our soldiers when they go to fight."

²¹When Samuel told Yahweh what the people had said, ²²Yahweh replied, "Do what they are telling you to do. Give them a king!" So Samuel agreed, and then he sent the people home.

Chapter 9

¹Now there was a rich and influential man, whose name was Kish. He belonged to the tribe descended from Benjamin. Kish was son of Abiel and the grandson of Zeror. He was from the family of Bekorath and from the clan of Aphiah. ²Kish had a son whose name was Saul. He was more handsome than any of the other Israelite men, and he was a head taller than any of the other Israelite men.

³One day, some of Kish's female donkeys wandered off. So Kish told Saul, "Take one of my servants with you, and go and search for the donkeys!" ⁴So Saul did that. He took a servant, and they walked through the hill country

where the descendants of Ephraim lived, and then they went through the regions of Shalishah and Shaalim, and then they went through all the region belonging to the tribe of Benjamin, but they could not find the donkeys.

⁵Finally, they came to the region of Zuph. Then Saul said to the servant, "Let us go back home. If we do not do that, my father will stop worrying about the donkeys and start worrying about us."

⁶But the servant said, "I have another idea. There is one of God's prophets who lives in this town. People respect him very much, because everything he predicts comes true. Let us go and talk to him. Perhaps he can tell us where we can go to find the donkeys."

⁷Saul replied to the servant, "If we go to talk with him, we should give a gift to him, but what can we give to him? We have no more food in our sacks. Do we have anything else to give to him?"

⁸The servant replied, "Look at this! I have a small piece of silver. I can give this to him, and then he will tell us where to go to find the donkeys." ⁹⁻¹¹Saul said, "Very good, let us go talk to him." So they went to the town where the prophet lived. As they were going up the hill into the town, they met some young women who were coming out of the town to get some water from a well. One of them asked the women, "Is the seer in the town today?" They said that because previously, if people in Israel wanted a message from God, they would say, "Let us go to the seer," and people who now are called prophets were at that time called seers, or "those who see visions from God." ¹⁰⁻¹¹⁻¹²The women replied, "Yes, he is in the town. In fact, he is walking on the road ahead of you. He arrived in the town today because the people are going to offer a sacrifice on the altar where the people gather to worship God. ¹³If you go quickly, you will have time to talk to him before he goes there. The people who have been invited will not start eating until he arrives there and blesses the sacrifice."

¹⁴So Saul and the servant entered the town. As they went through the gates, they saw Samuel as he was coming toward them; he was on his way to where people were going to offer sacrifices.

¹⁵On the previous day, Yahweh had told Samuel, ¹⁶"At this time tomorrow, I will send a man to you from the land where the descendants of Benjamin live. Pour olive oil on his head to indicate that he will become the leader of my Israelite people. I have seen that my people are suffering because the Philistine people are oppressing them, and I have heard my people as they have called out to me for help. The man whom you anoint will rescue my people from the power of the Philistine people."

¹⁷When Samuel saw Saul, Yahweh said to him, "This is the man I told you about yesterday! He is the one who will rule my people!"

¹⁸Saul saw Samuel at the town gate, but he did not know that it was Samuel. He went over to him and asked him, "Can you tell me, where is the house of the man who sees visions from God?"

¹⁹Samuel replied, "I am that man. Go ahead of me with your servant to the place where the people make sacrifices. Both of you will eat with me today. Tomorrow morning I will tell you what you are wanting to know, and then I will send you home. ²⁰Also, do not worry anymore about those donkeys that wandered away three days ago. Someone has found them. But what you need to know is that it is you and your family that all the Israeli people are wanting!"

²¹Saul replied, "I am from the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest of all tribes! And my family is the least important family in our tribe! So why are you talking to me like this, about the Israelite people wanting me and my family?"

²²Then Samuel brought Saul and the servant into the big dining room, and told them to sit at the head of the table, indicating that he was honoring them more than he was honoring the thirty people who had been invited. ²³Then Samuel told the cook, "Bring to me the special piece of meat that I told you to set aside."

²⁴So the cook brought the leg and the meat that was on it; he set it in front of Saul. Samuel said to Saul, "Start eating it. I told the cook to save this for you, so that you could eat it at this time, when all these people whom I invited are here." So Saul and Samuel ate together.

²⁵After they finished eating, they returned to the town. Then Samuel took Saul up to the flat roof of his house, and talked with him there.

²⁶As the sun was rising the next morning, Samuel called up to Saul, "Get up! It is time for me to send you on the road back home." So Saul got up, and later Samuel and Saul left the house together.

²⁷When they got to the edge of the town, Samuel told Saul to send his servant ahead. After the servant left, Samuel said to Saul, "Stay here for a few minutes, in order that I can give you a message I received from God."

Chapter 10

¹Then Samuel took a small jar of olive oil and poured some of it on Saul's head. Then he kissed Saul on the cheek, and told him, "I am doing this because Yahweh has chosen you to be the leader of his Israelite people. ²When you leave me today, and when you arrive near Rachel's tomb at Zelzah, in the region of the tribe of Benjamin, you will meet two men. They will say to you, 'The donkeys have been found, but now your father is worrying about you, and he is asking people if they have seen you.'

³When you arrive at the large oak tree at the town of Tabor, you will see three men coming toward you. They will be on their way to worship God at Bethel. One of them will be leading three young goats, one will be carrying three loaves of bread, and one will be carrying a container of wine. ⁴They will greet you, and they will offer you two of the loaves of bread. Accept them.

⁵When you arrive at the hill where people worship God near the town of Gibeah, where there is a camp where the Philistine soldiers stay, you will meet a group of prophets who will be coming down from the altar on top of the hill. There will be people in front of them who will be playing various musical instruments: A harp, a tambourine, a flute, and a lyre. And all of them will be shouting out messages from God. ⁶At that time the Spirit of Yahweh will come upon you, and you also will shout out in the same way. You will be changed, so that you will become like a different person. ⁷After those things occur, do whatever you think is right to do, because God is with you.

⁸Then go ahead of me, down to the city of Gilgal, and wait for me for seven days. Then I will join you there to burn sacrifices and offer other sacrifices to enable you to continue to have fellowship with God. When I arrive there, I will tell you what other things you should do."

⁹As Saul started to leave there, God changed Saul's inner being. And all the things that Samuel had predicted happened on that day. ¹⁰When Saul and his servant arrived at Gibeah, they saw some prophets who were speaking messages that came directly from God. As the prophets were approaching Saul and his servant, God's Spirit came upon Saul powerfully, and he also began to shout out messages from God. ¹¹When people who had known Saul previously heard him doing what the prophets were doing, they said to each other, "What has happened to this son of Kish? Is he now really one of the prophets?"

¹²One of the men who lived there replied, "It does not matter who the parents of these other prophets are. What matters is that, amazingly, Saul is speaking messages from God." And that is why, when people are very skeptical about some report, they think about what happened to Saul and say, "Is Saul really one of the prophets?" ¹³When Saul finished speaking the messages that God gave him, he went to the place where the people offered sacrifices.

¹⁴Later, Saul's uncle saw him there, and asked him, "Where did you go?" Saul replied, "We went to look for the donkeys. When we could not find them, we came here to ask Samuel if he could tell us where they were."

¹⁵Saul's uncle replied, "What did Samuel tell you?"

¹⁶Saul replied, "He assured us that someone had found the donkeys." But he did not tell his uncle what Samuel had said about him becoming the king of Israel.

¹⁷Later Samuel summoned the people of Israel to gather at Mizpah to hear a message from Yahweh. ¹⁸After they arrived, he said to them, "This is what Yahweh, the God we Israelite people worship, says: 'I brought you Israelite people out of Egypt. I rescued your ancestors from the power of the rulers of Egypt and from all the other kings who oppressed them. ¹⁹I am the one who saves you from all your troubles and difficulties. But you have shown that you do not want to worship me. Instead, you have asked me to select a man to rule you as king. So now, your tribal and clan leaders must gather in my presence.'"

²⁰When those representatives came near to Samuel, God indicated that he had chosen someone from the tribe descended from Benjamin. ²¹Then Samuel told representatives of the tribe of Benjamin to come forward, and God indicated that from that tribe he had chosen someone from the family of Matri, and then God indicated that from the family of Matri he had chosen Saul son of Kish. But when they looked for Saul, they could not find him. ²²So they asked Yahweh, "Has someone else been chosen, perhaps?" Yahweh replied, "The man is hiding among the army equipment."

²³So they quickly went there and found Saul, and brought him in front of all the people. They could see that truly he was a head taller than anyone else. ²⁴Then Samuel said to all the people there, "This is the king whom Yahweh has chosen for you. Truly, there is no one else like him in all Israel!" All the people shouted, "May this king live a long time!"

²⁵Then Samuel told the people what things that the king would force them to do, and all the things the king was required to do. He wrote all those things in a scroll, and then he put it in a sacred place in the temple. Then Samuel sent all the people home.

²⁶When Saul returned to his home in the town of Gibeah, a group of courageous men decided to continually accompany Saul. They did that because God motivated them to do that. ²⁷But some worthless men said, "How can this man save us from our enemies?" They despised him and refused to give him any gifts to show that they would be loyal to him. But Saul did not say anything to rebuke them.

Chapter 11

¹About a month later, King Nahash of Ammon led his army across the Jordan River, and they surrounded the city of Jabesh in the region of Gilead. But all the men of Jabesh appointed someone who said to Nahash, "Make an agreement with us not to kill us, and then we will let you rule us."

²Nahash replied, "I will do that if you do one thing. Allow us to gouge out all the right eyes of your people. By doing that we will cause the people in other countries to despise all you Israelite people."

³The leaders of Jabesh replied, "Do not attack us for the next seven days. During that time, we will send messengers throughout Israel to tell them what you are demanding. If no one will help us, then we will surrender to you."

⁴So the leaders of Jabesh sent messengers throughout Israel. When the messengers came to Gibeah, which was the city where Saul lived, and they told the people there about the situation, everyone started to cry. ⁵At that time, Saul was plowing in the field. When he returned home, he asked, "Why are all the people crying?" So they told him what the messengers from Jabesh had reported.

⁶Then God's Spirit came powerfully upon Saul, and he became very angry because of what Nahash wanted to do.

⁷He took two of his oxen and killed them and cut them into pieces. Then he sent messengers carrying those pieces throughout Israel to tell people this message: "Saul says that he cut this ox in pieces, and that he will do the same thing to the oxen of anyone who refuses to come with him and Samuel to fight the army from Ammon!" Then Yahweh caused all the people of Israel to be afraid of what Saul might do to them if they did not go and help Saul. So the men all gathered together. ⁸When Saul counted them at Bezek, he saw that there were 300,000 Israelite men there, as well as thirty thousand men from the tribe of Judah.

⁹So Saul sent messengers back to the people at Jabesh to tell them, "We will rescue you by the time the weather is hot tomorrow morning." The messengers went and told the people of Jabesh, who became very happy when they heard the news. ¹⁰Then the men of Jabesh told Nahash, "Tomorrow we will surrender to you, and then you can do to us whatever you want to."

¹¹But before the sun rose the next morning, Saul and his army arrived. He divided them into three groups. They rushed into the camp of the soldiers from Ammon, and attacked them. By noontime they had killed most of them, and those who were not killed scattered. Each of them who ran away ran away alone.

¹²Then the people of Jabesh said to Samuel, "Where are those men who said that they did not want Saul to be our king? Bring them here, and we will kill them!"

¹³But Saul replied, "No, we are not going to execute anyone today, because this is the day that Yahweh has saved us Israelite people. It is a day to rejoice, not to kill anyone."

¹⁴Then Samuel said to the people, "Let us all go to Gilgal, and there we will again proclaim that Saul is our king."

¹⁵So they went to Gilgal. There, knowing that Yahweh was watching, they proclaimed that Saul was their king. Then they offered sacrifices to enable them to continue to have fellowship with Yahweh. And Saul and all the other Israelite people were very happy.

Chapter 12

¹Then Samuel said this to all the Israelite people: "I have done everything that you told me to do, and I have given you a king to rule the country. ²My own sons are grown up and with you now, but I have appointed Saul instead of one of them, and he is now your leader. I am now old, and my hair is gray. I have been your leader ever since I was a boy. ³Now tell me, while Yahweh is listening, and while the king whom he has chosen is listening, whose ox or donkey have I stolen during all those years? Whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed badly? From whom have I accepted a bribe, in order that I would ignore the evil things he had done? If I have done any of these things, tell me, and I will pay back what I owe."

