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2 Chronicles

Chapter 1

¹King Solomon, David's son, was able to gain complete control over his kingdom, because Yahweh his God was with him and enabled him to become a very strong king.

²⁻⁵When David had been king, he arranged for a new sacred tent to be made in Jerusalem. Then David and the Israelite leaders brought God's sacred chest from the city of Kiriath Jearim to the new sacred tent. But when Solomon became the king, the first sacred tent was still in the city of Gibeon. There was a bronze altar there that Bezalel son of Uri and grandson of Hur, had made was also still at Gibeon, in front of the first sacred tent.

Solomon called together the army commanders who directed thousands of soldiers, and the commanders who directed hundreds of soldiers, with the judges and all the other leaders in Israel. He told them to go with him to Gibeon. So they all went to the place on the hill where idols were worshiped at Gibeon. That was the same place where God had met with his people in the tent which Moses had made. There Solomon and all the others with him prayed to Yahweh. ⁶Then Solomon went up to the bronze altar in front of the sacred tent, and he offered one thousand animals to be killed and completely burned on the altar.

⁷That night God appeared to Solomon in a dream and said to him, "Request whatever you want me to give to you."

⁸Solomon replied to God, "You were very kind to David my father, and now you have appointed me to be the next king. ⁹So Yahweh my God, you have caused me to become the king to rule people who are as many as the dust of the earth. So do what you promised to my father David. ¹⁰Please enable me to be wise and to know what I should do, in order that I may rule these people well, because there is no one who can rule all this great nation of yours without your help."

¹¹God replied to Solomon, "You have not requested a huge amount of money or to be honored or that your enemies be killed. And you have not requested that you be enabled to live for a long time. Instead, you have requested that I enable you to be wise and to know what you should do in order that you may govern well my people whom I have appointed you to rule. ¹²So I will enable you to be wise and to know what you should do to rule my people well. But I will also enable you to have a huge amount of money and for people everywhere to honor you, more any king before you, and more than any king who will come after you." ¹³Then Solomon and the people who were with him all left the sacred tent at Gibeon, and they returned to Jerusalem. There he ruled the Israelite people.

¹⁴Solomon acquired 1,400 chariots and twelve thousand men who rode on horses. He put some of the chariots and horses in Jerusalem, and put some of them in various other cities. ¹⁵During the years that Solomon was king, silver and gold were as common in Jerusalem as stones, and lumber from cedar trees were as plentiful as lumber from ordinary sycamore trees in the foothills. ¹⁶Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and from the region of Kue. ¹⁷In Egypt his men paid seven kilograms of silver for each chariot and one and seven-tenths kilograms of silver for each horse. They also sold many of them to the kings of the Heth and Aram people groups.

Chapter 2

¹Solomon decided that a temple should be built where Yahweh would be worshiped, and also that he would build a palace for himself. ²He commanded seventy thousand men to carry the building supplies and eighty thousand men to cut stones from quarries in the hills. He also chose 3,600 men to supervise them.

³Solomon sent this message to King Hiram of the city of Tyre:

"Many years ago when my father David was building his palace, you sent him cedar logs. Will you send me cedar logs, too?"

⁴We are about to build a temple to set it apart for Yahweh, to burn for him incense made from fragrant spices, to always display before him the bread, and to burn animal offerings every morning and evening and day of rest, as well as at every new moon and on the other special festivals to honor Yahweh our God. We want to do these things forever, as Yahweh has commanded. ⁵We want this temple to be a great temple, because our God is greater than all other gods. ⁶But no one can build a place for God to live in, since even the heavens and the earth are not big enough for him. I myself am not worthy to build him a house, except as a place to offer sacrifices to him.

⁷Therefore, please send me someone who is very good at making things from gold and silver and bronze and iron, and at making things from purple and red and blue cloth. He should also know well how to engrave designs. I want him to work in Jerusalem and in other places in Judah with my skilled craftsmen, the ones whom my father David appointed.

⁸I know that your workers are skilled in cutting timber, so also please send me cedar logs, pine logs, and algum from the Lebanon mountains. My workers will work with your workers. ⁹In that way, they will provide me with plenty of lumber. We will need plenty, because I want the temple that we will build to be large and beautiful. ¹⁰I will pay to your workers, the men who cut the logs, 4,400 kiloliters of bushels of ground wheat, 4,400 kiloliters of barley, and 440 kiloliters of wine, and 440 kiloliters of olive oil."

¹¹When Hiram received this message, he replied by sending a message back to Solomon:

"Because Yahweh loves his people, he has appointed you to be their king. ¹²Let everyone praise Yahweh, the God to whom the Israelite people belong, the one who created the sky and the earth! He has given King David a wise son, one who is very intelligent and who has good skill and understanding. He wants to build a temple for Yahweh and a palace for himself. ¹³I will send to you Hiram-Abi, one of my skilled craftsmen. ¹⁴His mother was from the tribe of Dan, and his father was from here in Tyre. He is able to make things from gold and silver and bronze and iron and stone and wood, but he also makes nice things from purple and blue and red cloth, and he does all kinds of engraving. He can make things using any design that you give to him. He will work with your craftsmen, and the craftsmen who did work for your father, King David.

¹⁵Now please send us the wheat, barley, olive oil, and wine that you promised to send to us. ¹⁶When you do that, my workers will cut in the Lebanon mountains all the logs that you need and bring them down to the sea. Then we will tie the logs together to form rafts with them, and float them in the sea to the city of Joppa. From there, you can arrange for men to take them up to Jerusalem."

¹⁷Solomon told his workers to count all the people from other countries who were living in Israel, similar to what his father David had done. There were 153,600 of them. ¹⁸Solomon assigned seventy thousand of them to carry materials, and eighty thousand to cut stone from quarries in the hills, and 3,600 of them to supervise the others and be sure that they worked steadily.

Chapter 3

¹Then Solomon's workers started to build the temple for Yahweh in Jerusalem. They built it on Mount Moriah, where an angel from Yahweh had appeared to his father David. They built it on the ground that Ornan, a descendant of the Jebus people group, had sold to David and where David said that it should be built. ²They began the work on the second day of the second month, when Solomon had been ruling almost four years.

³The foundation of the temple was twenty-seven meters long and nine meters wide. ⁴The entrance room across the front of the temple was also nine meters long, the same as the temple's width. The entrance room was also nine meters high. Solomon caused workmen to coat the interior of the entrance room with thin sheets of pure gold.

⁵Solomon's workers used panels of pine wood to line the main hall of the temple. Then they covered those panels with very thin sheets of pure gold. On them they carved images of palm trees and designs that resembled chains.

⁶They decorated the temple with very valuable stones. The gold that they used was from the land of Parvaim.

⁷They covered the ceiling beams, doorframes, walls and doors of the temple with very thin sheets of gold. They also carved statues of winged creatures on the walls. ⁸They also built the very holy place inside the temple. It was nine meters long, the same as the temple's width. The width of the very holy place was the same. They covered its walls with sheets of pure gold that altogether weighed about twenty metric tons. ⁹Each gold nail weighed about one-half a kilogram. They also covered the walls of the upper rooms with thin sheets of gold.

¹⁰Solomon's workers made two statues of creatures with wings to put inside the very holy place. They covered those statues with very thin sheets of gold. ¹¹⁻¹²Each statue had two long wings. One wing of each statue touched the wall of the temple. The other wing of each statue touched a wing of the other statue. The wingspan of each cherub was about four and three-fifths meters across. One wing of each cherub touched the wall, while the other reached to the middle of room and touched the inner wing of the other cherub. Each wing was two and one-third meters long.

¹³It was nine meters from the outer wing of the one statue to the outer wing of the other statue. The statues faced the doorway leading to the main room.

¹⁴Solomon's workers made a curtain to separate the main room from the very holy place. It was made of blue, purple, and red thread and fine linen. Figures of winged creatures were embroidered on the curtain. ¹⁵They made two bronze pillars and put them at the entrance of the temple. They were each sixteen meters high. A separate piece was attached to the top of each pillar; each of the top pieces was two and one-third meters high. ¹⁶The workers made carvings that resembled chains and put them on top of the pillars. They made carvings that resembled pomegranates and attached them to the chains. There were one hundred of them. ¹⁷They set up the pillars in front of the temple, one the south side of the entrance and the other on the north side. The one of the south side was named Jakin and the one on the north side was named Boaz.

Chapter 4

¹Solomon's workers made a square bronze altar, nine meters long on each side, and four and three-fifths meters high. ²They also made a very large round tank that was called "The Sea," and it had a circumference of fourteen meters. ³Below the outer rim there were small figures of bulls that were set in a circle, the bulls were placed 45 centimeters apart around the whole circle. The bulls were cast together in two rows, and they were also cast together with the metal basin that was called "The Sea." (Each row had three hundred figures of bulls.)

⁴"The Sea" was set on twelve large figures of bulls, with the bulls facing outward. Three bulls faced north, three faced west, three faced south, and three faced east. ⁵The sides of the tank were eight centimeters thick. The tank's brim was fashioned like the brim of a cup; it resembled a lily blossom. The tank held sixty-six kiloliters of water.

⁶The craftsmen also made ten basins for washing the articles that were to be used in making offerings, and they set five on the south side, and five on the north side. In them the utensils used for the burnt offering were washed, and the priests washed themselves in the large bronze tank that was called "The Sea."

⁷The craftsmen also made ten gold lampstands according to how Solomon had instructed them. They put them in the temple, five on the south side and five on the north side.

⁸They made ten tables and put them in the temple, five on the south side and five on the north side. They also made one hundred gold basins.

⁹They constructed one courtyard for the priests, and a larger courtyard for the other people. They made doors for the courtyards and covered them with thin sheets of bronze. ¹⁰They placed the large tank that was called "The Sea" at the southeast corner of the temple.

¹¹They also made pots and shovels for the ashes of the altar, and other small bowls.

So Hiram and his workers finished the work that King Solomon had given him to do at the temple of God. ¹²These were the things that they made:

the two large pillars

the two bowl shaped tops on top of the pillars

the two sets of carvings that resembled chains to decorate the tops of the two pillars

¹³the four hundred carvings that resembled pomegranates that were placed in two rows, they were made to decorate the tops of the two pillars.

¹⁴The pomegranate carvings also were used to decorate the stands, and the basins that were placed on them,

¹⁵the very large tank called "The Sea," and the figures of twelve bulls underneath it,

¹⁶the pots, shovels, meat forks, and all the other things needed for the work at the altar.

All those things that Hiram-Abi and his craftsmen made for King Solomon were of bronze that they polished for it to gleam brightly. ¹⁷They made them by pouring melted bronze into the clay molds that Hiram-Abi had set up near the Jordan River between the cities of Succoth and Zarethan. ¹⁸All of those things that Solomon told them to make used a very large amount of bronze, so great was the amount they used that no one knew how much it all weighed.

¹⁹Solomon's workers also made all these things that they later put into the temple:

the golden altar,

the tables on which the priests put the bread to display before God,

²⁰the pure gold lampstands and the pure gold lamps, in which the priests put oil to burn in front of the very holy place (as God had told Moses that the priests should do),

²¹the pure gold decorations that resembled flowers,

and the lamps and tongs.

²²The workers also made the pure gold wick trimmers and bowls for sprinkling, and dishes and incense burners,

the gold doors of the temple,

the gold inner doors leading to the very holy place,

the gold doors leading to the main hall.

Chapter 5

¹After Solomon's workers had finished building the temple, Solomon put in the temple storerooms everything that his father David had dedicated to Yahweh—all the silver and gold and all the other things that were used at the temple.

²Then King Solomon summoned to Jerusalem all the elders of Israel, all the leaders of the tribes and of the families. He wanted them to join in bringing to the temple Yahweh's sacred chest from Mount Zion, where it was in the part of the city called the city of David. ³So all the leaders of Israel gathered together with the king, during the Festival of Shelters, in the seventh month.

⁴When they had all arrived, the descendants of Levi lifted up the sacred chest, ⁵and they carried it and the sacred tent and the sacred things that were inside it. The priests, who were also descended from Levi, carried them. ⁶King Solomon and many of the other people of Israel who had gathered there walked in front of the sacred chest. And they sacrificed a huge amount of sheep and bulls. No one was able to count them because there were very many.

⁷The priests then brought the sacred chest into the very holy place, into the inner room of the temple, and they placed it under the wings of the figures of winged creatures. ⁸The wings of those figures spread out over the sacred chest and over the poles by which it was carried. ⁹The poles were very long, with the result that they could be seen by people who were standing in the entrance to the very holy place, but they could not be seen by anyone standing outside the temple. Those poles are still there. ¹⁰The only things that were inside the sacred chest were the two stone tablets that Moses had put there at Mount Sinai, where Yahweh had made a covenant with the Israelites after they came out of Egypt.

¹¹Then the priests left the holy place in the temple. All the priests who were there set themselves apart to serve the priestly duties, without concern for which group they were from. ¹²All the descendants of Levi who were musicians—Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, their sons and their other relatives—stood on the east side of the altar. They were wearing linen clothes, and they were playing cymbals, harps, and lyres. There were 120 other priests who were blowing trumpets. ¹³The men blowing trumpets, those playing the cymbals and other musical instruments, and the singers, made music together, praising Yahweh and singing this song:

"Yahweh is good to us;

he faithfully loves us forever."

Then suddenly the temple was filled with a cloud. ¹⁴The glory of Yahweh filled the temple, with the result that the priests were not able to continue doing their work.

Chapter 6

¹Then Solomon prayed, "Yahweh, you said that you would live in a dark cloud. ²But now I have built a glorious temple for you to live in forever!"

³Then while all the people stood there, Solomon turned toward the people and asked God to bless them. ⁴He said to them,

"Let us praise Yahweh, the God to whom we Israelites belong, who has caused to happen what he promised to my father David. What he said to David was this:

⁵'From the time that I brought my people out of Egypt, I have never chosen a city in Israel in which a temple should be built for people to worship me there. Nor did I choose anyone to be the leader of my Israelite people. ⁶But now I have chosen Jerusalem to be the place for people to worship me, and I have chosen you, David, to rule my Israelite people.'"

⁷Then Solomon said further, "My father David wanted to build a temple for Yahweh, the God to whom we Israelites belong. ⁸But Yahweh said to him, 'It is good that you wanted to build a house for me. ⁹However, you are not the one who I want to build the temple, It is one of your own sons who will build it.'

¹⁰And Yahweh has done what he promised to do. I have become the king of Israel to rule after my father, and I am ruling the people, as Yahweh promised, and I have arranged for this temple to be built for us to worship Yahweh,

the God to whom we Israelites belong. ¹¹I have put the sacred chest in the temple, in which are the stone tablets showing the covenant that Yahweh made with us Israelite people.”

¹²Then Solomon stood in front of the altar that was in front of the people of Israel who had gathered there. He spread out his hands as he began to pray. ¹³Now His workers had built a bronze platform there for him to stand on, which was two and one-third meters square and one and one-half meters high. They had put it in the outer courtyard. Solomon mounted that platform and then knelt down in front of all the people of Israel who had gathered there, and he spread out his arms toward heaven. ¹⁴Then he prayed,

“Yahweh, the God to whom we Israelite people belong, there is no God like you in heaven or on the earth. You solemnly promised in your covenant that you would faithfully love us, and that is what you have done for us who earnestly do what you want us to do.

¹⁵You have done the things that you promised my father David, who served you very well, that you would do. Truly, you promised to do those things for him, and today we see that by your power you have caused it all to happen.

¹⁶So now, Yahweh, the God we Israelites worship Israel, as you promised your servant David, my father, please make sure that he will always have a descendant who will be king of Israel. For you promise you would do this if his descendants were faithful to you. ¹⁷So now, God of us Israelite people, cause what you promised David, who served you well, to become true.

¹⁸But, my God, will you really live on earth among us? This temple I have built cannot contain you; not even the universe and heaven itself can contain you. ¹⁹But Yahweh, my God, please listen to my prayer, while I am pleading with this day and do what I am requesting. ²⁰Always protect this temple, this place where you said you would be present, in order that you might always hear me when I pray, for I am your servant. ²¹Listen to me when I pray, and listen to your Israelite people when they pray, whether we are here, or even if we just face in this direction. Listen from heaven, where you live; and when you hear us pray, forgive us.

²²If people accuse someone of doing something wrong to another person, and if they bring him in front of your altar outside this holy temple, and if he says, ‘I did not do that; may God punish me if I am not telling the truth,’ ²³then please listen from heaven and decide who is telling the truth. Then punish the person who is guilty as he deserves to be punished, and do good to the other person as a reward for his innocence.

²⁴And suppose that your Israelite people are defeated by their enemies because they sinned against you, and forced to go to some distant country. Suppose further that they turn away from their sinful behavior and face in the direction of this temple and acknowledge that you have justly punished them; and suppose that they beg you to forgive them. ²⁵Then please listen to them from heaven and forgive your them for the sins that they have committed, and bring them back to this land that you gave to our ancestors.

²⁶When you do not allow any rain to fall because the people have sinned against you—then, if they stop acting sinfully and humbly pray to you, you who are present in this place, ²⁷then listen from heaven and forgive the sins of your people. Teach them the right way to conduct their lives. Then send rain on the land that you gave to your people forever.

²⁸And when the people of this land experience famines, or if there is a plague or mildew or locusts or grasshoppers, or when their enemies surround any of their cities in order to attack them—if any of these disaster happens to them— ²⁹and then if your Israelite people earnestly plead, or if even just one person does so—if they stretch out their hands toward this temple and pray to you because they know the weakness and sorrow in their own hearts— ³⁰then listen from your home in heaven and forgive them. You alone know what each person is thinking, so reward each person according to everything that he does. ³¹Do this in order that they might honor you and conduct their lives as you want them to, all the time that they live in this land that you gave to our ancestors.

³²There will be some foreigners who do not belong to your Israelite people who have come here from countries far away because they have heard that you are very great and powerful. If they turn toward this temple and pray,

³³then from your home in heaven please listen to their prayer and do for them what they request you to do. Do that in order that all the people groups in the world will honor and obey you, as your people of Israel do. And do this so that they will know that you are present in this temple that I have built.

³⁴When you send your people to go and attack their enemies, if they pray to you, no matter where they are, and if they turn toward this city that you have chosen and toward this temple that I have caused to be built to honor you, ³⁵then will you please listen from heaven to their prayers. Listen to what they plead for you to do, and give them help.

³⁶It is true that everyone sins. So when your people sin against you, and you become angry with them, you might allow their enemies to capture them and take them to their countries, even to countries that are far away. ³⁷When that happens, while they are in those distant countries, if they say 'We have sinned; we have done things that are wrong and have done things that are very wicked,' ³⁸suppose that they repent very sincerely and pray facing this land that you gave their ancestors, and facing this city that you chose, and facing this temple that I have built for you to be present in. ³⁹Then from your home in heaven listen to their prayer, and listen to them while they plead for your help, and do what they ask you to do, and forgive your people who have sinned against you.

⁴⁰Now, my God, look at us as we pray to you in this place, and please listen to us.

⁴¹Yahweh our God, come and stay in this place with the sacred chest,

the chest that shows that you are powerful.

Yahweh God, cause your priests to know clearly that you have rescued them.

Cause us your people to rejoice because of all the good things that you do for us.

⁴²Yahweh God, do not reject me, the king whom you have appointed to be the king of Israel;

do not forget how faithfully were to David, your servant, because of your covenant with him."

Chapter 7

¹When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from the sky and burned up the animals that the people had sacrificed, as well as the other offerings. And the power and light of Yahweh filled the temple. ²The light was extremely bright, with the result that the priests could not enter the temple of Yahweh. ³When all the Israelite people who were there saw the fire coming down and the light of Yahweh above the temple, they prostrated themselves with their faces touching the stone pavement. They worshiped and thanked Yahweh, saying,

'Yahweh is always good to us;

he will love us forever, as he promised to do.'