⁴They replied, "No, you have never cheated anyone or oppressed anyone or accepted a bribe from anyone."

⁵Then Samuel said, "Today Yahweh can testify, and the king whom you chose can testify, that I have not taken a bribe from anyone." They replied, "Yes, Yahweh can say that he knows that is true."

⁶Samuel continued by saying, "Yahweh is the one who appointed Moses and Aaron to lead our ancestors. He is the one who brought them out of Egypt. And he is the one who will testify that what I am saying is true. ⁷Now while Yahweh is listening, stand here quietly while I accuse you and tell you that your requesting a king instead of trusting Yahweh to lead you was wrong. I will do that by reminding you of all the great miracles that Yahweh performed for you and your ancestors.

⁸Many years after our ancestor Jacob went to Egypt, his descendants pleaded to Yahweh to help them. So Yahweh sent Moses and Aaron to them, and they led our ancestors out of Egypt, and eventually they settled in this land.

⁹But our ancestors soon forgot about Yahweh, their God. So he allowed Sisera, the commander of the army from Hazor, to defeat them. He also allowed the Philistines and the army of the king of Moab to fight our ancestors and defeat them. ¹⁰Then our ancestors pleaded with Yahweh again to help them. They admitted, 'Yahweh, we have sinned, and we have forsaken you. We have worshiped idols that represent the god Baal and the goddess Ashtoreth. But if you rescue us from our enemies, we will worship you only.' ¹¹So Yahweh sent men such as Gideon, Barak, Jephthah, and me to save you. And as a result, you did not have to worry about any enemies attacking you.

¹²But now, when King Nahash of Ammon came with his army to attack you, you were afraid. So you came to me, and said, 'We want a king to rule us,' even though Yahweh was already your king! ¹³So now, look, here is the king whom you have chosen. You asked for a king, and Yahweh has now appointed a king for you. ¹⁴If you honor

Yahweh and if you serve him, and if you listen to what he says and obey what he commands, and if you and the king who rules over you do what Yahweh your God wants you to do, things will go well for you all. ¹⁵But if you do not listen to what Yahweh says, if you disobey what he commands, then he will punish you, just as he punished our ancestors.

¹⁶Now stand here quietly and see the great thing that Yahweh is about to do. ¹⁷You know that it does not rain at this time of the year, during the time when you harvest wheat. But I will ask Yahweh to send thunder and lightning and rain today. When he does that, you will realize that Yahweh considers that you have done a very wicked thing by requesting a king."

¹⁸Then Samuel prayed to Yahweh, and Yahweh caused it to thunder and lightning and rain. So all the people became very afraid of Yahweh and of Samuel.

¹⁹They cried out to Samuel, "Pray for us! We have added to our previous sins by requesting a king! Pray to Yahweh, your God, in order that we will not die because of having done that!"

²⁰Samuel replied, "Do not be afraid! You have done this evil thing, but do not stop doing the things that Yahweh wants you to do. Instead, serve Yahweh with your whole inner being. ²¹Do not abandon Yahweh and worship useless idols. They cannot help you or save you from your enemies, because they are truly useless. ²²Yahweh decided to make us his people. So he will not abandon us people whom he has chosen, because he would injure his own reputation of being completely faithful if he did that. ²³But as for me, I have solemnly promised that I will not sin against Yahweh by ceasing to pray for you. And I will continue to teach you what things are good and right for you to do. ²⁴But you must honor Yahweh and serve him with your whole inner being. Never forget all the great things that he has done for you. ²⁵If you keep doing wicked things, he will get rid of you and your king!"

Chapter 13

¹Saul was thirty years old when he began to reign. He ruled for forty years.

²Some years after he became king, he chose three thousand men from the Israelite army to go with him to fight the Philistines. Then he sent the other soldiers back home. Of the men he chose, two thousand stayed with Saul at Micmash and in the hill country near Bethel, and a thousand stayed with Saul's son Jonathan at Gibeah, in the area of the tribe of Benjamin.

³Jonathan and the men who were with him attacked the Philistine soldiers who were camped at Geba. The other Philistines heard about that. So Saul realized that the army of Philistia would probably come to fight the Israelites again. So Saul sent messengers to blow trumpets throughout Israel to gather the people together and proclaim to them, "All you Hebrews need to hear that now the Philistines will start a war with us!" ⁴The messengers told the rest of the army to gather together with Saul at Gilgal. And all the people in Israel heard the news. People were saying, "Saul's army has attacked the Philistine camp, with the result that now the Philistines hate us Israelites very much."

⁵The Philistines gathered together and were given equipment to fight the Israelites. The Philistines had three thousand chariots and six thousand chariot drivers. Their soldiers seemed to be as many as grains of sand on the seashore. They went up and set up their tents at Micmash, to the east of Beth Aven, that is, Bethel. ⁶The Philistines attacked the Israelites very strongly, and the Israelite soldiers realized that they were in a very bad situation. So many of the Israelite soldiers hid in caves and holes in the ground, or among the rocks, or in pits, or in wells.

⁷Some of them crossed the Jordan River and went to the area where the descendants of Gad lived and to the region of Gilead.

But Saul stayed at Gilgal. All the soldiers who were with him were shaking because they were so afraid. ⁸Saul waited seven days, which was the number of days that Samuel had told him to wait for him. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal during that time, so many of the men in Saul's army began to leave him and run away. ⁹So Saul said to the soldiers, "Bring to me an animal to be completely burned on the altar and one for the offering to enable us

to continue to have fellowship with God." So the men did that. ¹⁰And just as he was finished burning these offerings, Samuel arrived. Saul went to greet him.

¹¹Samuel saw what Saul had done, and he said to Saul, "Why have you done this?" Saul replied, "I saw that my men were leaving me and running away, and that you did not come here during the time that you said that you would come, and that the Philistine army was gathering together at Micmash.

¹²So I thought, 'The Philistine army is going to attack us here at Gilgal, and I have not yet asked Yahweh to bless us.' So I felt it was necessary to offer the burnt offerings to seek God's blessings."

¹³Samuel replied, "What you did was very foolish! You have not obeyed what Yahweh, your God, commanded about sacrifices. If you had obeyed him, God would have allowed you and your descendants to rule Israel for a long time.

¹⁴But now because of what you have done, after you die none of your descendants will continue to rule. Yahweh is seeking a man to be king who will be just the kind of person that he wants him to be, so that he can appoint him to be the leader of his people. Yahweh will do this because you have not obeyed what he commanded."

¹⁵Then Samuel left Gilgal and went up to Gibeah. Saul stayed at Gilgal with his soldiers. There were only about six hundred of them left who did not run away.

¹⁶Saul and his son Jonathan and the soldiers who were with them went to the city of Geba in the area of the tribe of Benjamin and set up their tents there. The Philistine army set up their tents at Micmash. ¹⁷Three groups of Philistia soldiers soon left the place where their army was staying, and went and made raids on Israelite towns. One group went north toward the city of Ophrah in the region of Shual. ¹⁸One group went west to the city of Beth Horon. The third group went toward the Israelite border, above Zeboim Valley, near the wilderness.

¹⁹At that time, there were no men in Israel who were blacksmiths. The people of Philistia would not permit the Israelites to have men who could do that, because they were afraid that they would make iron swords and spears for the Hebrews to use. ²⁰So whenever the Israelites needed to sharpen the blades of their plows, or picks, or axes, or sickles, they were forced to take those things to a Philistine man who could sharpen those things. ²¹They needed to pay about eight grams of silver for the sharpening of their plow blades and their picks. They needed to pay about four grams of silver for the sharpening of their axes or sickles, or to straighten the goads used to drive the oxen.

²²So because the Israelites could not make swords and spears out of iron, at the time when the Israelites fought against the army of Philistia. Saul and Jonathan were the only Israelite men who had swords. None of the others had a sword. They had only bows and arrows and some kinds of other weapons.

²³Before the battle started, some Philistine soldiers went to the mountain pass outside Micmash to guard it.

Chapter 14

¹One day, Jonathan said to the young man who carried his weapons, "Come with me; we will go over to where the Philistine soldiers have put up their tents." So they went, but Jonathan did not tell his father what they were going to do.

²On that day, Saul and the six hundred soldiers who were with him were sitting around a pomegranate tree at a place where the people threshed grain, near Gibeah. ³Ahijah the priest was also there, one of those who wore the sacred apron. Ahijah son of Ahitub, who was a brother of Ichabod. Ichabod and Ahitub were the sons of Phinehas son of Eli, who had been Yahweh's priest at Shiloh.

Now no one knew that Jonathan had left the Israelite camp.

⁴Jonathan planned that he and the young man would go through a narrow pass to get to where the Philistine army was. The cliff on one side of the pass was named Bozez, and the other cliff was named Seneh. ⁵One cliff faced north toward Michmash, and the cliff on the other side faced south toward the town of Geba.

⁶Jonathan said to the young man who carried his weapons, "Come with me. We will go to where those pagans have set up their tents. Perhaps Yahweh will help us. It does not matter whether we are only two men or many people; nothing can stop Yahweh from enabling us to defeat them."

⁷The young man who was carrying Jonathan's weapons said, "Do what you think is the best thing for us to do. I will be helping you."

⁸Then Jonathan said, "Very well, come with me. We will cross the valley to where the Philistine army is, and allow them to see us. ⁹If they then say to us, 'You two stay there until we come down to you,' we will stay there and not go up to them. ¹⁰But if they say to us, 'Come up here,' that will show us that Yahweh will enable us to defeat them. Then we will go up and fight them."

¹¹When the two of them crossed the valley, the Philistine soldiers saw them coming. They said, "Look! The Hebrews are crawling out of the holes in which they have been hiding!" ¹²Then the Philistine soldiers who were closest to Jonathan and the young man who carried his weapons said, "Come up here, and we will teach you something about how to fight!"

Jonathan said to the young man who was with him, "Come behind me and climb up, because Yahweh is going to help us to defeat them!" ¹³So Jonathan climbed up, using his hands and his feet because it was very steep. The young man climbed up following him. As Jonathan climbed, he struck and killed many Philistine soldiers, and the young man who was with him killed many more as he followed behind Jonathan. ¹⁴In that first battle the two of them killed about twenty Philistine soldiers in an area that was about 1/5 of a hectare.

¹⁵Then all the other Philistine soldiers, the ones in the camp and the ones who had been attacking the Israelite towns, ones who were out in the field much closer, panicked. Then God caused the ground to shake, and they all became terrified.

¹⁶Saul's lookouts were in the town of Gibeah in the region of the tribe of Benjamin. They saw that the soldiers of the Philistine army were running away in all directions. ¹⁷Saul realized that some of his soldiers must have attacked the Philistine army. So he said to the soldiers who were with him, "Check to see if any of our men are not here." So they checked, and found out that Jonathan and the man who carried his weapons were gone.

¹⁸So Saul said to Ahijah the priest, "Bring the sacred chest here." For the Israelite people had been carrying the sacred chest with them. ¹⁹But while Saul was talking to the priest, he saw that the Philistine soldiers were becoming more panicked. So Saul said to Ahijah, "Do not bring the sacred chest at this time."

²⁰Then Saul gathered his men and they went toward the battle. They found that the Philistine soldiers were so confused that they were striking each other with their swords. ²¹Before that, some of the Hebrew men had deserted their army and gone to join with the Philistine army. But now those men revolted and joined with Saul and Jonathan and the other Israelite soldiers. ²²Some of the Israelite soldiers had previously run away and hidden in the mountains where the tribe of Ephraim lived. But when they heard that the Philistine soldiers were running away, they came down and joined the other Israelite soldiers and pursued the Philistine soldiers. ²³So Yahweh rescued the Israelites on that day. The Israelite soldiers continued to pursue their enemies beyond the town of Beth Aven.

²⁴Before Saul's soldiers went to the battle, Saul declared to them solemnly, "I do not want any of you to eat any food before this evening, before we have defeated all our enemies. If anyone eats anything, Yahweh will curse him." So none of the Israeli soldiers ate any food, and they became faint because they were very hungry.

²⁵The Israelite army went into the forest, and they found honeycombs on the ground, but they did not eat any honey. ²⁶They were afraid to eat any, because they had solemnly promised that they would not eat any food. ²⁷But

Jonathan had left the camp very early in the morning and so he did not hear that his father had bound the people by a solemn promise. When he saw a honeycomb, he dipped the end of his walking stick into it and ate some honey. After he ate the honey, he felt stronger.