⁴⁻⁵Then the king and all the people who were there dedicated the temple to Yahweh by offering more sacrifices to him. King Solomon offered twenty-two thousand cattle and 120,000 sheep and goats to be sacrificed. ⁶The priests stood in their positions, and the other descendants of Levi stood in their positions holding the musical instruments to praise Yahweh, instruments that King David had ordered to be made for praising Yahweh and thanking him. They sang, "He faithfully loves us forever." Opposite the other descendants of Levi the priests stood, blowing their trumpets, while all the Israelite people were standing and listening.

⁷Solomon dedicated the middle part of the courtyard in front of the temple. Then he presented offerings to be completely burned there along with the fat of the animals to be sacrificed to maintain fellowship with Yahweh. The priests burned them there in the courtyard because in addition to those things there were offerings of flour, with the result that there was not enough space on the bronze altar to burn all those sacrifices.

⁸Solomon and the other people celebrated the Festival of Shelters for seven days. There was a huge group of people who celebrated with him. Some of them came from as far away as Lebohamath in the far north and from the border of Egypt in the far south. ⁹On the eighth day they gathered again to worship Yahweh. They had celebrated the dedication of the altar for seven days and the Festival of Shelters for seven days. ¹⁰Then on the next day Solomon sent them to their homes. They were very joyful because of all the good things that Yahweh had done for David and Solomon and for all his Israelite people.

¹¹In this way, Solomon's workers finished building the temple and Solomon's palace. And Solomon finished doing everything else that he had planned to do. ¹²Then Yahweh appeared to him one night in a dream and said to him, "I have heard your prayer, and I have chosen this temple to be the place where my people will offer sacrifices to me.

¹³When I prevent any rain from falling, or when I command locusts to eat all the crops, or when I send a plague among my people, ¹⁴then if the people who belong to me, are sorry for their sins and stop doing them, and if they plead with me for me to forgive, then I will indeed listen from heaven. I will forgive them for having sinned, and I will cause them to prosper again. ¹⁵I will listen to them when they pray to me in this place. ¹⁶I have decided to be present in this temple, and I have set apart it for myself. I will protect it for all time.

¹⁷And as for you, if you obey me as David, your father, did, and if you do all that I command you to do, and if you obey all my laws and decrees, ¹⁸I will make sure that your descendants will always be kings, which is what I promised to David your father, when I told him, 'Persons from your descendants will always be the kings of Israel.'

¹⁹What will I do to you Israelites when you stop worshiping me? What will I do when you disobey the decrees and commands I have given to you? And what will I do when you start worshipping other gods? ²⁰This is what I will do: I will cause you to be driven away from this land that I have given to you, and I will reject the temple that I have set apart for myself. I will make people from all the other people groups laugh about what happened to house where Yahweh was worshiped. ²¹Although this temple is now so magnificent, when that happens, all the people who pass by will be appalled, and they will say, 'Why has Yahweh done terrible things like this to this country and to this temple?' ²²And others will reply, 'It happened because they rejected Yahweh, the God to whom their ancestors belonged, the one who brought their ancestors out of Egypt, and they have chosen to worship other gods and try to please them. And that is why Yahweh has caused them to experience all these disasters.'"

Chapter 8

¹Solomon's workers took twenty years to build the temple and his palace. ²Then his workers rebuilt the cities that King Hiram had given back to him, and Solomon sent Israelites to live in those cities. ³Solomon's army then went to the town of Hamathzobah and captured it. ⁴They also rebuilt walls around the city of Tadmor in the wilderness, and in the region of Hamath, for all the towns where they kept supplies. ⁵They rebuilt the cities of Upper Beth Horon and Lower Beth Horon, and built walls around them with gates and bars for the gates. ⁶They also rebuilt the city of Baalath and all the cities where supplies were kept, and the cities where Solomon's chariots and horses were kept. Solomon's workers built whatever he wanted them to build, in Jerusalem and in Lebanon, and in other places in the area that he ruled.

⁷Solomon forced people from many other groups who were not Israelites to work for him as if they were slaves. They were people from the Heth, Amor, Periz, Hiv, and Jebus people groups. ⁸They were descendants of groups whom the Israelites had not completely destroyed. Solomon forced them to become his laborers, and they are still that at this present time. ⁹But Solomon did not force Israelites to work for him. Israelites became his soldiers and commanders of his chariots and his chariot drivers. ¹⁰They were also King Solomon's chief officials. There were 250 of them, and they supervised the workers.

¹¹Solomon brought his wife, who was the daughter of the king of Egypt, to the place that his workers had built for her in the place outside Jerusalem called the city of David. He said, "I do not want my wife to live in the palace that

my father King David's workers built, because the sacred chest was in that palace for a while, and any place where the sacred chest has been is holy."

¹²On the altar that Solomon's workers had built in front of the entrance to the temple, Solomon brought many offerings that were to be completely burned. ¹³He did that obeying what sacrifices Moses had declared should be made every day, on the Sabbath days, to celebrate each day on which there was a new moon, and on the three other festivals that were celebrated each year: the Festival of Bread with No Yeast, the Festival of Harvest, and the Festival of Shelters. ¹⁴Obeying what his father David had commanded, Solomon appointed the groups of priests for their work, and he appointed the descendants of Levi to lead the people while they sang to praise Yahweh, and while they assisted the priests in their daily work. He also appointed groups of them to guard all the gates, because that was also what David, God's servant, had commanded. ¹⁵The priests and other descendants of Levi obeyed completely everything that the king commanded, including the order to take care of the storerooms.

¹⁶They did all the work of building the temple that Solomon told them to do, until it was all completed. In the way they finished building the temple.

¹⁷Then some of Solomon's men went to the cities of Ezion Geber and Elath on the coast of the Sea of Reeds, next to a region that belonged to the Edom people group. ¹⁸King Hiram sent him from the city of Tyre some ships that were commanded by his officers. They were men who were experienced sailors. These men went in the ships with Solomon's men to the region of Ophir and brought back about fifteen metric tons of gold, which they delivered to King Solomon.

Chapter 9

¹The queen who ruled the Sheba area in Arabia heard that Solomon had become famous, so she traveled to Jerusalem to ask him questions that were difficult to answer. She came with a large group of servants, and she brought camels that were loaded with spices, and valuable gems. When she arrived, she shared her thoughts with him. ²Solomon answered all her questions. He explained everything that she asked about, even things that were very difficult.

³The queen realized that Solomon was very wise. She saw his palace, ⁴she saw the food that was served on his table every day, she saw where his officials lived, their uniforms, the servants who served the food and wine, and the sacrifices that he took to the temple to be offered. She was extremely amazed.

⁵She said to the king, "Everything that I heard in my own country about you and about how wise you are is true!

⁶But I did not believe it was true until I came here and saw it myself. You are extremely wise and rich, even more than what people told me. ⁷The men who work for you are very fortunate! Your servants who are constantly standing in front of you and listening to the wise things that you say are also fortunate! ⁸I praise Yahweh your God, who has shown that he is pleased with you by appointing you to be the king of Israel for him. God has always loved the Israelite people, and he desires to assist them forever, so he has appointed you to be their king, in order that you will rule them fairly and righteously."

⁹Then the queen gave to Solomon about four metric tons of gold and a large amount of spices and gemstones. Never had King Solomon received more spices than the queen gave him at that time.

¹⁰⁻¹²King Solomon gave to the queen from Sheba everything that she wanted. He gave her more than she had given to him. Then she and those who came with her returned to her own land.

The men of Hiram worked with the men of Solomon to bring gold from Ophir. They also brought a large amount of alnum wood. The wood was used to make steps for the house of Yahweh, and they also used the wood to make harps and lyres for those who played music. No one in all the land of Judah had ever seen anything like the quality of the alnum wood that was used to make the steps and the instruments.

¹³Each year there was brought to Solomon about twenty-two metric tons of gold. That was in addition to the taxes paid to him by the merchants and traders. ¹⁴Also, the kings of Arabia and the governors of the districts in Israel brought gold and silver to Solomon.

¹⁵King Solomon's workers took this gold and hammered it into thin sheets and covered two hundred large shields with those thin sheets of gold; they put about six and one-half kilograms of gold on each shield. ¹⁶His workers made three hundred smaller shields. They covered each of them with one and three-quarters kilograms of gold. Then the king put those shields in the House of the Forest of Lebanon.

¹⁷His workers also made for him a large throne. Part of it was covered with ivory and part of it was covered with very fine gold. ¹⁸There were six steps in front of the throne. There was a gold footstool that was attached to the throne. At each side of the throne there was an armrest, and alongside each armrest there was a statue of a lion.

¹⁹So there were twelve statues of lions. No throne like that had ever existed in any other kingdom. ²⁰All of Solomon's cups were made of gold, and all the various dishes in the House of the Forest of Lebanon were made of gold. They did not make things from silver, because during the years that Solomon ruled, silver was not considered to be valuable. ²¹The king had a fleet of ships capable of sailing far out on the ocean. It sailed along with Hiram's merchant fleet. Every three years the fleet brought gold, silver, ivory, apes, and baboons.

²²King Solomon became richer and wiser than any other king on the earth. ²³Kings from all over the world wanted to come and listen to the wise things that Solomon said, things that God had put into his mind. ²⁴All the people who came to him brought presents: things made from silver or gold; they also brought robes, weapons, spices, horses, and mules. The merchants continued to do this every year.

²⁵Solomon had four thousand stalls for his horses and chariots, and twelve thousand men who rode horses. Solomon put some of them in Jerusalem and some of them in other cities where he kept his chariots. ²⁶Solomon ruled over all the kings in the area from the Euphrates River in the northeast, to the region of Philistia in the west, and to the border of Egypt in the south. ²⁷During the years that Solomon was king, he caused silver to become as common in Jerusalem as stone; and he caused cedar trees in the foothills of Judah to become as plentiful as sycamore fig trees. ²⁸Solomon's agents brought horses to the land of Judah from Egypt and from many other lands.