²⁸But one of the Israelite soldiers saw him and said to him, "Your father solemnly declared to us that Yahweh would curse anyone who ate any food today. So now we are very tired and weak from being hungry because we obeyed him." ²⁹Jonathan exclaimed, "My father had caused trouble for all of us! See how refreshed I am after eating a little honey! ³⁰If he had permitted all of us to eat from the food we took from our enemies while we were pursuing them, we would have been able to kill many more of their soldiers!"

³¹The Israelites pursued and killed Philistine soldiers all that day, from Micmash town then going west to Aijalon. But they continued to become more weak from being hungry. ³²They had taken many sheep and cattle that the Philistine soldiers had abandoned. Now, because they were extremely hungry, they butchered some of those animals and ate the meat without draining the blood from the animals. ³³One of the soldiers told Saul, "Look! The men are sinning against Yahweh by eating meat that still has blood in it!"

Saul replied to the men who were near him, "They have disobeyed Yahweh! Roll a large stone over here!"

³⁴After they did that, he said to those men, "Go and tell all the soldiers that each of them must bring an ox or a sheep to me, and kill it here on this stone, and drain the blood before he eats any of the meat. They should not sin against Yahweh by eating meat from some animal without draining its blood." So that night all the soldiers brought animals and slaughtered them there. ³⁵Then Saul built an altar to worship Yahweh. That was the first time that he built an altar for Yahweh.

³⁶Then Saul said to the Israelite soldiers, "Let us chase the Philistine soldiers tonight. We can attack them all night. We will not allow any of them to escape alive."

The Israelite soldiers answered, "We will do whatever you think is the best thing for us to do."

But the priest said, "We should ask Yahweh what he thinks we should do." ³⁷So Saul asked God, "Should we chase the Philistine soldiers? Will you enable us to defeat them?" But God did not answer Saul that day.

³⁸Then Saul summoned all the leaders of his army. He said to them, "I am sure that God has not answered me because someone has sinned. We must find out what sin someone has committed. ³⁹Yahweh has rescued us from the Philistine army. Just as surely as Yahweh is alive, whoever has sinned must be executed. Even if it is my son Jonathan who has sinned, he must be executed."

His men knew who was guilty, but none of them said anything to Saul. ⁴⁰Then Saul said to all the Israelite soldiers, "You stand on one side. My son Jonathan and I will stand on the other side."

His men replied, "Do whatever you think is best." ⁴¹Then Saul prayed to Yahweh, the Israelites' God, "Tell me who is guilty and who is not guilty." Then the priest cast lots, and they indicated that it was either Jonathan or Saul who was the guilty one, and that the other men were not guilty. ⁴²Then Saul said to the priest, "Throw the stones again to indicate which of us two is guilty." So he did, and the stones indicated that Jonathan was the guilty one.

⁴³Then Saul said to Jonathan, "Tell me what you have done that was wrong."

Jonathan replied, "I ate a little bit of honey. It was only a little bit that was on the end of my stick. Do I deserve to be executed because of doing that?" ⁴⁴Saul replied, "Yes, you must be executed! I hope that God will strike me and kill me if you are not executed for having done that!"

⁴⁵But the Israelite soldiers said to Saul, "Jonathan has won a great victory for all us Israelites. Should he be executed for eating some honey? Certainly not! Just as surely as Yahweh lives, we will not allow you to injure him in any manner, because today God helped Jonathan to kill many soldiers of the Philistine army!"

So by saying that the Israelite soldiers rescued Jonathan, and he was not executed. ⁴⁶Then Saul ordered his soldiers to stop pursuing the Philistine army, so the Philistine soldiers returned to their homes.

⁴⁷After Saul became the ruler, he fought against enemies on every side. He fought against Moab, the Ammonites, Edom, the kings of Zobah, and the Philistines. Wherever the Israelite army fought, they defeated their enemies.

⁴⁸Saul's army fought bravely and defeated the very tall descendants of Amalek. His army rescued the Israelites from those who had plundered them.

⁴⁹Saul's sons were Jonathan, Ishbosheth, and Malki-Shua. He also had two daughters, Merab and her younger sister Michal. ⁵⁰Saul's wife was Ahinoam, the daughter of Ahimaaz. The commander of Saul's army was Abner son of Saul's uncle Ner. ⁵¹Saul's father Kish and Abner's father Ner were both sons of Abiel.

⁵²All the time that Saul was alive, his army fought against the Philistine army. And whenever Saul saw a young man who was brave and strong, he forced him to join his army.

Chapter 15

¹One day Samuel said to Saul, "Yahweh sent me to appoint you to be the king of the Israelite people. So now listen to this message from Yahweh: ²Yahweh, commander of the angel armies, has declared this: 'I am going to punish the descendants of Amalek for attacking the Israelite people after the Israelites left Egypt. ³So now go with your army and attack the Amalek people group. Destroy them completely—destroy them and everything that belongs to them—the men and women, their children and infants, their cattle and sheep and camels and donkeys. Do not spare any of them!'"

⁴So Saul summoned the army, and they gathered at Telaim town. There were 200,000 soldiers. Ten thousand of them were from Judah, and the others were from the other Israelite tribes. ⁵Then Saul went with his army to a town where some of the Amalek people group lived. The army prepared to attack them suddenly by hiding in the valley. ⁶Then Saul sent this message to the Kenite people group who lived in that area: "You acted kindly toward all our Israelite ancestors when they left Egypt. But we are going to kill all of the Amalek people group, because they opposed our ancestors. So move away from where the Amalek people group live. If you do not move away, you will be killed when they are killed." So when the Kenite people group heard that, they immediately left that area.

⁷Then Saul's army slaughtered the Amalek people group, from the town of Havilah in the east to the town of Shur in the west. Shur was at the border between Israel and Egypt. ⁸Saul's army captured Agag, the king of the Amalek people group, but they killed everyone else. ⁹They not only spared Agag, but they also took the best sheep and goats and cattle. They took everything that was good. They destroyed only the animals that they considered to be worthless.

¹⁰Then Yahweh said to Samuel, ¹¹"I am sorry that I appointed Saul to be your king, because he has stopped worshiping me. He has not obeyed what I commanded him to do." Samuel was very disturbed when he heard that, and he cried out to Yahweh all that night.

¹²Early the next morning, Samuel got up and went to talk with Saul. But someone told Samuel, "Saul went to the city of Carmel, where he has set up a monument to honor himself. Now he has left there and gone down to Gilgal."

¹³When Samuel arrived at Gilgal and came to Saul, Saul said, "I wish that Yahweh may bless you! I have obeyed what Yahweh told me to do."

¹⁴But Samuel replied, "If that is true, why is it that I hear cattle mooing and I hear sheep bleating?"

¹⁵Saul replied, "The soldiers took them from the Amalek people group. They saved the best sheep and cattle, in order to offer them as sacrifices to Yahweh, your God. But we have completely destroyed all the others."

¹⁶Samuel said to Saul, "Stop talking! Allow me to tell you what Yahweh said to me last night."

Saul replied, "Tell me what he said." ¹⁷Samuel said, "Previously you did not think that you were important. But now you have become the leader of the tribes of Israel. Yahweh appointed you to be their king. ¹⁸And Yahweh sent you to do something for him. He said to you, 'Go and get rid of all those sinful people, the Amalek people group. Attack them and kill all of them.' ¹⁹So why did you not obey Yahweh? Why did you take the plunder for yourself instead of destroying it? You have done what Yahweh says is evil, and he knows it!"

²⁰Saul replied to Samuel, "I did what Yahweh sent me to do! I brought back King Agag, but we killed everyone else!

²¹My men brought back only the best sheep and cattle and other things, in order to sacrifice them to Yahweh your God here at Gilgal."

²²But Samuel replied,

"Which do you think pleases Yahweh more, animals that are completely burned on the altar and other sacrifices,

or people obeying him?

It is better to obey Yahweh than to offer sacrifices to him.

It is better to pay attention to what he says than to burn the fat of rams, which God said should be sacrificed to him.

²³To rebel against God is as sinful as doing sorcery,
and being stubborn is as sinful as worshiping idols.

So, because you disobeyed what Yahweh told you to do,

he has declared that you will no longer be king."

²⁴Then Saul said to Samuel, "Yes, I have sinned. I disobeyed what you told me to do, which is what Yahweh commanded. I did that because I was afraid of what my men would say if I did not do what they wanted. So I did what they demanded. ²⁵But now, please forgive me for having sinned. And come back with me to where the people are in order that I may worship Yahweh."

²⁶But Samuel replied, "No, I will not go back with you. You have rejected what Yahweh commanded you to do. So he has rejected you, and declared that you will no longer be the king of Israel. ²⁷So I do not want to talk anymore with you, either."

As Samuel turned to leave, Saul tried to stop him by grabbing the edge of Samuel's robe, and it tore. ²⁸Samuel said to him, "Today Yahweh has torn away from you the kingdom of Israel. He will appoint someone else to be king, someone who is a better man than you are. ²⁹And since the one who is the glorious God of the Israelite people does not lie, he will not change his mind. Humans sometimes change their minds, but God does not do that, because he is not a human."

³⁰Then Saul pleaded again. He said, "I know that I have sinned. But please honor me in front of the leaders of the Israelite people and in front of all the other Israelite people by coming back to them with me in order that I may worship Yahweh your God." ³¹So Samuel finally agreed to do that, and they went together back to where the people were, and Saul worshiped Yahweh there.

³²Then Samuel said, "Bring King Agag to me." So they brought Agag to him. Agag was brought before him, and he was locked in chains. He thought, "Surely the bitterness of death is past!"

³³But Samuel said to him,

"You have killed the sons of many women with your sword,

so now your mother will no longer have a son."

And Samuel cut Agag into pieces with his sword, there at Gilgal, where the Israelites worshiped Yahweh.

³⁴Then Samuel left there and returned to his home in Ramah, and Saul went to his home in Gibeah. ³⁵Samuel never saw Saul again, but he was very sad about what Saul had done. And Yahweh was very sorry that he had appointed Saul to be the king of Israel.

Chapter 16

¹Finally, Yahweh said to Samuel, "I have decided that I will not allow Saul to continue to be the king. So you should not keep feeling sad about what he has done. Put some olive oil in a small container and go to Bethlehem to anoint someone with the oil, and appoint him to be king. I am sending you there to a man named Jesse, because I have chosen one of his sons to be the king of Israel."

²But Samuel said, "I am afraid to go. If Saul hears that I have appointed someone else to be king, he will kill me." Yahweh answered, "Take with you a female cow that has not calved, and say to people that you have come to kill it and offer it as a sacrifice to me.

³Invite Jesse to come to the sacrifice. When he comes, I will show you what you should do. And I will show you which of his sons I have chosen to be the king. Then you should pour the olive oil over him to indicate that I have chosen him to be the king."

⁴Samuel did what Yahweh told him to do. He went to Bethlehem. When the town leaders came to him, they trembled, because they were worried that Samuel had come to rebuke them about something. One of them asked him, "Have you come to speak peacefully to us?"

⁵Samuel replied, "Yes. I have come peacefully, to make a sacrifice to Yahweh. Set yourself apart for the honor of Yahweh, and then come with me to where they will offer the sacrifice." Then Samuel set apart Jesse to do what honors God, along with his sons, and then he invited them to the sacrifice.

⁶When they arrived there, Samuel looked at Jesse's oldest son Eliab, and thought, "Surely this is the one whom Yahweh has appointed be king!"

⁷But Yahweh said to Samuel, "Do not think that he is the one whom I have chosen because of his being handsome and very tall, because I have not chosen him. I do not evaluate people as people do. You people evaluate people by their appearance, but I evaluate people by what is in their inner beings."

⁸Then Jesse told his next oldest son Abinadab to step forward and walk in front of Samuel. But when he did that, Samuel said, "Yahweh has not chosen this one, either." ⁹Then Jesse told his next oldest son Shammah to step forward. He stepped forward, but Samuel said, "Yahweh has not chosen this one, either." ¹⁰Similarly, Jesse told his other four sons to walk in front of Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse, "Yahweh has not chosen any of these sons of yours." ¹¹Then Samuel asked Jesse, "Do you have any other sons?" Jesse replied, "My youngest son is not here; he is out in the fields taking care of the sheep." Samuel said, "Send someone to bring him here! We will not sit down to eat until he gets here."

¹²So Jesse sent someone to bring David there. And when David arrived, Samuel saw that he was handsome and healthy, and had bright eyes. Then Yahweh said, "This is the one whom I have chosen; anoint him to be king."

¹³So as David stood there in front of his older brothers, Samuel took the container of oil that he had brought and poured some of it on David's head to set him apart to serve God. After they all ate, Samuel left there and returned to Ramah. But Yahweh's Spirit came on David powerfully, and stayed with David for the rest of his life.

¹⁴But Yahweh's Spirit left Saul. Instead of his Spirit staying with Saul, Yahweh sent an evil spirit to Saul to terrify him repeatedly.

¹⁵One of his servants said to him, "It is evident that an evil spirit sent by God is terrifying you. ¹⁶So we suggest that you allow us your servants here to search for a man who plays the harp well. He can play the harp whenever the evil spirit bothers you. Then you will calm down and you will be well again."

¹⁷Saul replied, "Fine, find for me a man who can play the harp well, and bring him to me."

¹⁸One of his servants said to him, "A man named Jesse, in the city of Bethlehem, has a son who plays the harp very well. Furthermore, he is a brave man, and is a capable soldier. He is handsome and he always speaks wisely. And Yahweh always protects him."

¹⁹So Saul sent some messengers to Jesse. He told them to say to Jesse, "Send your son David to me, the one who takes care of sheep." ²⁰So after they went and told that to Jesse, he agreed and got a young goat, a container of wine, a donkey on which he put some loaves of bread and gave them to David to take to Saul as a present.

²¹Then David went to Saul and started to work for him. Saul liked David very much, and he became the man who carried Saul's weapons when Saul went to fight in battles. ²²Then Saul sent a messenger to go to Jesse and tell him, "I am pleased with David. Please let him stay here and work for me."

²³Jesse agreed, and after that, whenever the evil spirit whom God sent tormented Saul, David played the harp. Then Saul would become calm, and the evil spirit would leave him.

Chapter 17

¹The Philistines gathered their army to fight the Israelite army. They gathered together near Sokoh, in the area where the descendants of Judah lived. They set up their tents at Ephes Dammim, which is between Sokoh and Azekah. ²Saul gathered the Israelite army near Elah Valley, and they set up their tents. Then they all took their places, ready to fight the Philistines. ³So the Philistine and Israelite armies faced each other. They were on two hills, with a valley between them.

⁴Then a great warrior, three meters tall, came out from the Philistine camp. He was Goliath, from the city of Gath.

⁵He wore a helmet made of bronze to protect his head, and he wore a coat made of metal plates to protect his body. The metal coat weighed about fifty-five kilograms. ⁶He wore bronze guards on his legs. He had a small bronze spear fastened on his back. ⁷He also had a big spear. It had a cord on it to enable him to throw it better. Its iron head weighed about seven kilograms. A soldier carrying Goliath's huge shield walked in front of him.

⁸Goliath stood there and shouted to the Israelite army, "I can see you are lined up for battle, but you will not fight me. You can see that I am a Philistine soldier who is ready to fight, but you are just the slaves of Saul. Choose one man who can fight for all of you and send him down here to me! ⁹If he fights with me and kills me, then my fellow Philistines will all become your slaves. But if I defeat him and kill him, then you Israelites will all become our slaves.

¹⁰None of you Israelite men can defeat me! Send me a man who will fight with me!" ¹¹When Saul and all the Israelite soldiers heard that, they were very terrified.

¹²Now David son of Jesse was from the clan of Ephrath. He lived in Bethlehem, in the region of the tribe of Judah. Jesse had eight sons. When Saul was king, Jesse had already become a very old man. ¹³Jesse's three oldest sons, Eliab and Abinadab and Shammah, had gone with Saul to fight the Philistines. ¹⁴David was Jesse's youngest son. While his three oldest brothers were with Saul, ¹⁵David went back and forth. Sometimes he went to Saul's camp, and sometimes he stayed in Bethlehem to take care of his father's sheep.

¹⁶For forty days Goliath came out from the Philistine camp and stood there mocking the Israelite army. He kept telling the Israelites to choose one man to fight with him. He did this twice each day, in the morning and in the evening.

¹⁷One day, Jesse said to David, "Here is a sack of roasted grain and ten loaves of bread. Take these quickly to your older brothers. ¹⁸And here are ten large chunks of cheese. Take them to their commander. And see how things are going with your older brothers. Then if they are safe, bring back something to show they are all right.

¹⁹Your brothers are with Saul and all the other Israelite soldiers, camped alongside Elah Valley, preparing to fight the Philistines." ²⁰So David arranged for another shepherd to take care of the sheep. Early the next morning he took the food and went to the Israelite camp, as Jesse told him to do. He arrived there just as the Israelite soldiers were forming their ranks and going out to the battlefield. As they went, they were shouting a war cry. ²¹The Philistine army and the Israelite army stood on the hillsides, facing each other, ready for the battle. ²²David gave the food to the man who was taking care of the war equipment. He told him to take care of the food that he brought, and then he went and greeted his older brothers. ²³While he was talking with them, he saw Goliath coming out from among the Philistine soldiers, shouting to the Israelites, challenging them to send a man to fight him. David heard what Goliath was saying. ²⁴When all the Israelite soldiers saw Goliath, they were terrified and started to run away. ²⁵They were saying to each other, "Look at him coming up toward us! And listen to him as he defies us Israelites! The king says that he will give a big reward to whoever kills this man. He also says that he will give his daughter to that man for him to marry her, and that he will no longer require that man's family to pay taxes."

²⁶David talked to some of the men who were standing near him. He said, "This Philistine—this uncircumcised man—should not be mocking the all-powerful God. What will be given to the person who kills this Philistine and stops him from shaming us Israelites?"

²⁷The men told him the same thing that the other men had said, about what the king would do for anyone who killed Goliath.

²⁸But when David's oldest brother Eliab heard David talking to the men, he was angry. He said to David, "Why have you come down here? Is someone taking care of those few sheep that you left in the desert? I know you are just a troublemaking boy! You just want to watch the battle!"

²⁹David replied, "I have done nothing wrong? I was merely asking a question!" ³⁰Then he walked over to another man and asked him the same question, but the man gave him the same answer. Each time he asked someone, he received the same answer. ³¹Finally, someone told King Saul what David had asked, and Saul sent someone to bring David to him.

³²David told King Saul, "No one should worry because of that Philistine man. I will go and fight with him!"

³³Saul said to David, "You are only a young man, and he has been a very powerful soldier all his life. So you are not able to go and fight with him!"

³⁴David replied, "I have been taking care of my father's sheep for many years. Whenever a lion or a bear came and carried away a lamb, ³⁵I went after it and attacked it and rescued the lamb from the animal's mouth. Then I grabbed the animal by its jaw and struck it and killed it. ³⁶I have killed both lions and bears. And I will do the same to this heathen Philistine, because he has defied the army of the all-powerful God! ³⁷Yahweh has rescued me from the claws of lions and bears, and he will rescue me from this Philistine!" Then Saul said to David, "All right, go and fight him, and I hope that Yahweh will help you!"

³⁸Then Saul gave to David his own clothes that he always wore in battles, and he gave him a bronze helmet and a coat made of metal plates. ³⁹David put these things on. Then he fastened his sword over them and tried to walk. But he could not walk, because he was not accustomed to wearing those things. So David said to Saul, "I cannot fight wearing all these things, because I am not accustomed to wearing them!" So he took them off.

⁴⁰Then he took his walking staff and he picked up five smooth stones out of a streambed. He put them in the pouch of his shoulder bag. Then he put his sling in his hand and started walking toward Goliath.

⁴¹Goliath walked toward David, with the soldier who was carrying his shield walking in front of him. ⁴²When he got near David, he looked at David closely. He saw that David had a handsome face and healthy body, but that he was only a young man. So he sneered at David. ⁴³He said to David, "Are you coming to me with a stick because you think that I am a dog?" Then he called out to his gods to harm David. ⁴⁴He said to David, "Come here to me, and I will kill you and give your dead body to the birds and wild animals to eat!"

⁴⁵David replied, "You are coming to me with a sword and a spear and a small spear. But I am coming to you with the authority of Yahweh, commander of the angel armies. He is the God whom the army of Israel worships, and he is the God whom you have defied. ⁴⁶Today Yahweh will enable me to defeat you. I will strike you down and cut off your head. And we Israelites will kill many Philistine soldiers and give their bodies to the birds and wild animals to eat. And everyone in the world will hear about it and know that we Israelite people worship an all-powerful God.

⁴⁷And everyone here will know that Yahweh can rescue people without a sword or a spear. Yahweh always wins his battles, and he will enable us to defeat all of you Philistines."

⁴⁸As Goliath came closer to attack David, David ran quickly toward him. ⁴⁹He put his hand into his shoulder bag and took out one stone. He put in his sling and hurled it toward Goliath. The stone hit Goliath in the forehead and cracked his skull, and he fell facedown to the ground.

⁵⁰⁻⁵¹Then David ran and stood over Goliath. He pulled Goliath's sword from its sheath and killed him with it, and then cut off his head. In that way David defeated the Philistine without having his own sword. He used only a sling and a stone!

When the other Philistines saw that their great warrior was dead, they ran away. ⁵¹⁻⁵²The Israelite men shouted and ran after them. They pursued them all the way to the city of Gath and to the gates of the city of Ekron. They struck them down as they went, with the result that dead Philistines were lying on the road all the way from Shaaraim to Gath and Ekron. ⁵³When the Israelites returned from chasing the Philistines, they took everything valuable from the Philistine camp. ⁵⁴David later took the head of Goliath to Jerusalem, but he kept Goliath's weapons in his own tent.

⁵⁵As Saul watched David going toward Goliath, he said to Abner, the commander of his army, "Abner, whose son is that young man?" Abner replied, "As sure as you are alive, I do not know."

⁵⁶Then the king said, "Find out whose son he is!"

⁵⁷Later, as David returned from killing Goliath, Abner took him to Saul. David was carrying Goliath's head.

⁵⁸Saul asked him, "Young man, whose son are you?" David replied, "Sir, I am the son of your servant Jesse, who lives in Bethlehem."

Chapter 18

¹After David finished talking with Saul, he met Saul's son, Jonathan. Jonathan immediately liked David; in fact, he began to love him. ²From that day, Saul kept David with him to serve him; he did not let him return home.

³Because he loved David so much, Jonathan made a solemn agreement with David. They promised each other that they would always be friends. ⁴Jonathan took off his own outer robe and gave it to David. He also gave David his soldier's tunic, his sword, his bow and arrows, and his belt.

⁵David went wherever Saul sent him. And whatever Saul told him to do, David did it very successfully. As a result, Saul appointed David as a commander in the army. All the officers and other men in the army approved of that.

⁶But when the men in the army were returning home after David had killed Goliath, Israelite women came out from many cities and towns. They greeted King Saul while they were singing and dancing very joyfully, playing tambourines and lyres. ⁷As they danced, they sang this song:

"Saul has killed a thousand enemy soldiers,
But David has killed ten thousand of them."

⁸When Saul heard them singing that, he did not like it. He became very angry. He said to himself, "They are saying that David killed ten thousand men, but that I have killed only one thousand. Soon they will want to make him their king!" ⁹From that time, Saul watched David very closely because he was suspicious that David would try to become king.

¹⁰The next day, an evil spirit sent by God suddenly took control of Saul. He began to act like a madman, inside his house. David was playing the lyre for him, as he did every day. Saul was holding a spear in his hand, ¹¹and he hurled it at David, thinking, "I will fasten David to the wall with the spear!" He did that two times, but David jumped aside both times.

¹²Because it became evident that Yahweh had abandoned Saul but that he was helping David, Saul was afraid of David. ¹³So he appointed David as a commander of a thousand soldiers and sent David away from him, hoping that David would be killed in a battle. But when David led his soldiers in their battles, ¹⁴he always had great success, because Yahweh was helping him. ¹⁵When Saul heard that David and his soldiers were very successful, he became more afraid of David. ¹⁶But all the people of Israel and of Judah loved David, because he led the soldiers very successfully in the battles.

¹⁷One day Saul said to David, "I am ready to give you my oldest daughter, Merab, to be your wife. I will do that if you serve me bravely by fighting battles for Yahweh against the Philistines." He said that because he thought, "I will not try to get rid of David by myself. I will allow the Philistines to do that."

¹⁸But David said to Saul, "I am not a very important person, and my family is not very important. Also my clan is not a very important Israelite clan. So I do not deserve to become your son-in-law." ¹⁹So, when it was time for Merab to be given to David to become his wife, instead, Saul gave her to a man named Adriel, from Meholah.