²⁹Lists of all the other things that Solomon did are written in the scrolls written by the prophet Nathan, and by the prophet Ahijah from the city of Shiloh, and in the scroll in which was written the visions of the prophet Iddo (a scroll in which Iddo's visions about Jeroboam son of Nebat were also written). ³⁰Solomon ruled in Jerusalem over all of Israel for forty years. ³¹Then Solomon died; they buried him in the part of Jerusalem called 'the city of David.' And his son Rehoboam became the next king.

Chapter 10

¹All the people of northern Israel went to the city Shechem in order to appoint Rehoboam to be their king. So Rehoboam also went there. ²Now Jeroboam son of Nebat had fled to Egypt to escape from King Solomon. While he was in Egypt he heard about the people wanting to appoint Rehoboam to be their king, and so he returned to Israel from Egypt. ³So the leaders of the northern tribes summoned Jeroboam, and he went with them to talk to Rehoboam. They said to Rehoboam, ⁴"Your father Solomon forced us to work very hard, but if you charge us fewer taxes than we were paying to him, and if you make us work not so much we will serve you faithfully."

⁵He replied, "Come back three days from now, and I will give you my answer." So those leaders and Jeroboam left.

⁶Then King Rehoboam consulted his older men who had advised his father Solomon while he was still alive. He asked them, "What shall I say to answer these men?"

⁷They replied, "If you will be kind to these people and do things that will please them, and if you say kind things to them when you answer them, they will always serve you."

⁸But he did not agree with what the older men advised him to do. Instead, he consulted the younger men who had grown up with him, who were now his advisors. ⁹He said to them, "What do you say that I should answer the men who are asking me to reduce the work and taxes that my father required from them?"

¹⁰The young men who had grown up with him replied, "Those men have said that your father forced them to work very hard for him, so they want you to reduce the work and taxes that your father required from them. But this is what you should tell them: 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist.' ¹¹My father required you people to work hard and pay high taxes, but I will make the loads you carry even heavier. My father whipped you with leather whips, but I will whip you with scorpions."

¹²Three days later, Jeroboam and all the leaders came to King Rehoboam again, as he had instructed them to do.

¹³The king ignored the advice of the older men and spoke harshly to the Israelite leaders. ¹⁴He told them what the younger men had advised. He said, "My father put heavy burdens of work and taxes on you, but I will put heavier burdens on you. It was as though he beat you with whips, but I will beat you with scorpions!" ¹⁵So the king did not pay any attention to the people's leaders. All this happened in order that what Yahweh wanted would occur, what he had told the prophet Ahijah about Jeroboam becoming king of the ten tribes out of the twelve.

¹⁶When the Israelite leaders realized that the king did not pay any attention to what they said, they shouted,

"We do not want anything to do with this descendant of King David!

We will not pay attention to what this grandson of Jesse says!

You people of Israel, let us go home!

As for this descendant of David, he can look after his family himself!"

So the Israelite leaders returned to their homes.

¹⁷And after that, the only Israelite people whom Rehoboam ruled over were those who lived in the territory of the tribe of Judah, in the countryside and in the cities, towns, and villages.

¹⁸Then King Rehoboam went with Adoniram to talk to the Israelite people. Adoniram was the man who supervised all the men who were forced to work for Rehoboam. But the Israelite people killed him by throwing stones at him. When that happened, King Rehoboam quickly got in his chariot and escaped to Jerusalem. ¹⁹Ever since that time, the people of the northern tribes of Israel have been rebelling against the descendants of King David.

Chapter 11

¹When Rehoboam arrived in Jerusalem, he gathered 180,000 of the best soldiers from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. He wanted them to fight against the northern tribes of Israel and defeat them, in order that he could rule all twelve tribes again.

²But Yahweh spoke to the prophet Shemaiah and said this to him: ³"Go and tell this to Solomon's son Rehoboam, the king of Judah, and to all the Israelite people of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin: ⁴Yahweh says that you must not go to fight against the people of Israel; it is as though they are your own relatives. All of you must go home. What has happened is what Yahweh wanted to happen." So Shemaiah went and told that to them, and they all paid attention to what Yahweh had commanded them to do; they did not attack Jeroboam and his soldiers.

⁵Rehoboam lived in Jerusalem, and his workers built walls around several of the cities and towns in Judah to protect them against enemy attacks. ⁶In the area that belonged to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin they built walls around Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa, ⁷Beth Zur, Soko, Adullam, ⁸Gath, Mareshah, ⁹Adoraim, Lachish, Azekah, ¹⁰Zorah, Aijalon, and Hebron. ¹¹He also appointed an army commander in each of those cities and towns, and gave them supplies

of food, olive oil, and wine. ¹²He put shields and spears in all the cities and made them well-protected. So he continued to control the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

¹³The priests and other descendants of Levi throughout Israel supported Rehoboam. ¹⁴The descendants of Levi abandoned their property and their pastureland, and they came to Jerusalem and to other places in Judah, because Jeroboam and his sons would not allow them to do the work of priests of Yahweh. ¹⁵Instead, Jeroboam appointed the priests that he wanted to work at the altars he commanded to be built on the hills all around the cities, to offer sacrifices to the idols that he commanded to be made that resembled goats and calves. ¹⁶And people from every tribe in Israel who wanted to worship Yahweh, the God to whom the Israelites belonged, went with the descendants of Levi to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices to Yahweh, the God whom their ancestors worshiped. ¹⁷They caused the kingdom of Judah to be strong, and for three years they were happy that Solomon's son Rehoboam was the king. During that time they conducted their lives righteously as David and Solomon had done previously.

¹⁸Rehoboam married Mahalath. She was the daughter of David's son Jerimoth, and her mother was Abihail, the daughter of Eliab and granddaughter of Jesse. ¹⁹Rehoboam and Mahalath had three sons: Jeush, Shemariah, and Zham. ²⁰Later Rehoboam married Maacah, the daughter of Absalom, and they had four sons: Abijah, Attai, Ziza, and Shelomith. ²¹Rehoboam loved Maacah more than he loved any other of his wives and slave wives. Altogether he had eighteen wives and sixty slave wives, and twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters.

²²Rehoboam appointed his son Abijah to be the leader of his older and younger brothers, because he wanted to appoint Abijah to be the next king. ²³He very wisely sent some of his other sons to other cities in the areas of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and to other cities that had walls around them. He gave them plenty of supplies and many wives.

Chapter 12

¹After Rehoboam had obtained complete control of his kingdom, he and all the other people in Judah stopped obeying the laws of Yahweh. ²As a result, after Rehoboam had been king for almost five years, Yahweh sent Shishak, the king of Egypt, with his army to attack Jerusalem. ³He brought with his army twelve hundred chariots and sixty thousand soldiers who rode horses and a very large number of troops from two regions in Libya, and from Ethiopia. ⁴They captured many of the cities in Judah that had walls around them, and they came as far as Jerusalem.

⁵Then the prophet Shemaiah came to Rehoboam and the other leaders of Judah who had gathered in Jerusalem because they were afraid of the army of Shishak. Shemaiah said to them, "Yahweh says this: 'You have abandoned me; so now I am abandoning you, to allow you to be captured by the army of Shishak.'"

⁶Then the king and the other Israelite leaders humbled themselves and said, "What Yahweh is doing to us is just."

⁷When Yahweh realized that they had humbled themselves, he gave this message to Shemaiah: "Because they have humbled themselves, I will not allow them to be destroyed. Instead, I will soon rescue them. I will not use Shishak's army to completely destroy the people of Jerusalem, ⁸but they will conquer Jerusalem and force the people there to do what Shishak wants them to do. As a result, the people of Jerusalem will learn that it is better to serve me than to serve the kings of other countries."

⁹When Shishak's army attacked Jerusalem, they took away the valuable things that were in the temple of Yahweh and in the king's palace. They took everything that was valuable, including the gold shields that Solomon's workers had made. ¹⁰So King Rehoboam's workers made bronze shields to be used instead of the gold ones, and gave the bronze shields to the commanders of the men who guarded the entrance to the his palace. ¹¹After that, whenever the king went to the temple, the guards went with him, carrying those bronze shields. Then when the king left, they would return the shields to the guards' room.

¹²Because Rehoboam humbled himself, Yahweh stopped being angry with him, and did not get rid of him. Instead, he caused good things to happen in Judah.

¹³King Rehoboam again obtained complete control in Jerusalem, and continued to be the king of Judah. He was forty-one years old when he became the king. He ruled for seventeen years in Jerusalem, which is the city that Yahweh had chosen from all the tribes in Israel to be the place in which people were to worship him. ¹⁴Rehoboam's mother's name was Naamah. She was from the Ammon people group. Rehoboam did evil things because he did not try to find out what Yahweh wanted him to do.

¹⁵An account of all the things that Rehoboam did while he was the king, and lists of the members of his family, are in the scrolls written by the prophets Shemaiah and Iddo. The armies of Rehoboam and Jeroboam were constantly fighting each other. ¹⁶When Rehoboam died, he was buried in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David. Then his son Abijah became the king.

Chapter 13

¹When Jeroboam had been ruling Israel for almost eighteen years, Abijah became the king of Judah. ²He ruled in Jerusalem for three years. His mother was Micaiah, the daughter of Uriel from the city of Gibeah.

There was a war between the armies of Abijah and Jeroboam. ³Abijah went into the battle, taking 400,000 of his capable soldiers, and Jeroboam prepared to fight them, taking 800,000 of his capable troops.

⁴Abijah stood on the top of Mount Zemaraim, which is in the hill country that belonged to the tribe of Ephraim, and he shouted, "Jeroboam and all you other people of Israel, listen to me! ⁵You certainly know that Yahweh, whom we Israelites are to worship, made a covenant with David by which he promised that his descendants would always rule over Israel. ⁶But Jeroboam, who was only an official of David's son King Solomon, rebelled against his king. ⁷And when Solomon's son Rehoboam became king and was still young and inexperienced, a group of worthless scoundrels gathered around you and rebelled against him.