²⁰However, Saul's other daughter, Michal, fell in love with David. When they told Saul about that, he was pleased.

²¹He thought, "I will give Michal to him, in order that she may trap him, and the Philistines will be able to kill him." So he said to David, "You can marry Michal," and by saying that, he indicated for the second time that David would become his son-in-law.

²²Saul told his servants, "Talk to David privately, and say to him, 'Listen, the king is pleased with you, and all of us his servants love you. So now we think that you should marry Michal and become the king's son-in-law.'"

²³So they said that to David. But David said, "It would be a great honor to become the king's son-in-law. But I do not think that I should do that, because I am only a poor and insignificant man."

²⁴Saul's servant told him what David had said. ²⁵Saul replied, "Go and say to David, 'In order for the king to allow you to marry Michal, he wants you to kill one hundred Philistines and to cut off their foreskins and bring the foreskins to him to prove that you have killed them. In that way he will get revenge on his enemies.'" But what Saul really wanted was that the Philistines would kill David while he was trying to kill them.

²⁶When the servants told that to David, he was very pleased that he could become the king's son-in-law by doing that. The king had said how many days he would allow for David to do that. ²⁷But before that time ended, David and his men went and killed, not one hundred, but two hundred Philistines! He brought their foreskins to Saul, and counted them while Saul was watching, in order to prove that he had fulfilled what the king required so that he could become Saul's son-in-law. So then Saul was obligated to allow David to marry his daughter Michal.

²⁸But when Saul realized that Yahweh was helping David, and that his daughter loved David, ²⁹he became more afraid of David. So as long as Saul lived, he was David's enemy.

³⁰The Philistine armies repeatedly came to fight the Israelites, but every time they fought, David and his soldiers were more successful than any of Saul's other army commanders. As a result, David became very famous.

Chapter 19

¹Then Saul urged all his servants and his son Jonathan to kill David. But Jonathan liked David very much. ²So he warned David, "My father Saul is seeking for a way to kill you. So be careful. Tomorrow morning go and find a place to hide in the field. ³I will ask my father to go out there with me. While we are out there, I will talk to him about you. Then I will tell you everything that he tells me." So David did what Jonathan told him to do.

⁴The next morning, Jonathan spoke with his father, saying many good things about David. He said, "You should never do anything to harm your servant David! He has never done anything to harm you! Everything that he has done has helped you very much. ⁵He was in danger of being killed when he fought against Goliath, the great soldier of the Philistine army. By enabling David to kill him, Yahweh won a great victory for all the people of Israel. You were very happy when you saw that. Why would you want to do anything now to harm David? There is no reason for you to kill him, because he has not done anything wrong!"

⁶Saul listened to what Jonathan said. Then Saul said, "I solemnly promise that just as surely as Yahweh is alive, I will not kill David."

⁷Afterward, Jonathan summoned David and told him what he and Saul had said. Then Jonathan brought David to Saul, and David served Saul as he had done before.

⁸One day a war started again, and David led his soldiers to fight against the Philistine army. David's army attacked them very furiously, with the result that the Philistine army ran away.

⁹But one day when Saul was sitting in his house, an evil spirit sent from Yahweh suddenly came upon Saul. Saul picked up his spear as David was playing his harp for him. ¹⁰Saul hurled his spear at David to try to fasten him to the wall. David dodged, and the spear did not hit him. The spear stuck in the wall, but David ran out into the darkness and escaped.

¹¹Then Saul sent messengers to David's house. He told them to watch the house and to kill David while he was leaving the house the following morning. But David's wife Michal saw them and warned him, saying, "To save your life, you must run away tonight, because if you do not do that, you will be killed tomorrow!" ¹²So she enabled David to climb out through a window, and he ran away and escaped. ¹³Then Michal took an idol that was in the house and put it in the bed. She covered it with some of David's clothes, and put some goat's hair on the head of the idol.

¹⁴When the messengers came to the house the next morning, she told them that David was sick and could not get out of bed.

¹⁵When they reported that to Saul, he told them to go back to David's house. He said to them, "Bring him to me lying on his bed, in order that I can kill him!" ¹⁶But when those men entered David's house, they saw that there was only an idol in the bed, with goat's hair on its head.

¹⁷When they reported that to Saul, Saul summoned Michal and said to her, "Why did you trick me like that? You allowed my enemy to escape!"

Michal replied to Saul, "David told me that if I did not help him to escape, he would kill me!"

¹⁸After David had escaped from Saul, he went to Samuel, who was at his home in Ramah. He told Samuel everything that Saul had done to try to kill him. Then David and Samuel went to Naioth, which was nearby, and they stayed there. ¹⁹Someone told Saul that David was in Naioth near the city of Ramah, ²⁰so Saul sent some messengers to capture him. When those messengers arrived in Ramah, they met some men who were shouting messages from Yahweh, and Samuel was there as their leader. When Saul's messengers met them, the Spirit of God

came upon Saul's men, and they also shouted in the same way. ²¹When Saul heard about that, he sent two more lots of messengers, but they also started to shout out messages from Yahweh. ²²Finally, Saul himself went to Ramah. When he arrived at the well at a place named Seku, he asked people there, "Where are Samuel and David?"

The people replied, "They are at Naioth near Ramah." ²³While Saul was walking toward Naioth, the Spirit of God also came upon him. While he walked on, he shouted messages from Yahweh until he came to Naioth. ²⁴There he took off his outer clothes, and he spoke messages from God in front of Samuel. He lay on the ground doing that all day and all night. That is the reason that when people see someone doing something that is very unexpected, they say, "Is Saul also a prophet?"

Chapter 20

¹David ran away from Naioth. He went to Jonathan and asked him, "What have I done to displease your father? What did I do that was wrong? Why is he trying to kill me?"

²Jonathan replied, "My father is certainly not trying to kill you! He always tells me before he does anything that he is planning. He tells me about important things and unimportant things that he plans to do. Why would he refuse to tell me if he were planning to kill you? So what you are saying cannot be true."

³Then David solemnly declared this to Jonathan: "Your father knows very well that you and I are very good friends, so he says to himself, 'I will not tell Jonathan what I am going to do. If I tell Jonathan, he will be upset, and then he will tell David.' But just as surely as Yahweh is alive and you are alive, I am only one step away from being killed."

⁴Jonathan said to David, "I will do whatever you tell me to do."

⁵David replied, "Tomorrow we will celebrate the festival of the new moon. I always eat with the king at that festival. But tomorrow I will hide in the field, and I will stay there for one night. I will stay there until the evening of the day after tomorrow. ⁶If your father asks why I am not there at the festival, say to him, 'David requested me to allow him to go to his home in Bethlehem, where his family will offer the sacrifice that they offer every year.' ⁷If your father says 'Very well', then I know I will be safe. But if he becomes extremely angry, you will know that he is determined to harm me. ⁸Please be kind to me. Yahweh heard you when you made a solemn agreement with me that you and I will always be good friends. But if I deserve to be punished, you should kill me yourself, rather than allow your father to punish me."

⁹Jonathan replied, "I will never do that! If I ever find out that my father is determined to harm you, I will certainly tell you."

¹⁰David asked him, "How will I find out if your father answers you harshly?" ¹¹Jonathan replied, "Come with me. We will go out into the field." So they went together out into the field.

¹²There Jonathan said to David, "I promise this while Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, is listening: At this time the day after tomorrow, I will find out what my father is thinking about you. If he is saying good things about you, I will certainly send a message to you to tell that to you. ¹³But if he is planning to hurt you, I hope that Yahweh will punish me very severely if I do not tell you in advance and help you flee, so that you might go away in safety. I hope that Yahweh will be with you and help you like he has helped my father. ¹⁴But while I am still alive, please act kindly toward me because of the oath that we both swore in Yahweh's sight; do not kill me when you become king. ¹⁵But if I die, never stop acting kindly toward my family for the sake of our oath, even after Yahweh has gotten rid of all your enemies all over the earth."

¹⁶So Jonathan made a solemn agreement with David and his descendants. And he said, "I hope that Yahweh will get rid of all your enemies." ¹⁷And Jonathan requested David to repeat his solemn promise to be his close friend, because Jonathan loved David as much as he loved himself.

¹⁸Then Jonathan said, "Tomorrow we will celebrate the festival of the new moon. When you are not sitting at your place when we eat, my father will miss you. ¹⁹The day after tomorrow, in the evening go to the place where you hid before. Wait by the pile of stones. ²⁰I will come out and shoot three arrows as though I were trying to shoot at a target. The arrows will hit the ground close to the pile of stones. ²¹Then I will send a boy to bring the arrows back to me. If you hear me say to him, 'They are closer to me,' then just as surely as Yahweh is alive, you will know that everything is fine, and that you will not be killed. ²²But if I tell him, 'The arrows are farther away,' you will know that you must leave immediately, because Yahweh wants you to run away. ²³I hope that Yahweh will watch you and me and enable us to never forget what we have promised each other."

²⁴So David went and hid in the field. When the festival of the new moon started, the king sat down to eat. ²⁵He sat where he usually sat, close to the wall. Jonathan sat across from him, and Abner the army commander sat next to Saul. But no one was sitting in the place where David usually sat. ²⁶On that day, Saul did not say anything about David, because he was thinking, "Something must have happened that caused David to become unacceptable to worship God." ²⁷But the next day, when David was not sitting at the place where he usually sat, Saul asked Jonathan, "Why has that son of Jesse not been here to eat with us yesterday and today?"

²⁸Jonathan replied, "David urgently requested me that I permit him to go to Bethlehem. ²⁹He said, 'Please allow me to go, because our family is going to offer a sacrifice. My older brother insisted that I be there. So please allow me to go to be with my older brothers.' I allowed David to go, and that is the reason that he is not here eating with you."

³⁰Saul was furious! He said to Jonathan, "You rebellious idiot! I know that you are being loyal to that son of Jesse. But you will cause shame to come to yourself and to your mother. ³¹As long as Jesse's son is living, you will never become the king, and you will never rule over this kingdom! So now, summon David, and bring him to me. He must be executed!"

³²Jonathan asked his father, "Why should David be executed? What wrong has he done?" ³³Then Saul threw his spear at Jonathan in order to kill him, but the spear did not hit him. So Jonathan knew that his father really wanted to kill David.

³⁴Jonathan was very angry, and he left the room. On that second day of the festival he refused to eat anything. He was disgusted about what his father had done, and he was worried about David.

³⁵The following morning Jonathan went out to the field to give a message to David, as he had agreed that he would do. He took a young boy with him. ³⁶Jonathan said to the boy, "Run and find the arrows that I shoot." The boy started running, and Jonathan shot an arrow ahead of the boy. ³⁷The boy ran to the place where the arrow hit the ground, but Jonathan called out, "The arrow is further away!" ³⁸Then he shouted to the boy, "Go quickly; do not wait! Do not stop!" The boy picked up the arrow and brought it back to Jonathan. ³⁹But the boy did not understand the meaning of what Jonathan had said; only Jonathan and David knew. ⁴⁰Then Jonathan gave his bow and arrows to the boy and told him, "Take them back to the town."

⁴¹When the boy left, David came out from behind the pile of stones, where he had been hiding. He went to Jonathan and bowed in front of Jonathan three times, with his face touching the ground. Then David and Jonathan kissed each other on the cheek, and they cried together. But David cried more than Jonathan.

⁴²Jonathan said to David, "May things go well for you as you go. Yahweh has heard what we solemnly promised to always do for each other, and what we said that our descendants must do for each other." Then David left, and Jonathan went back to the town.

Chapter 21

¹David fled from there and went to the city of Nob to see Ahimelech the priest. Ahimelech trembled when he saw David because he was afraid that something bad had happened. He said to David, "Why are you alone? Why have no men come with you?"

²David deceived Ahimelech by replying, "The king sent me. But he does not want anyone to know anything about what he sent me to do. I have told my men where they should meet me. ³Now I want to know, do you have any food here for me to eat? Could you give me five loaves of bread, or whatever other food that you can find?"

⁴The priest answered David, "There is no ordinary bread here, but I have some of the sacred bread that was placed before Yahweh. Your men may eat it if they have not slept with women recently."

⁵David replied, "They have not been near women for many days. I do not allow my men to defile themselves by sleeping with women while they are preparing to fight in battles. They must continue to keep themselves acceptable to God when they are on ordinary trips, and today they have certainly kept themselves acceptable to God because now we are doing something very special." ⁶Now the only bread that the priest had was the bread on display before God, the bread that had been placed in Yahweh's presence in the sacred tent. So the priest gave David some of that bread. On that day the priest had taken those loaves from the table and replaced them with fresh loaves.