⁸And now you are planning to fight against the kingdom that Yahweh established to be governed by David's descendants. It is true that you have a huge army, and you and your soldiers have brought with you the golden statues of calves that Jeroboam's workers made to be your gods. ⁹But you drove out the priests that Yahweh appointed, men who are descendants of Aaron the first high priest. You also drove out the descendants of Levi, and you appointed the priests that you wanted, like the people of other countries do. And so one may even come to set himself apart for the work of a priest, even sacrificing a young bull and seven rams as a sign of his ordination and his dedication to become a priest. But what kind of priest is he? He is consecrated to serve idols that are not gods at all!

¹⁰As for us, Yahweh is our God, and we have not abandoned him. Our priests who serve Yahweh are descendants of Aaron, and the descendants of Levi assist them. ¹¹Every morning and every evening they present to Yahweh offerings to be completely burned on the altar, and they burn fragrant incense. Each week they place on the sacred table the bread to display before Yahweh, and each morning they light the lamps that are on the gold lampstand. We are obeying what Yahweh our God requires us to do. But you have abandoned him; you no longer worship him.

¹²Yahweh is with us; he is our leader. The priests whom he has appointed will blow their trumpets to signal that we are ready to fight a battle against you. You Israelite men, do not fight against Yahweh, the God to whom your ancestors belonged, because you will not be successful against him."

¹³While he was speaking, Jeroboam sent some of his troops around the army of Judah. So while the soldiers who were with Jeroboam were in front of the army of Judah, the other soldiers of Israel were behind the army of Judah.

¹⁴When the soldiers of Judah turned and saw that they were going to be attacked from the front and from the rear, they cried out to Yahweh. The priests blew their trumpets, ¹⁵and the men of Judah shouted a loud battle cry. Then Yahweh enabled Abijah and the army of Judah to defeat Jeroboam and the army of Israel. ¹⁶The soldiers of Israel

fled from the soldiers of Judah, and God enabled the army of Judah to defeat them. ¹⁷Abijah and his troops struck the capable soldiers of Israel and killed 500,000 of them, the best soldiers there were in Israel.

¹⁸So the soldiers of Israel were defeated, and the soldiers of Judah won the battle because they trusted in Yahweh, the God to whom their ancestors belonged.

¹⁹Abijah's army pursued the army of Jeroboam, and they captured from the people of Israel the cities of Bethel, Jeshanah, and Ephron, and the surrounding villages. ²⁰During the remaining time that Abijah ruled, Jeroboam did not become powerful again. Then Yahweh caused him to become very ill, and he died.

²¹But Abijah became more powerful. He married fourteen wives and had twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters.

²²An account of the other things that Abijah did while he was the was king, including what he said and what he did, is in the scroll written by the prophet Iddo.

Chapter 14

¹When Abijah died, he was buried in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David. His son Asa became the king. While Asa was ruling, there was peace in Judah for ten years.

²Asa did things that Yahweh his God considers to be right and good. ³His workers got rid of the altars to worship foreign gods that were at the hilltops where the idols were worshiped. They smashed the stone pillars and cut down the poles that were there for the goddess Asherah. ⁴Asa commanded the people of Judah to worship only Yahweh, the God whom their ancestors worshiped, and to seek his will and obey his commands. ⁵His workers destroyed all the places where idols were worshiped on the hilltops, and the altars for burning incense to idols, in every town in Judah. As a result, there was peace while Asa ruled the kingdom of Judah. ⁶His workers built cities and constructed walls around them. No army attacked Judah during those years, because Yahweh enabled them to have peace.

⁷Asa said to the people of Judah, "We should protect these towns by building walls around them, with watchtowers and gates that have bars. This country still belongs to us because we have requested Yahweh our God to help us. We requested him for his help, and he has given us peace in our entire country." So they built buildings and succeeded in what they did.

⁸Asa had an army of 300,000 men from Judah. They all carried large shields and spears. He also had 280,000 men from the tribe of Benjamin in his army. They also carried shields, and also bows and arrows. They were all brave soldiers.

⁹Zerah, a man from Ethiopia, attacked Judah with an army of one million men and three hundred chariots. He came to Mareshah, southwest of Jerusalem. ¹⁰Asa went with his army to fight against them, and both armies took their positions in the Zephathah Valley.

¹¹Then Asa cried out to Yahweh his God, saying, "Yahweh, there is no one like you who can help those who have very little power to resist large armies. We have come to fight against this huge army. Yahweh, you are our God; do not allow anyone to defeat you."

¹²Then Yahweh enabled Asa and the army of Judah to defeat the army from Ethiopia. They fled, ¹³and Asa and his army pursued them to the southwest as far as Gerar. A huge number of the soldiers from Ethiopia were killed, with the result that those who were not killed were unable to fight anymore. They were completely defeated by Yahweh and his army, and the men of Judah carried away a great amount of their possessions. ¹⁴The men of Judah were able to destroy the villages near to the city of Gerar because Yahweh had caused the people there to become terrified and unable to fight. The army of Judah took away all the valuable things from those villages. ¹⁵They also attacked the places where the local people who took care of domestic animals had set up their tents, and they took away large flocks and herds of sheep and goats and camels. Then they returned to Jerusalem.

Chapter 15

¹The Spirit of God came on Azariah son of Oded. ²Azariah went to talk with Asa and said to him, "Asa and all you men of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, listen to me. Yahweh is with you whenever you are with him. If you request him to help you, he will help you, but if you abandon him, he will abandon you. ³For many years the Israelite people did not have the true God, and they did not have priests or God's laws. ⁴But when they experienced trouble, they turned to Yahweh, our God, and requested him to help them. And he helped them. ⁵At that time, people were not safe when they traveled, because all the people who lived in those countries were experiencing many difficulties. ⁶The people of various nations were crushed by armies of other nations, and people in some cities were crushed by armies from other cities, because God was allowing them to experience many difficulties. ⁷But you people, you must be strong and do not become discouraged, because God will reward you for what you do to please him."

⁸Asa was encouraged when he heard what Azariah son of Oded, prophesied. Asa commanded his workers to remove all the detestable idols from everywhere in the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and from the towns that his soldiers had captured in the hills of the tribe of Ephraim. Asa's workers repaired the altar where people offered sacrifices to Yahweh that was in front of the entrance to the temple in Jerusalem. ⁹He gathered together all the people of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and many people had come from the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon who were living among them. He was able to do that because many people had left those tribes in Israel, when they realized that Yahweh was helping him.

¹⁰After Asa had been ruling for almost fifteen years, in the third month of that year, those people gathered in Jerusalem. ¹¹At that time they sacrificed to Yahweh seven hundred bulls and seven thousand sheep and goats, from the animals that they had captured when they defeated the army of Ethiopia. ¹²They solemnly made an agreement to worship very sincerely Yahweh, the God whom our ancestors worshiped. ¹³They promised to execute all those who would not worship Yahweh, including those who were important and who were not important, both men and women. ¹⁴They shouted and blew trumpets and other horns while they solemnly promised to do that. ¹⁵All the people who were living in Judah were happy to promise to do that because they had solemnly promised to do it very sincerely. They eagerly asked Yahweh to guide them, and he helped them. So he enabled them to have peace throughout their country.

¹⁶King Asa's grandmother Maacah had made a disgusting pole for worshiping the goddess Asherah. So Asa commanded his workers to cut down that pole, chop it into pieces, and burn it in the Kidron Valley. He did not allow Maacah to continue to influence the people because she was the mother of the previous king. ¹⁷Although Asa's workers did not get rid of places where people worshiped idols, and those high places remained on the hills throughout Asa's reign. But still, Asa was determined to do what pleased Yahweh all during the years that he was alive. ¹⁸He ordered his workers to bring into God's temple all the silver and gold and other valuable items that he and his father had dedicated to God.

¹⁹There were no more wars in Judah until Asa had been ruling Judah almost thirty-five years.

Chapter 16

¹When Asa had been ruling Judah for almost thirty-six years, King Baasha of Israel went with his army to attack Judah. They captured the town of Ramah north of Jerusalem and started to build a wall around it, in order to prevent any people from entering or leaving the area in Judah that King Asa ruled.

²So Asa told his workers to take all the silver and gold that was in the storerooms of the temple and in his own palace, and take and give it to Ben Hadad, the king of Aram, who was ruling in Damascus. He sent him a message, saying, ³"I want there to be a peace treaty between me and you, like there was between my father and your father.

Look, I am sending you much silver and gold. So please cancel the treaty that you have made with Baasha, the king of Israel, in order that he will take his soldiers away from attacking mine, because he will be afraid of your army."

⁴Ben Hadad agreed to do what King Asa suggested. He sent the commanders of his armies with their soldiers to attack some of the towns in Israel. They captured Ijon, Dan, Abel Maim, and all the cities in the tribe of Naphtali where supplies were kept. ⁵When Baasha heard about that, he commanded his troops to stop fortifying Ramah.

⁶Then King Asa gathered all the men of Judah, and they took away from Ramah all the stones and timber that Baasha's men had been using to build the wall around that town. They took those materials to the cities of Geba and Mizpah north of Jerusalem and built walls around them.

⁷At that time the prophet Hanani went to King Asa and said to him, "Because you relied on the king of Aram and not on Yahweh our God, the army of the king of Aram has escaped from you. ⁸Remember that the huge armies from Ethiopia were very powerful. But when you relied on Yahweh, he enabled your army to defeat them. ⁹That happened because Yahweh sees what is happening all over the earth, and he strengthens those who completely trust him. You have done a very foolish thing, so from now on other armies will be fighting your army."

¹⁰Asa was very angry with the prophet because of what the prophet had said. So he commanded his officials to put Hanani in prison. At that same time, he started to treat some of his people very cruelly.

¹¹All the things that Asa did while he was ruling, from the time he started to rule until he died, are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. ¹²When Asa had been ruling for almost thirty-nine years, he was afflicted with a disease in his feet. The disease was very severe, but in spite of that, he did not request help from Yahweh. Instead he sought help only from doctors. ¹³Asa had been ruling for about forty-one years when he died. ¹⁴People buried him in the tomb that his workers had made for him in the part of Jerusalem called "the city of David." They laid his corpse on a bed covered with spices and various perfumes that had been mixed together. They also lit a huge fire to honor him.