⁷It happened that Doeg, from the Edom people group, was there on that day to make himself acceptable to Yahweh, and he saw what Ahimelech did. He was one of Saul's officials and the leader of Saul's shepherds.

⁸David asked Ahimelech, "Do you have a spear or a sword that I can use? The king appointed us to do this task and told us to leave immediately, so I did not have time to bring any weapons."

⁹Ahimelech replied, "I have only the sword that belonged to Goliath the giant from the Philisti people group whom you killed in Elah Valley. It is wrapped in a cloth, and is behind the sacred apron in the sacred tent. If you want it, take it, because I have no other weapon here."

David replied, "Truly, there is no other sword that is as good as that one! Give it to me." ¹⁰So Ahimelech gave it to him, and David left there. He and his men went to the city of Gath in the region of Philistia, to stay with King Achish.

¹¹But the officers of King Achish did not approve of David's coming. They said to King Achish, "This man David is just as powerful as the king of his land. Our enemies, the Israelite people, honored him by dancing and singing,

'Saul has killed thousands of his enemies,

but David has killed tens of thousands of them!'"

¹²David heard what those men were saying, so he was afraid of what King Achish might do to him. ¹³So he pretended that he was insane. He started scratching on the gates of the city and allowing his saliva to run down his beard.

¹⁴Then King Achish said to his men, "Look at this man! He is acting like an insane man! Why have you brought him to me? ¹⁵I already have enough crazy people around me. I do not want him to come into my house."

Chapter 22

¹So David and his men left Gath and went east to hide in a cave on a hill near the town of Adullam. Soon his older brothers and all his other relatives came and stayed with him there. ²Then other men came there. Some were men who had caused trouble, some were men who owed money, and some were men who were unhappy for any reason. They continued to come until there were four hundred men there, and David was their leader.

³Later they left there and went east to the city of Mizpah in the land of Moab. There David asked the king of Moab, "Please allow my father and mother to live here with you until I know what God is going to do for me." ⁴The king gave him permission, so David's parents stayed with the king of Moab all the time that David and the men who were with him were hiding in that area.

⁵One day the prophet Gad told David, "Leave your hideout here and return to Judah." So David and his men went to the Hereth Forest in Judah.

⁶One day, someone told Saul that David and his men had arrived in Judah. On that day, Saul was sitting underneath the tamarisk tree on a hill near the town of Gibeah. He was holding his spear and his army officers were standing around him. ⁷He shouted to them, "You men of the tribe of Benjamin, listen to me! Do you think that the son of Jesse will give all of you fields and vineyards if he becomes your king? Will he appoint all of you to become generals and captains in his army? ⁸Is that why you have all conspired against me, as he is doing today? Not one of you informed me that my own son had sworn friendship with him! Not one of you has had any pity on me or told me that my son has encouraged the son of Jesse to revolt against me, to hide out from me!"

⁹Doeg, a man from the Edom people group, was standing there with Saul's officers. He said to Saul, "When I was at Nob, I saw that son of Jesse talking to Ahimelech the priest. ¹⁰Ahimelech asked Yahweh what David should do. Then Ahimelech gave to David some food and the sword of Goliath, that Philistine giant."

¹¹Then Saul summoned Ahimelech and all Ahimelech's relatives who were priests at Nob. So they all came before the king. ¹²Saul said to Ahimelech, "You son of Ahitub, listen to me!"

Ahimelech answered, "Yes, sir!" ¹³Saul said, "Why are you and Jesse's son conspiring to get rid of me? You gave him some bread and a sword. You requested God to tell David what he should do. David has rebelled against me, and right now he is hiding somewhere, waiting to attack me."

¹⁴Ahimelech replied, "I do not understand why you are saying that, because David, your son-in-law, the captain of your bodyguards, is very loyal to you. No one is more loyal to you than David! Everyone in your household respects him very much. ¹⁵Furthermore, this was certainly not the first time that I requested God to say what he wanted David to do. And it is not right for you to accuse me or any of my relatives of trying to get rid of you, because I do not know anything about anyone wanting to do that."

¹⁶The king then shouted, "Ahimelech, you and all your relatives are going to be executed right now!"

¹⁷Then he commanded his bodyguards, "Kill these priests of Yahweh, because they are allies of David, and they are conspiring with David against me! They knew that David was trying to run away from me, but they did not tell me!"

But Saul's bodyguards refused to kill Yahweh's priests.

¹⁸Then the king said to Doeg, "You kill them!" So Doeg, the man from the Edom people group, went out and struck them down with his sword. On that day he killed eighty-five men who were able to wear the sacred aprons because they were all God's priests. ¹⁹He also went and killed many people in Nob, the city where the priests lived. He killed men, women, children, babies, cattle, donkeys, and sheep there.

²⁰But Abiathar, Ahimelech's son, escaped. He ran away and joined David and the men who were with him. ²¹He told David that Saul had commanded Doeg to kill Yahweh's priests. ²²Then David said to him, "That man from the Edom people group, Doeg, was there at Nob on the day that I was there. I knew that he would surely tell Saul what happened. So it is my fault that your father and all of his family have been killed. ²³You stay with me, and do not be afraid. The man who wants to kill you wants to kill me also, but you will be safe if you stay with me."

Chapter 23

¹One day someone told David, "You need to know that the Philistine army is attacking the town of Keilah and that they are stealing grain from where men are threshing it." ²David asked Yahweh, "Should my men and I go to fight against those men from the Philistia people group?"

Yahweh answered, "Yes, go. Attack them, and rescue the people of Keilah." ³But David's men said to him, "We are afraid that Saul will attack us here in Judah. We will be more afraid if we go to Keilah where the Philistine army is!"

⁴So David asked Yahweh again if they should go to Keilah. Yahweh answered, "Yes, go down to Keilah. I will help you to defeat the Philistines." ⁵So David and his men went to Keilah. They fought against the Philistines and captured many of their cattle. David and his men killed many of the Philistine men and rescued the people of Keilah.

⁶Abiathar son of Ahimelech, fled to be with David at Keilah, and he brought a sacred apron with him to use to determine what God wanted him to do.

⁷Someone soon told Saul that David was at Keilah. So he said, "That is good! God is enabling me to capture him! He has trapped himself in that town, because it has high walls with gates around it."

⁸So Saul summoned his army, and they prepared to go down to Keilah to attack David and his men.

⁹But David found out that Saul was planning for his army to attack him. So he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring here the sacred apron." ¹⁰So when Abiathar brought it, David prayed, "Yahweh, God of us Israelites, I have heard that Saul is planning to come here with his army and destroy Keilah because I am here. ¹¹Will Saul come down here to Keilah, as people reported to me? Will the leaders of Keilah enable Saul to capture me? Yahweh, God of us Israelites, please tell me!"

Yahweh answered, "Yes, Saul will come down." ¹²Then David asked, "Will the leaders of Keilah enable Saul's army to capture me and my men if we stay here?"

By means of the stones in the sacred vest, Yahweh replied, "Yes, they will." ¹³So David and his six hundred men left Keilah. They continued to move from one place to another, wherever they thought that Saul would not find them. And when Saul found out that David had escaped from Keilah, he did not go there.

¹⁴David and his man stayed in hiding places in the desert and in the hills of the wilderness of Ziph. Every day Saul sent men to search for David, but Yahweh did not allow them to capture David.

¹⁵While David and his men were at a place named Horesh in the wilderness of Ziph, he found out that Saul was coming there to kill him. ¹⁶But Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and encouraged him to continue to trust in God. ¹⁷Jonathan told him, "Do not be afraid, because my father will not be able to harm you. Some day you will be the king of Israel, and I will be the second most important man in Israel. My father Saul also knows that."

¹⁸Then the two of them repeated their solemn promise that Yahweh had heard them make previously, that they would always be loyal to each other. Then Jonathan went home, but David stayed at Horesh.

¹⁹Some people from Ziph went to Saul when he was at Gibeah, and they told him, "David and his men are hiding in our land! They are hiding in places at Horesh on the hill of Hakilah, south of a place named Jeshimon." ²⁰So, O king, go down there any time that you want to. It is our duty to capture him and turn him over to you."

²¹Saul replied, "I hope that Yahweh will bless you for your concern for me. ²²Go back and find out more about him. Find out exactly where he is staying, and find out who has seen him there. People tell me that he is very clever, so we need to be clever also to be able to capture him. ²³Find out all the places where he and his men hide. Then come back and tell me everything that you have found out. Then I will take my army and go there with you. If David is with any of the clans of Judah, we will search for him and find him!"

²⁴So those people went back to Ziph before Saul went there. At that time David and his men were in the desert of Maon, south of Jeshimon. ²⁵Saul and his soldiers went to search for David, but David heard about that. So he and his men went further south to a rocky hill in the wilderness of Maon. When Saul heard about that, he and his men followed David and his men to the wilderness of Maon.

²⁶Saul and his soldiers were walking along one side of the hill, and David and his men were on the other side. David and his men were hurrying to escape from Saul's soldiers, because Saul and his soldiers were coming much closer. ²⁷But then a messenger came to Saul and said to him, "Come quickly! The Philistine army is attacking the people in our land!" ²⁸So Saul stopped pursuing David, and he and his soldiers went to fight against the Philistine army. That is the reason that people call that place the Rock of Escape. ²⁹David and his men also left that place and went to places to hide safely at Engedi.

Chapter 24

¹After Saul and his soldiers returned home after fighting against the Philistine army, someone reported to Saul that David and his men had gone into the wilderness near EnGedi. ²When Saul heard that, he chose three thousand men from various areas in Israel, and they went to search for David and his men at the Rocks of Wild Goats.

³At a place where the road was alongside some sheep pens, Saul left the road and entered a cave to relieve himself. He did not know that David and his men were hiding further inside that same cave! ⁴David's men saw Saul and whispered to David, "Today is the day that Yahweh spoke about when he said, 'I will enable you to defeat your enemy.' You can do to him whatever you want to!" So David crept toward the entrance of the cave and cut off with his knife a small piece of Saul's robe. ⁵And then he returned to his men.

But David felt guilty for having cut off a piece of Saul's robe. ⁶He said to his men, "I should not have done that to the king! I hope that Yahweh will never allow me to attack the one whom God has appointed, because Yahweh is the one who chose him to be the king." ⁷By saying that, David restrained his men and did not allow them to kill Saul.

After Saul left the cave and started to walk on the road again, ⁸David came out of the cave and shouted to Saul, "King Saul!" Saul turned around and looked, and David bowed down with his face touching the ground. ⁹Then he said to Saul, "Why do you pay attention to people when they say 'David wants to harm you?' ¹⁰Today you can see with your own eyes that what they say is not true. Yahweh put you in a place where I and my men could have killed you when you were in this cave. Some of my men told me that I should do that, but I did not allow them to do that. I said to them, 'I will not harm my master, because he is the king whom Yahweh appointed.' ¹¹Your majesty, look at this piece of your robe that is in my hand! I cut it from your robe, but I did not kill you. So now you should be able to understand that I am not planning to do anything evil to you. I have not done anything wrong to you, but you are searching for me to kill me. ¹²I desire that Yahweh will judge and decide which of us is doing what is right. And I desire that he will punish you for the wrong things that you have done to me. But I will not try to harm you. ¹³There is a proverb that has the words, 'Evil things are done by evil people.' But I am not evil, so I will not do evil things to you.

¹⁴You are the king of Israel. So why are you pursuing me? What is it you are chasing? I am nothing more than a dead dog or a flea. ¹⁵I hope that Yahweh will decide who is right in this matter, you or I? And when he decides in my favor, I hope he will defend me and save me from your power."

¹⁶When David finished saying that to Saul, Saul called out to him and asked, "My son David, is that your voice that I am hearing?" Then he cried loudly. ¹⁷He said, "You are a better man than I am. You have done something very good to me when I tried to do something very bad to you. ¹⁸When Yahweh put me in a place in that cave where you could have easily killed me, you did not do that. ¹⁹No one lets his enemy go free after he finds him. But you have done this. I hope that Yahweh will reward you for your acting kindly toward me today. ²⁰I know that some day

you will surely become the king, and that your kingdom will prosper as you rule the Israelite people. ²¹Now while Yahweh is listening, solemnly promise to me that you will not kill my family and get rid of all my descendants.”