Chapter 17

¹Then Asa's son Jehoshaphat became the king of Judah, and he enabled his army to become very strong, with the result that they could resist attacks from the army of Israel. ²He put soldiers in all the cities in Judah around which they had built walls, and he put soldiers in other places in Judah and in the towns in the tribe of Ephraim that soldiers of his father Asa had captured.

³Yahweh helped Jehoshaphat because in his earlier years, when he first began his rule, he did the things that pleased Yahweh just as his ancestor King David had done. Jehoshaphat did not worship Baal. ⁴Instead, he sought advice from the God whom his father had worshiped, and he obeyed God's commands and he did not do the evil things that the kings of Israel kept doing. ⁵Yahweh enabled him to completely control his kingdom. All the people of Judah brought gifts to him, with the result that he became very rich and was greatly honored. ⁶He was completely devoted to doing what pleased Yahweh. His workers got rid of the places on hilltops where idols were worshiped and the places where poles were set up and used to worship the goddess Asherah all throughout Judah.

⁷When he had been ruling Judah for almost three years, he sent some of his officials—Ben-Hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Micaiah—to teach the people in various cities in Judah. ⁸With them he sent several descendants of Levi—Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tob-Adonijah, along with two priests, Elishama and Jehoram. ⁹They took with them a scroll on which was written the laws of Yahweh and they taught them to the people in all the towns throughout Judah.

¹⁰The people in all the kingdoms surrounding Judah became very afraid of what Yahweh might do to punish them if they fought against Judah, so they did not try to fight Jehoshaphat's army. ¹¹Some people from Philistia brought gifts to Jehoshaphat, and they also brought to him the silver that he demanded that they pay to him. Some Arabs brought to him 7,700 rams and 7,700 goats.

¹²Jehoshaphat continued to become more powerful. His workers built forts and places to store supplies in various towns in Judah. ¹³Then they put large amounts of supplies in those storehouses.

Jehoshaphat also placed in Jerusalem soldiers who were experienced. ¹⁴The leaders and numbers from each tribe were as follows:

From the tribe of Judah, Adnah was the leader of the soldiers, and he commanded 300,000 soldiers.

¹⁵His assistant was Jehohanan, who commanded 280,000 soldiers.

¹⁶Next was Zicri's son Amasiah, who volunteered to serve Yahweh in this way; he commanded 200,000 courageous soldiers.

¹⁷From the tribe of Benjamin, Eliada, who was a brave soldier, was the leader of the soldiers; he commanded 200,000 men who had bows, arrows, and shields.

¹⁸Next was Jehozabad, who commanded 180,000 men who had weapons for fighting battles.

¹⁹Those were the soldiers who served the king in Jerusalem, in addition to the men whom the king had placed in the other cities in Judah that had walls around them.

Chapter 18

¹Jehoshaphat became very wealthy and was greatly honored. But then he arranged for one of his family to marry someone from the family of King Ahab of Israel. ²Several years later, he went down from Jerusalem to Samaria to visit Ahab. Ahab welcomed him, and the people who had come with him by slaughtering many sheep and cattle for a feast. ³Then he asked Jehoshaphat, "Will you and your army go with my army to attack the city of Ramoth in the region of Gilead?" Jehoshaphat replied, "My soldiers and I are at your orders. We will go to war when you tell us to go." ⁴Then he added, "But we should ask Yahweh first, to find out what he wants us to do."

⁵So the king of Israel gathered all his four hundred prophets and asked them, "Should we go to fight the people of Ramoth, or should we not?"

They replied, "Yes, go and attack them because God will enable your army to defeat them."

⁶But Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there no prophet of Yahweh here whom we can ask?"

⁷The king of Israel replied, "There is still one man here, whom we can ask to find out what Yahweh wants. His name is Micaiah son of Imlah. But I hate him because he never says that anything good about me. He always predicts that bad things will happen to me."

Jehoshaphat replied, "King Ahab, you should not say that!"

⁸So the king of Israel told one of his officials to summon Micaiah immediately.

⁹Now the king of Israel and the king of Judah were sitting there on thrones, wearing their royal robes. They were sitting by the gate of Samaria, and all the prophets were busy saying words of prophecy to them.

¹⁰One of them whose name was Zedekiah son of Kenaanah, had made from iron something that resembled the horns of a bull. He proclaimed to Ahab, "This is what Yahweh says: 'With horns like these, your army will keep attacking the army of Aram like a bull attacks another animal, until you completely destroy them.'" ¹¹All the other prophets of Ahab agreed. They said, "Yes! If you attack Ramoth in Gilead, you will be successful, because Yahweh will enable you to defeat them."

¹²The messenger who went to summon Micaiah said to him, "Listen to me! All the other prophets are predicting the same thing. You had better do as they are doing!"

¹³But Micaiah said, "As surely as Yahweh lives, I will tell him only what he tells me to say."

¹⁴When Micaiah arrived, the king of Israel asked him, "Should we go to attack Ramoth, or not?"

Micaiah replied, "Sure, go! Yahweh will enable your army to defeat them!"

¹⁵But King Ahab wished to appear reverent toward Yahweh in front of Jehoshaphat. He said to Micaiah, "I keep telling you to say only what Yahweh tells you to say!"

¹⁶Then Micaiah replied, "The truth is that in a vision I saw all the troops of Israel scattered on the mountains. They seemed to be like sheep that did not have a shepherd. And Yahweh said, 'Their master has been killed. So tell them all to go home peacefully.'"

¹⁷Ahab turned to Jehoshaphat and said, "I told you that Micaiah never says anything good will happen to me! He only predicts bad things for me."

¹⁸But Micaiah continued, saying, "Listen to what Yahweh showed to me! In a vision I saw Yahweh sitting on his throne, with all the armies of heaven standing around him, on his right side and on his left side. ¹⁹And Yahweh said, 'Who can persuade Ahab, the king of Israel, to go to fight against the people of Ramoth, in order that he may be killed there?'

Some suggested one thing, and others suggested something else.

²⁰Finally one spirit forward and said, 'I can do it!'

Yahweh asked him, 'How will you do it?'

²¹The spirit replied, 'I will go and inspire all of Ahab's prophets to tell lies.' Yahweh said, 'You will be successful; go and do it!'

²²So now I tell you that Yahweh has caused your prophets to lie to you. Yahweh has decided that something terrible will happen to you."

²³Then Zedekiah walked over to Micaiah and slapped him on his face. He said, "Do you think that Yahweh's spirit left me in order to speak to you?"

²⁴Micaiah replied, "You will find out for yourself to which of us Yahweh's spirit has truly spoken on the day when you go into a room of some house to hide from the Aramean soldiers!"

²⁵King Ahab commanded his soldiers, "Arrest Micaiah and take him to Amon, the governor of this city, and to my son Joash. ²⁶Tell them that I have commanded that they should put this man in prison and give him only bread and water. Do not give him anything else to eat until I return safely from the battle!"

²⁷Micaiah replied, "If you return safely, it will be clear that it was not Yahweh who told me what to say to you!" Then he said to all those who were standing there, "Do not forget what I have said to King Ahab!"

²⁸So the king of Israel and the king of Judah led their armies to Ramoth in Gilead. ²⁹King Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "I will put on different clothes, in order that no one will recognize that I am the king. But you should wear your royal robe." So the king of Israel disguised himself, and they both went into the battle.

³⁰The king of Aram had told his soldiers who were driving the chariots, "Attack only the king of Israel! Do not attack anyone else." ³¹So when the soldiers who were driving the Aramean chariots saw Jehoshaphat wearing the royal robes, they thought, "He must be the king of Israel!" ³²So they turned to attack him. But when Jehoshaphat cried

out, Yahweh helped him, and they realized that he was not the king of Israel. And God caused them to stop pursuing him.

³³But one Aramean soldier shot an arrow at Ahab, without knowing who he was. The arrow struck Ahab between the places where the parts of his armor joined together. Ahab told the driver of his chariot, "Turn the chariot around and take me out of here! I have been severely wounded!" ³⁴The battle continued all the day. Ahab was sitting propped up in his chariot, facing the Aramean soldiers. And late in the afternoon, when the sun was setting, he died.

Chapter 19

¹When King Jehoshaphat returned safely to his palace in Jerusalem, ²the prophet Jehu son of the prophet Hanani, went out of the city to meet the king, and said to him, "It was not right for you to help a wicked man and to love those who hate Yahweh. Because of what you have done, Yahweh is angry with you. ³But you have done some good things; you got rid of the poles in this country for worshiping the goddess Asherah, and you have been determined to do what pleases God."

⁴Jehoshaphat lived in Jerusalem. But one time, like he had done once previously, he went out among all the people in the country, from the city of Beersheba in the far south to the hill country of the tribe of Ephraim in the far north, and he convinced them to return to worshiping Yahweh, the God whom their ancestors worshiped. ⁵He appointed judges throughout Judah, in each of the cities that had walls around them. ⁶He told them, "Make your decisions carefully, because you are judging cases not in order to please people, but to please Yahweh. And he will be watching you whenever you make a decision. ⁷So now revere Yahweh and judge cases carefully and do not forget that Yahweh our God never acts unjustly, and that he never does what people want because they offer him money."

⁸In Jerusalem, Jehoshaphat also appointed some priests and other descendants of Levi and some leaders of Israelite families to be judges. He told them to do what Yahweh's laws said was right when they settled disputes. Those men lived in Jerusalem. ⁹He told them this: "You must always do your work faithfully, honoring Yahweh. ¹⁰In every dispute that your fellow Israelites who live in the cities want you to settle, you must warn them to not sin against Yahweh by telling lies during the trial—regardless of whether the trial is about murder, or about various laws, or about various royal decrees. If you do not warn them, God will punish you. Do this so that he does not become angry with you or your fellow Israelites.

¹¹Amariah, the high priest, will supervise you in any matter that Yahweh is concerned about, and Zebadiah son of Ishmael, the leader of the tribe of Judah, will supervise you in any matter that I am concerned about. And the descendants of Levi will assist you. Act courageously, and I pray that Yahweh will help those who do their work well."