²²David solemnly promised Saul that he would not harm Saul’s family. Then Saul went back home, and David and his men went back up into the place where they had been hiding.

Chapter 25

¹Soon after that, Samuel died, and all the Israelite people gathered and mourned for him. They buried his body outside his home in Ramah.

Then David and his men moved to the wilderness of Paran. ²In Maon town there was a man who owned land in Carmel, a nearby village. He was very rich; he owned 3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats. Carmel is where he sheared his sheep. ³His name was Nabal; he was a descendant of Caleb. His wife Abigail was a wise and beautiful woman, but Nabal was very cruel and treated people very unkindly.

⁴One day while David and his men were in the desert, someone told him that Nabal was cutting the wool from his sheep. ⁵So David told ten of his men, “Go to Nabal at Carmel and greet him for me. ⁶Then tell him this message from me: ‘I wish that things may go well for you and your family and for everything that you possess.

⁷I heard people say that you are cutting the wool from your sheep. Previously, when your shepherds were among us, we did not harm them. All the time that your shepherds were among us at Carmel, we did not steal any sheep from them. ⁸You can ask your servants if this is true, and they will tell you that it is true. We have come here at a time when you are celebrating, so I ask you to please be kind to us and give these men whatever extra food you have, for me, David, and my men to eat.’”

⁹When David’s men arrived where Nabal was, they gave David’s message to him, and they waited for him to reply.

¹⁰But Nabal spoke harshly to them, “Who does this man, this son of Jesse, think that he is? There are many slaves who are running away from their masters at the present time, and it seems to me that he is just one of them. ¹¹I give bread and water to the men who are cutting the wool from my sheep, and I give them meat from animals that I have slaughtered. Why should I take some of those things and give them to a group of outlaws?”

¹²Then David’s men returned and told him what Nabal had said. ¹³When David heard this, he told his men, “We are going to kill Nabal; fasten your swords!” So he fastened on his sword, and about four hundred men fastened their swords and went with him. There were two hundred of his men who stayed with their supplies.

¹⁴One of Nabal’s servants found out what David and his men were planning to do, so he went to Nabal’s wife Abigail and said to her, “David sent some messengers from the desert to greet our master Nabal, but Nabal only yelled at them. ¹⁵All the time that we were in the fields close to them, those men of David were very kind to us. They did not harm us. They did not steal anything from us. ¹⁶They protected us during the daytime and during the night. They were like a wall around us to protect us while we were taking care of our sheep. ¹⁷So now you should think about it and decide what you can do. If you do not do something, terrible things will happen to our master and to all his family. Nabal is an extremely wicked man, so he will not listen to anyone who tries to tell him what to do.”

¹⁸When Abigail heard that, she very quickly gathered two hundred loaves of bread, and also got two leather bags full of wine, the meat from five sheep, a bushel of roasted grain, a hundred packs of raisins, and two hundred packs of dried figs. She put all those things on donkeys. ¹⁹Then she told her servants, “Go ahead of me. I will follow you.” But she did not tell her husband what she was going to do.

²⁰Abigail rode on her donkey and came down to the place in the hills where David and his men were staying. Suddenly David and his men met her. ²¹David had been saying to his men, “It was useless for us to protect that man and all his possessions here in this wilderness. We did not steal anything that belonged to him, but he has

acted badly toward me in return for our good actions toward him. ²²I hope that God will strike me and kill me if he or even one male person belonging to him is still alive tomorrow morning!"

²³When Abigail saw David, she quickly got down from her donkey and bowed before him, with her face touching the ground. ²⁴Then she prostrated herself at David's feet and said to him, "Sir, I deserve to be punished for what my husband has done. Please listen to what I say to you. ²⁵Please do not pay attention to what this worthless man Nabal has said. His name means 'fool,' and he surely is a foolish man. But I, who am willing to be your servant, did not see the messengers whom you sent to him. ²⁶Yahweh has prevented you from getting revenge on anyone and killing anyone. I hope that just as surely as Yahweh lives and as surely as you live, your enemies will be cursed like Nabal is. ²⁷I have brought a gift for you and for the men who are with you. ²⁸Please forgive me if I have done anything wrong to you. Yahweh will surely reward you by allowing many of your descendants to become kings of Israel, because you are fighting the battles that Yahweh wants you to fight. And I know that throughout all your life you have not done anything wrong. ²⁹Even when those who are trying to kill you pursue you, you are safe because Yahweh your God takes care of you. You will be protected like a bundle that is safely tied up. But your enemies will disappear like stones that are hurled from a sling. ³⁰Yahweh has promised to do good things for you, and he will do what he has promised. And he will cause you to become the ruler of the Israelite people. ³¹When that happens, you will be glad that you did not kill any people in Nabal's household. You will not think that you deserve to be punished for having punished and killed innocent people. And when Yahweh enables you to successfully become the king, please do not forget to be kind to me."

³²David replied to Abigail, "I praise Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites worship, because he sent you to talk with me. ³³I hope today God may help you because you have wisely kept me from killing people today, and from paying back evil for evil. ³⁴Just as surely as Yahweh the God whom we Israelites worship is alive, he has prevented me from harming you. If you had not come quickly to talk to me, neither Nabal nor even one of Nabal's men or boys would be still alive tomorrow morning."

³⁵Then David accepted the gifts that Abigail had brought to him. He said to her, "I hope that things may go well for you. I have heard what you said, and I will do what you have requested."

³⁶When Abigail returned to Nabal, he was in his house, having a big celebration like kings have. He was very drunk and feeling very happy. So Abigail did not say anything to him that night about her meeting with David. ³⁷The next morning, when he was no longer drunk, she told him everything that had happened when she talked with David. Immediately, he had a stroke and could no longer move. ³⁸About ten days later Yahweh struck him again, and he died.

³⁹After David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "I praise Yahweh! Nabal insulted me, but Yahweh has shown that I have been right. He has prevented me from doing anything wrong. And he has punished Nabal for the wrong that he did."

Then David sent messengers to Abigail, to ask her if she would become his wife. ⁴⁰His servants went to Carmel and said to Abigail, "David sent us to take you to become his wife." ⁴¹Abigail bowed down with her face touching the ground. Then she told the messengers to tell David, "I am happy to become your wife. I will be your servant. And I am willing to wash the feet of your servants." ⁴²Abigail quickly got on her donkey and went with David's messengers. Five of her female servants went with her. When she arrived where David was, she became his wife. ⁴³David had previously married Ahinoam, a woman from Jezreel near Carmel. So both Abigail and Ahinoam were now David's wives. ⁴⁴King Saul's daughter Michal was also David's wife, but Saul had given her to Laish's son Paltiel, who was from the town of Gallim.

Chapter 26

¹One day some of the people of Ziph town went to Saul while he was at Gibeah, and they said to him, "David is hiding in a cave on the hill of Hakilah, east of the town of Jeshimon."

²So Saul chose three thousand of the best Israelite soldiers and went with them to the wilderness of Ziph to search for David. ³Saul and his men set up their tents close to the road on the hill of Hakilah, east of the town of Jeshimon, but David and his men stayed in the wilderness. When David heard that Saul was searching for him, ⁴he sent some spies to find out if it was true that Saul had come to Hakilah.

⁵Then that evening David went to the place where Saul had set up his tent. From a distance he saw where Saul and his army commander, Abner, were sleeping. Saul was sleeping with all his army sleeping around him.

⁶David went back to where his men were and talked to Ahimelech, who was from the Heth people group, and Joab's brother Abishai, whose mother was David's older sister Zeruah. He asked them, "Who will go with me down into the camp where Saul is?"

Abishai replied, "I will go with you." ⁷So that night David and Abishai crept into Saul's camp. They saw that Saul was asleep in the middle of the camp. Abner and the other soldiers were sleeping around Saul. Saul's spear was stuck in the ground near his head.

⁸Abishai whispered to David, "Today Yahweh has enabled us to kill your enemy! Allow me to fasten Saul to the ground by thrusting my spear into him. It will be necessary for me to strike him only once. I will not need to strike him twice."

⁹But David whispered to Abishai, "No, do not kill Saul. Yahweh has appointed him to be king, so Yahweh will surely punish anyone who kills him. ¹⁰Just as surely as Yahweh is alive, he himself will punish Saul. Perhaps Yahweh will strike him when it is Saul's time to die, or perhaps Saul will be killed in a battle. ¹¹But I hope that Yahweh will prevent me from harming the king whom he has appointed. Let us take Saul's spear and water jug that are near his head. Then let us get out of here!"

¹²So David took the spear and the jug, and he and Abishai left. No one saw them or knew what they were doing, and no one woke up, because Yahweh had caused them to be sound asleep.

¹³David and Abishai went across the valley and climbed to the top of the hill, a long way from Saul's camp.

¹⁴Then David shouted to Abner, "Abner, can you hear me?"

Abner replied "Who are you, waking up the king by calling out to him?" ¹⁵David replied, "I am sure that you are the greatest man in Israel! So why did you not guard your master, the king? Someone came into your camp in order to kill your master, the king. ¹⁶You have done a very poor job of guarding Saul. So just as surely as Yahweh is alive, you and your men should be executed! You have not guarded your master whom Yahweh appointed to be the king. Where are the king's spear and the water jug that were close to his head?"

¹⁷Saul woke up and recognized that it was David's voice. He called out, saying, "My son David, is that your voice?"

David replied, "Yes, your majesty it is my voice."

¹⁸Then David added, "Sir, why are you pursuing me? I have done nothing wrong! ¹⁹Your majesty, listen to me! If Yahweh has caused you to be angry with me, I want him to accept a sacrifice from me. But if it is people who have caused you to be angry with me, I hope that Yahweh will curse them. They have forced me to leave the land that Yahweh gave to me. They have told me, 'Go somewhere else and worship other gods!' ²⁰Now do not force me to die away from the land and presence of Yahweh. You, the king, are looking for me, but I am as good as a flea or a wild bird that someone hunts in the hills."

²¹Then Saul said, "David, my son, I have sinned by trying to kill you. So come back home. Today you have considered my life to be very valuable and so you have not killed me. So I will not try to harm you. I have made a big mistake and have acted foolishly."

²²David replied, "I will leave your spear here. Send one of your young men here to get it. ²³Yahweh rewards us for the things that we do that are right and for being loyal to him. Even when Yahweh placed me where I could easily

have killed you, I refused to do that, because you are the one whom Yahweh has appointed to be the king. ²⁴Just as I considered your life to be valuable and spared your life today, I hope that Yahweh will consider my life to be valuable and spare my life and save me from all my troubles.”

²⁵Then Saul said to David, “My son David, I pray that Yahweh may bless you. May you do great things very successfully.”

Then David returned to his men, and Saul went back home.

Chapter 27

¹But David thought, “Some day Saul will capture me if I stay around here. So the best thing that I can do is to escape and go to the region of Philistia. If I do that, Saul will stop searching for me here in Israel, and I will be safe.”

²So David and his six hundred men left Israel and went to see Maok’s son Achish, who was king of the city of Gath in the region of Philistia. ³David and his men and their families started to live there in Gath, the city where King Achish lived. David’s two wives were with him—Ahinoam from Jezreel, and Nabal’s widow Abigail, from Carmel.

⁴When Saul heard that David had run away and was living in Gath, he stopped searching for David.

⁵One day David said to Achish, “If you are pleased with us, give us a place in one of the small villages where we can stay. There is no need for us to stay in the city where you are the king.”

⁶Achish liked what David suggested. So that day Achish gave to David the town of Ziklag. As a result, Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah since that time.

⁷David and his men lived in the region of Philistia for sixteen months. ⁸During that time, David and his men raided the people who lived in the areas where the Geshur, Girzi, and Amalek people groups lived. Those people had lived there from long before. That area extended south to Shur and to the border of Egypt. ⁹Whenever David’s men attacked them, they killed all the men and women, and they took all the people’s sheep and cattle and donkeys and camels, and even their clothes. Then they would bring those things back home, and David would go to talk to Achish.

¹⁰Each time Achish would ask David, “Where did you go raiding today?” David would lie to him and sometimes say that they had gone to the southern part of Judah, and sometimes he would say that they had gone to where the Jerahmeelites lived in the south, or that he had fought against the Kenites who lived in the south. ¹¹David’s men never brought back to Gath any man or woman who was still alive. David thought, “If we do not kill everyone, some of them who are still alive they will go and tell Achish the truth about what we really did.” David did that all the time that he and his men lived in the region of Philistia. ¹²So Achish believed what David told him; he thought, “Because of what David has done, his own people, the Israelites, must now hate him very much. So he will have to stay here and serve me forever.”