Chapter 20

¹Later armies from Moab and Ammon and some soldiers from region of Meun, near Edom, came to fight against Jehoshaphat's army.

²Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, "A huge army is coming to attack your army. They are coming from the region of Edom, from the other side of the Dead Sea. They have already come to Hazezon Tamar!" Another name for that place is Engedi. ³Jehoshaphat became very afraid, so he decided to ask Yahweh what he should do. He also proclaimed that all the people of Judah should fast. ⁴The people of Judah gathered together to request Yahweh to help them. They came to Jerusalem from every town in Judah to seek help from Yahweh.

⁵Then Jehoshaphat stood up in front of the people of Judah in front of the new courtyard of the temple, ⁶and he prayed this:

"Yahweh, the God whom our ancestors belonged to, you rule from heaven. You rule over all the kings and nations on earth. You can do anything; no one can successfully oppose you. ⁷Our God, you drove out the people who lived in this land while your Israelite people advanced into it, and you certainly gave it to us who are descendants of Abraham, so that the land would belong to us forever. ⁸Our ancestors lived here and built a temple at which to worship you. At that time they prayed: ⁹'If we experience disasters, either from our enemies attacking us, or from disease or hunger, we will assemble at this temple in your presence, for you agreed to be present here. We will plead with you because of the things we are suffering, and you will hear us and will rescue us.'

¹⁰You would not allow our Israelite ancestors to enter the countries of Ammon, Moab, or Edom when they were traveling from Egypt to Canaan. So our ancestors turned away from those areas and did not attack the people there and did not destroy them. But now they are coming here to attack us. ¹¹We did good things for them. But now look at how they are repaying us by trying to drive out us from the land that you gave to our ancestors to belong to them and their descendants forever! ¹²So, our God, please punish them. We cannot defeat the enormous army that is coming to attack us. We do not know what to do, but we are depending on you to help us."

¹³All the men of Judah and their wives, children, and babies were standing there in the presence of Yahweh while Jehoshaphat prayed.

¹⁴Then the Spirit of Yahweh came upon Jahaziel son of Zechariah, who was son of Benaiah, who was son of Jeiel, who was son of Mattaniah. He was a descendant of Levi and a descendant of Asaph. He stood up in front of the whole group that was gathered there, ¹⁵and said, "King Jehoshaphat and all you who live in Jerusalem and in other places in Judah, listen! This is what Yahweh says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this huge army that is coming to attack you, because it is not you who will win this battle. It is God who will win it. ¹⁶Tomorrow march down toward them. They will be climbing up through the pass of Ziz north of En Gedi. You will meet them at the end of the gorge near wilderness of Jeruel. ¹⁷But you will not need to fight this battle. You soldiers from Jerusalem and other places in Judah, just take your positions, and then stand still and watch what will happen. You will see Yahweh rescue you. Do not be afraid or discouraged. March toward them tomorrow, and Yahweh will be with you.'"

¹⁸Jehoshaphat prostrated himself with his face touching the ground, and all the people of Jerusalem and other places in Judah who were there knelt down to worship Yahweh. ¹⁹Then some descendants of Levi who were descendants of Kohath and Korah stood up and loudly praised Yahweh, the God whom the Israelites belonged to.

²⁰Early the next morning the army left to go to the desert near the town of Tekoa. While they were leaving, Jehoshaphat stood up and said to them, "You people of Jerusalem and other places in Judah, listen to me! Trust in Yahweh our God; if you do that, you will be strong. Trust in what his prophets have said; if you do that, you will be successful." ²¹Then, after consulting with the people's leaders, Jehoshaphat assigned some persons to sign praise of Yahweh for his greatness, and for these individuals to lead the entire army to the enemy. They were singing,

"Thank Yahweh,

because he faithfully loves us forever."

²²While they began to sing and praise Yahweh, Yahweh caused some enemy soldiers to unexpectedly attack the others from Ammon and Moab and Edom. They defeated the others in their army. ²³Then the soldiers from Ammon and Moab attacked the soldiers from Edom and completely annihilated them. After they finished slaughtering the men from Edom, they slaughtered each other.

²⁴When the soldiers from Judah came to the place where they could look down over the wilderness, they looked toward that huge army of their enemies, and they saw only corpses lying on the ground. No one had survived.

²⁵So Jehoshaphat and his soldiers went to take the possessions of their enemies, and they saw that there was a lot of equipment and clothing and other valuable things; there was more than they could carry away. There were very many things, with the result that it took three days for them to collect them all. ²⁶The following day they gathered in Berakah Valley and praised Yahweh there. That is why that valley is still called Berakah, which means praise.

²⁷Then while Jehoshaphat led them, all the soldiers who were from Jerusalem and other places in Judah returned to Jerusalem. They were happy because Yahweh had enabled them to defeat their enemies. ²⁸When they arrived at Jerusalem, they went to the temple, playing harps, lutes, and trumpets.

²⁹People in the kingdoms of the nearby countries became very afraid when they heard how Yahweh had fought against the enemies of the Israelites. ³⁰Then there was peace in the kingdom that Jehoshaphat ruled, because God had enabled him to have peace throughout the country.

³¹Jehoshaphat continued to rule Judah. He was thirty-five years old when he became king of Judah, and he ruled in Jerusalem for twenty-five years. His mother's name was Azubah, the daughter of Shilhi. ³²He did things that were pleasing to Yahweh, like his father Asa had done, and he did not stop doing those things. ³³But he did not get rid of the places where idols were worshiped on the hills in the countryside, and most of the people still not erious about obeying the God whom their ancestors had worshiped.

³⁴A record of the other things that Jehoshaphat did while he ruled, from the beginning until he died, is in the scrolls written by the prophet Jehu son of Hanani. They are also in the scroll on which was written a record of the activities of the kings of Israel.

³⁵Later, Jehoshaphat made a treaty with Ahaziah, the king of Israel, who was a very wicked king. ³⁶They agreed that their workers would build a fleet of ships to use to buy and sell things with other countries. After those ships were built at Ezion Geber, ³⁷Eliezer son of Dodavahu of the city of Mareshah, prophesied against Jehoshaphat. He said, "You have made an alliance with Ahaziah, who is a wicked king. Therefore, Yahweh will destroy the ships that your workers have made." And the ships were wrecked, and were never able to sail to other countries.

Chapter 21

¹Then Jehoshaphat died and was buried where his ancestors were buried in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David. His son Jehoram became the next king of Judah. ²Jehoram's younger brothers were Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azariah, Michael, and Shephatiah. ³Before Jehoshaphat died, he had given them large gifts of silver and gold and other valuable things. He also appointed them to rule various cities in Judah that had walls around them. But he appointed Jehoram to be the king of Judah, because Jehoram was his oldest son.

⁴After Jehoram was completely in control of his father's kingdom, he caused all of his younger brothers to be killed, along with some of the leaders of the nation. ⁵Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became the king, and he ruled in Jerusalem for eight years. ⁶But he did many of the evil things that the kings of Israel had done. He did many things that Yahweh said were evil, things that the family of Ahab had done, because he married one of Ahab's daughters. ⁷However, because of the covenant that Yahweh had made with King David, Yahweh did not want to get rid of the descendants Judah.

⁸While Jehoram was ruling, the people in the region of Edom rebelled against the king of Judah and appointed their own king. ⁹So Jehoram and his officers and his men in chariots went to Edom. There, the army of Edom surrounded them. However, Jerhoram and his army attacked them and broke free from them; then they escaped during the night. ¹⁰But the king of Judah was never able to regain control of Edom, and Edom is still not controlled by Judah. The people in the city of Libnah between Judah and Philistia also rebelled against Judah. Those things happened because Jehoram stopped obeying Yahweh, the God whom his ancestors belonged to.

¹¹On the hilltops in Judah he had also built high places, where they worshiped idols. He caused the people of Judah to stray away from Yahweh by worshiping foreign gods.

¹²One day, Jehoram received a letter from the prophet Elijah. Elijah had written this:

"This is what Yahweh, the God whom your ancestor King David worshiped, says: 'You have not done things that please me like your father Jehoshaphat did or what King Asa did.'

¹³Instead, you have continually done the evil things that the kings of Israel have done. You have encouraged the people in Jerusalem and other places in Judah to stop worshiping Yahweh and to be unfaithful to him. And you have killed your brothers, men who were better than you are.'

¹⁴So now Yahweh is about to cause disasters to strike very severely the people in your kingdom and even your own children and your wives, and everything that you own. ¹⁵And you yourself will have an intestinal disease that will continue to become worse, and you will suffer from it until you die."

¹⁶Then Yahweh stirred up some men from the Philistia people group and some Arabs who lived near the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, where people from Ethiopia had settled, to come against Jehoram. ¹⁷Their army invaded Judah and took away from Jerusalem all the valuable things that they found in the king's palace; they also took away his sons and wives. His youngest son, Jehoahaz, was the only one of his sons whom they did not take away.

¹⁸After that happened, Yahweh caused Jehoram to be afflicted with an intestinal disease that no doctor could cure.

¹⁹About two years later, while he had great pain, he died because of that disease. The people of Judah had made bonfires to honor his ancestors when they died, but they did not make a bonfire for Jehoram.

²⁰Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became the king, and he ruled in Jerusalem for eight years. No one regretted it when he died. His corpse was buried in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David, but he was not buried where the other kings of Judah had been buried.

Chapter 22

¹The people of Jerusalem appointed Jehoram's youngest son Ahaziah to be their king, because the men from Philistia who had invaded Judah with some Arabs had killed all of Jehoram's other sons. So Ahaziah started to rule Judah.

²Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he became king. He ruled in Jerusalem for one year. His mother's name was Athaliah, a granddaughter of King Omri of Israel.

³King Ahab conducted his life just like the members of Ahab's family had done, because his mother encouraged him to do things that are wrong. ⁴He did many things that Yahweh said were evil, like the descendants of Ahab had done, because after Ahaziah's father died, they became his advisors. And Ahaziah died as a result of heeding their bad advice. ⁵Before he died, he did what they encourage him to do by going with Joram son of King Ahab of Israel, to fight against the army of Hazael, the king of Aram, at Ramoth Gilead. Joram was wounded there by the Arameans.