Chapter 28

¹Some time later, the people of Philistia gathered their army to attack the Israelites again. King Achish told David, “I am expecting that you and your men will join with my men to attack the Israelites.”

²David replied, “We will go with you, and then you will see for yourself what we can do!”

Achish said, “Very well, I will appoint you to be my permanent bodyguard.”

³Now while Samuel was still alive, Saul did some things that pleased Yahweh. One of the good things that Saul did was to expel from Israel all the people who were fortune tellers or who talked to the spirits of dead people. But

Samuel had died, and all the Israelite people had mourned for him. Then they had buried him in Ramah, his hometown.

⁴The army of Philistia gathered and set up their tents at the city of Shunem, in the north of Israel. Saul gathered the Israelite army and set up their tents at Gilboa in the eastern part of the same valley. ⁵When Saul saw the army of Philistia, he became so afraid that his heart pounded. ⁶He prayed to Yahweh, but Yahweh did not answer him. Yahweh did not tell Saul what he should do by giving him a dream, or by having the priest throw the marked stones in his sacred pouch, or by giving a message about Saul to any prophet. ⁷Then Saul said to his servants, "Find for me a woman who talks to the spirits of dead people, in order that I can ask her what will happen." His servants replied, "There is a woman in the town of Endor who does that."

⁸So Saul took off the clothes that showed that he was the king, and he put on ordinary clothes to disguise himself. Then he and two of his men went during the night to talk to that woman. Saul said to her, "I want you to talk to a spirit of someone who has died. Cause to appear the person whose name I will give to you."

⁹But the woman replied, "You surely know what Saul has done. He expelled from this land all the people who talk to spirits of dead people and all fortune tellers. I think that you are trying to trap me, in order that I will be executed for doing something that is not permitted."

¹⁰Saul replied, solemnly asking Yahweh to listen to what he was saying, "Just as surely as Yahweh is alive, you will not be punished for doing this."

¹¹Then the woman said, "Whom do you want me to cause to appear?"

Saul replied, "Cause Samuel to appear."

¹²So the woman did that. But when she saw Samuel, she screamed. She said, "You have tricked me! You are Saul! You will execute me for doing this!"

¹³Saul said to her, "Do not be afraid. What do you see?"

The woman said, "I see a god coming up out of the ground." ¹⁴Saul said, "What does he look like?"

The woman replied, "An old man wearing a robe is appearing."

Then Saul knew that it was Samuel. So he bowed down with his face touching the ground. ¹⁵Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you bothered me by causing me to appear?"

Saul said, "I am very worried. The army of Philistia is about to attack my army, and God has abandoned me. He does not answer my questions anymore. He does not give me dreams to tell me what to do or give messages to prophets to tell me what to do. That is the reason that I came to see you. So you tell me what I should do!"

¹⁶Samuel said, "Yahweh has abandoned you and has become your enemy. So why do you ask me what you should do? ¹⁷He has done what he told me previously that he would do to you. He has torn the kingdom away from you, and he is giving it to someone who is another Israelite—David. ¹⁸You did not obey Yahweh. Yahweh was very angry with the Amalek people group. You did not kill all of their animals, with the result that you did not show that he was very angry with them. That is the reason that he is refusing to answer you today. ¹⁹Yahweh will enable the Philistine army to defeat you and all the other Israelite soldiers. And tomorrow you and your sons will be with me in the place where spirits of dead people are. Yahweh will cause the whole Israelite army to be defeated by the Philistine army."

²⁰After Samuel said that, he disappeared. Saul immediately fell flat on the ground. He was so afraid because of what Samuel had said that he lost all his strength. He was also very weak because he had not eaten anything all that day and night.

²¹The woman saw that he was very worried. She said to him, "Listen to me! I have done what you requested me to do. I could be executed for doing that. ²²So now please pay attention to what I say. Allow me to give you some food, in order that you will eat it and get enough strength to go back to your army."

²³But Saul refused. He said, "No, I will not eat anything." Then Saul's servants also urged him to eat something, and finally he listened to them. He got up from the ground and sat on the bed.

²⁴The woman had a fat calf close to her house. She quickly slaughtered it and cooked it. She took some flour and mixed it with olive oil, and baked it without putting in any yeast. ²⁵She placed the food in front of Saul and his servants, and they ate some of it. Then that same night they got up and left.

Chapter 29

¹The Philistine army gathered at the Valley of Aphek. The Israelites set up their tents at the city of Jezreel, which was in the same valley. ²The kings of Philistia divided their men into groups; some groups had one hundred soldiers and some groups had one thousand soldiers. David and his men were marching behind, with King Achish.

³But the Philistine commanders asked, "What are these Hebrews doing here, marching with us to battle?"

Achish replied, "Their leader is David. He previously worked for King Saul of Israel, but now he has been living near me for more than a year. During all the time since he left Saul, I have not seen that he has any faults." ⁴But the Philistine army commanders were angry with Achish for allowing David's army to be going with them. They said to him, "Send David and his men back to the city that you gave to him! We do not want him to go with us into the battle. If he goes with us, we will have an enemy in our own midst! He would please Saul by killing our own soldiers! ⁵Have you forgotten that David is the one about whom the Israelites dance and sing, saying,

'Saul has killed a thousand of our enemies,

but David has killed ten thousand of them?'"

⁶So Achish summoned David, and said to him, "Just as surely as Yahweh is alive, you have been loyal to me. I would like very much for you to fight along with my army. Since the day that you came to me, I have not found that you have any faults. But the other kings do not trust you. ⁷So all of you go back home, and I hope that things will go well for you. I do not want you to do anything that the other rulers of Philistia will not be pleased with."

⁸David replied, "What wrong have I done? Since the day that I first came to you until today, have I done anything that you think is evil? Your majesty, why will you not allow me to go and fight against your enemies?"

⁹Achish replied, "I know I can trust you as much as I could trust an angel from God. But the commanders of my army have said, 'We will not allow David and his men to go with us into the battle.' ¹⁰So early tomorrow morning you and your men must leave. Get up as soon as it gets light and leave."

¹¹So David and his men got up early the following morning and returned to the area where the Philistine people lived. But the Philistine army went up to the city of Jezreel.

Chapter 30

¹Three days later, when David and his men arrived at Ziklag, they discovered that men of the Amalek people group had raided Ziklag and some towns in the southern Judean wilderness. They had destroyed Ziklag and burned down all the buildings. ²They had captured the women and the children and everyone else, and had taken them away. But they had not killed anyone.

³When David and his men came to Ziklag, they saw that the town had been burned, and that their wives and sons and daughters had been captured and taken away. ⁴David and his men cried loudly, until they were so weak that

they could not cry anymore. ⁵David's two wives, Ahinoam and Abigail, had also been taken away. ⁶David's men were threatening to kill him by throwing stones at him, because they were very angry because their sons and daughters had been taken away. David was very distressed, but Yahweh his God gave him strength.

⁷Then David did not know what to do, so he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring to me the sacred apron and the sacred vest." So Abiathar brought them, ⁸and David asked Yahweh, "Should I and my men pursue the men who took our families? Will we be able to catch up to them?"

Yahweh answered by means of the stones in the sacred vest: "Yes, pursue them. You will catch up to them, and you will be able to rescue your families." ⁹So David and the six hundred men who were with him left, and they came to the ravine of Besor. Some of his men stayed there with some of their supplies. ¹⁰David and four hundred men continued to pursue the men who captured their families. The other two hundred men stayed there at the ravine, because they were so exhausted that they could not cross the ravine.

¹¹As David and the four hundred men were going, they saw a man from Egypt in a field; so they took him to David. They gave the man some water to drink and some food to eat. ¹²They also gave him a piece of fig cake and two packs of raisins. The man had not had anything to eat or drink for three days and nights, but after he ate and drank he felt refreshed.

¹³David asked him, "Who is your master? And where do you come from?"

He replied, "I am from Egypt. I am a slave of a man from the Amalek people group. Three days ago my master left me here, because I was sick and I was not able to go with them. ¹⁴We had raided the southern Judean wilderness of the Kerethites, and some other towns in Judah, and the southern Judean wilderness of the Calebites. We also burned Ziklag."

¹⁵David asked him, "Can you lead us to this group of raiders?"

He replied, "Yes, I will do that if you ask God to listen while you promise that you will not kill me or give me back to my master. If you promise that, I will take you to them." ¹⁶David agreed to do that, so the man from Egypt led David and his men to where the men from the Amalek people group were. Those men were lying on the ground, eating and drinking and celebrating because they had captured many things from the regions of Philistia and Judah.

¹⁷David and his men fought against them from sunset that day until the evening of the following day. Four hundred of them escaped and rode away on camels, but none of the others escaped. ¹⁸David rescued his two wives, and he and his men got back everything else that the men of the Amalek people group had taken. ¹⁹Nothing was missing. They took all their people back to Ziklag—young people and old people, their wives, their sons and their daughters. They also recovered all the other things that the men of the Amalek people group had taken from Ziklag. ²⁰They took with them the sheep and cattle that had been captured, and his men caused these animals to go in front of the rest of the cattle; they said, "These are animals that we captured in the battle; they belong to David!"

²¹David and his men got back to where the other two hundred men were waiting, the men who did not go with David because they were very exhausted. They had stayed at the ravine of Besor. When they saw David and his men coming, they went out to greet them. And David greeted them also.

²²But some of the men who had gone with David, men who were evil and troublemakers, said, "These two hundred men did not go with us. So we should not give to them any of the things that we recovered. Each of them should take only his wife and children and go back to their homes."

²³David replied, "No, my fellow Israelites, that would not be right. Yahweh has protected us and enabled us to defeat the enemies who attacked our town. ²⁴Who will pay attention to you if you say things like that? The men who stayed here with our supplies will get the same amount that the men who went into the battle will get. They will all receive the same amount." ²⁵David made that to be a law for the Israelite people, and that is still a law in Israel.

²⁶When David and all the others arrived in Ziklag, David sent to his friends who were leaders in Judah some of the things that they had captured from the Amalek people group. He said to them, "Here is a present for you. These are things that we took from Yahweh's enemies."

²⁷Here is a list of the cities and towns to whose leaders David sent gifts: Bethel, Ramoth in the southern part of Judah, Jattir, ²⁸Aroer, Siphmoth, Eshtemoa. ²⁹Also Rakal, the cities where the descendants of Jehrameel and the cities where the Kenite people group live, ³⁰Hormah, Bor Ashan, Athak, ³¹Hebron, and all the other places where David and his men had often gone.

Chapter 31

¹Later, the Philistines again fought against the Israelites. The Israelites ran away from them, and many Israelites were killed on Mount Gilboa. ²The Philistines caught up with Saul and three of his sons, and they killed all those three, Jonathan and Abinadab and Malki-Shua. ³The fighting was very fierce around Saul. When the Philistine archers caught up with Saul, they wounded him badly with their arrows.

⁴Saul said to the man who was carrying his weapons, "Take out your sword and kill me with it, in order that these heathen Philistines will not be able to thrust their swords into me and make fun of me while I am dying."

But the man who was carrying Saul's weapons was terrified, and refused to do that. So Saul took his own sword and fell on it. The sword pierced his body, and he died. ⁵When the man carrying his weapons saw that Saul was dead, he also threw himself on his own sword and died. ⁶So Saul, three of his sons, and the man who carried Saul's weapons, all died on that same day.

⁷When the Israelite people on the north side of the Valley of Jezreel and on the east side of the Jordan River heard that the Israelite army had run away and that Saul and his sons had died, they left their towns and ran away. Then the Philistines came and occupied their cities.

⁸The next day, when the Philistines came to take away the weapons of the dead Israelite soldiers, they found the bodies of Saul and his three sons on Mount Gilboa. ⁹They cut off Saul's head and took his weapons. Then they sent messengers throughout their land to proclaim the news in the temples, where they kept their idols, and to the other people, that their army had defeated the Israelites. ¹⁰They put Saul's weapons in the temple of their goddess Asherah. They also fastened the bodies of Saul and his sons to the wall that surrounded the city of Beth Shan.

¹¹When the people who lived in Jabesh in the region of Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul's corpse, ¹²all their bravest soldiers walked all night to Beth Shan. They took the corpses of Saul and his sons down from the city wall, and they took them back to Jabesh and burned the corpses there. ¹³They took the bones and buried them under a big tamarisk tree. Then they fasted for seven days.

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