⁶After he was wounded, Joram went back to the city of Jezreel to recover from his battle wounds. Then King Ahaziah went down to Jezreel to see Joram son of King Ahab, because he had been wounded.

⁷God caused Ahaziah to die as a result of his going to visit Joram. When Ahaziah arrived, he went with Joram to meet Jehu son of Nimshi, whom Yahweh had appointed to kill all the descendants of Ahab. ⁸While Jehu and the men who were with him were killing Ahab's descendants, they found the leaders of Judah and the sons of Ahaziah's relatives who had been working for Ahaziah, and they killed all of them also. ⁹Then Jehu went to find Ahaziah, and his soldiers found Ahaziah while he was hiding in the city of Samaria. They brought him to Jehu and executed him. Then they buried his corpse, because they said, "He deserves to be buried, because he was a descendant of Jehoshaphat, who tried hard to please Yahweh." After that, there were no descendants of Ahaziah who were powerful enough to become the kings of Judah.

¹⁰When Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, saw that her son had been killed, she commanded that all the members of Ahaziah's family who might become king must be executed. ¹¹But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram, took Joash, Ahaziah's very young son, away from the other sons of the king who were about to be murdered, and she hid him and his nursemaid in a bedroom in the temple. Because Jehosheba, who was the daughter of King

Jehoram and the wife of the high priest Jehoiada, was Ahaziah's sister, she was able to hide the child, with the result that Athaliah could not kill him. ¹²He remained hidden there for six years while Athaliah ruled Judah.

Chapter 23

¹The next year, Jehoiada decided that it was necessary to do something. So he made an agreement with the army commanders of groups of one hundred soldiers: Azariah son of Jeroham, Ishmael son of Jehohanan, Azariah son of Obed, Maaseiah son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat son of Zicri. ²They went throughout Judah and gathered the descendants of Levi and the leaders of Israelite families from all the cities. When they came to Jerusalem, ³the whole group went to the temple and made an agreement with the young king there. Jehoiada said to them, "This is the son of the previous king of Judah. So he is the one who must rule, like Yahweh promised that the descendants of King David must do.

⁴So this is what you must do: One-third of you priests and other descendants of Levi who are starting to work on the Sabbath day must guard the temple doors. ⁵One-third of you must guard the king's palace, and one-third of you must guard the Foundation Gate. All the other people will be in the courtyard outside the temple. ⁶Only the priests and the descendants of Levi who work there are allowed to enter the temple, because they are set apart for that work. All the others must remain in the courtyard, obeying what Yahweh has commanded. ⁷You descendants of Levi must stand around the young king, each of you with your weapon in your hand. You must kill anyone else who tries to enter the temple. And stay close to the king, wherever he goes."

⁸So the descendants of Levi and all the men of Judah did what Jehoiada had told them. He did not allow anyone to go home after he finished his work on that day. Each commander took his men, the ones who were finishing their work on that Sabbath day and those who were starting their work on that day. ⁹Then Jehoiada gave each of the commanders the spears and the large and small shields that had been put there in the temple by King David. ¹⁰He commanded all the guards to stand in their positions, each with his sword in his hand, all around the king—near the altar and near the temple, from the north side to the south side.

¹¹Then Jehoiada and his sons brought Joash out. They put a crown on his head and gave him a scroll on which were written the rules that the kings needed to obey, and they proclaimed that he was now the king. They anointed him with olive oil and shouted, "We desire that the king will live for many years!"

¹²When Athaliah heard the noise being made by the people running toward the king and cheering, she ran to the temple. ¹³She saw the young king there standing alongside the pillar at the entrance of the temple, which is the place at the temple where the kings usually stood. The army commanders and trumpet players were standing beside the king, and all the people of Judah were rejoicing and blowing trumpets, and singers with their musical instruments were leading the people while they praised God. Then Athaliah tore her robes and started screaming, "You are committing treason!"

¹⁴Jehoiada the high priest said to the army commanders, "Kill her, but do not kill her at the temple of Yahweh!" Then he said to them, "Bring Athaliah out between your ranks and kill anyone who tries to follow her!" ¹⁵She tried to flee, but they seized her as she reached the Horse Gate, before the palace, and they killed her there. ¹⁶Then Jehoiada made an agreement that he and the king and all the other people would be Yahweh's people. ¹⁷Then all the people who were there went to the temple of Baal and tore it down. They smashed the altars of Baal. They also killed Mattan, the priest of Baal, in front of those altars.

¹⁸Then Jehoiada appointed the priests, who were also descended from Levi, to take care of the temple. They were part of the group to whom King David had given various work at the temple, to sacrifice the animals that were to be completely burned on the altar, doing what was written in the laws that Moses had given to them. He also told them to rejoice and sing, which was also what David had commanded. ¹⁹He also put gatekeepers at the gates of the temple in order that anyone who was unacceptable to God would not be allowed to enter.

²⁰Jehoiada took with him the army commanders, the important men, the leaders and many others, and brought the king down from the temple. They went into the palace through the Upper Gate, and put the king on his throne. ²¹Then all the people of Judah rejoiced. And there was quiet throughout the city, because Athaliah had been killed.

Chapter 24

¹Joash was seven years old when he became the king of Judah, and he ruled in Jerusalem for forty years. His mother's name was Zibiah; she was from the city of Beersheba. ²Joash did what pleased Yahweh all during the years that Jehoiada was the high priest. ³Jehoiada chose two women to be Joash's wives. And they bore Joash sons and daughters.

⁴Some years later, Joash decided that the temple should be repaired. ⁵He summoned the priests and other descendants of Levi and said to them, "Go to the cities of Judah and collect from the people the tax money that they are required to pay each year, and use that money to pay for repairing the temple. Do it immediately." But the descendants of Levi did not do it immediately.

⁶So the king summoned Jehoiada and said to him, "Why have you not required the descendants of Levi to bring to Jerusalem from various places in Judah the annual tax that Moses said that the people of Judah must pay, for taking care of the sacred tent?"

⁷The temple needed to be repaired because the sons of that wicked woman Athaliah had entered into the temple and had wrecked some of the things, and had also used some of the sacred items that were in it for the worship of Baal.

⁸So, obeying what the king commanded, the descendants of Levi made a chest and placed it outside the temple, at one of the entrances. ⁹Then the king sent letters everywhere in Judah, requesting everyone to bring their tax money to the temple, as Moses had required the Israelite people to do when they were in the wilderness. ¹⁰All the officials and the other people agreed, and they brought their contributions gladly. They put the money into the chest until it was full. ¹¹Whenever the descendants of Levi brought the chest to the king's officials, and they saw that there was a lot of money in it, the king's secretary and the assistant to the high priest would take all the money from the chest and then put the chest back in its place. They did this frequently, and they collected a huge amount of money. ¹²The king and Jehoiada gave the money to the men who were supervising the work of repairing the temple. Those men hired stoneworkers and carpenters to repair the temple. They also hired men who worked with iron and bronze to repair the things in the temple that were broken.

¹³The men who did the repair work worked hard, and the work of repairing the temple progressed. They rebuilt the temple to make it as it was originally, and they made it stronger. ¹⁴When they had finished the repair work, they brought to the king and to Jehoiada the money that they had not used for the repairs. That money was used to make things to use for performing the sacrifices that were to be completely burned on the altar, and to make bowls and other gold and silver things for the temple. As long as Joash lived, the people continually brought to the temple sacrifices that were to be completely burned on the altar.

¹⁵Jehoiada became very old. He died when he was 130 years old. ¹⁶He was buried where the kings had been buried, in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David. He was buried there because of the good things that he had done in Judah for God and for God's temple.

¹⁷After Jehoiada died, the leaders of Judah went to Joash, bowed in front of him, and persuaded him to do what they wanted. ¹⁸So they and the other people stopped worshiping at the temple, and they started worshiping the poles dedicated to the goddess Asherah and other idols. Because they were doing those sinful things, God was very angry with the people of Jerusalem and with the people in other places in Judah. ¹⁹Although Yahweh sent prophets to persuade them to return to him, and although the prophets testified about the evil things that they had done, the people would not pay attention.

²⁰Then God's Spirit came upon Zechariah son of Jehoiada the high priest. He stood up front of the people and said, "This is what God says: Why are you violating Yahweh's commandments? You will not be able prosper if you do that. Since you have stopped obeying Yahweh, he will stop taking care of you."

²¹But the people planned to kill Zechariah. And the king permitted them to kill him. They killed him by throwing stones at him in the temple courtyard. ²²King Joash forgot about how Zechariah's father Jehoiada had been kind to him. So he commanded them to kill Jehoiada's son Zechariah, who said as he was dying, "I hope that Yahweh will see what you are doing to me and punish you for doing it."

²³Near the end of that year, the army of Aram marched to attack the army of Joash. They invaded Judah and attacked Jerusalem and killed all the leaders of the people. They seized many valuable things and sent them to their king in Damascus, their capital city. ²⁴The army of Aram that came to Judah was very small, but Yahweh allowed them to defeat the large army of Judah, because he was punishing Joash and the other people of Judah for having abandoned him, the God whom their ancestors worshiped. ²⁵Before the battle ended, Joash was severely wounded. Then his officials decided to kill him for murdering Zechariah son of Jehoiada the high priest. They killed him while he was in his bed. They buried him in the part of Jerusalem called the city of David, but they did not bury him in the place where the other kings had been buried.

²⁶Those who conspired to kill him were Zabad son of Shimeath, who was a woman from the Ammon people group, and Jehozabad son of Shimrith, who was a woman from the Moab people group. ²⁷An account of the things that were done by the sons of Joash and the many prophecies about Joash and what he did to repair the temple are written in the commentary on the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. Then after Joash died, Amaziah his son became the king.

Chapter 25

¹Amaziah was twenty-five years old when he became the king of Judah, and he ruled from Jerusalem for twenty-nine years. His mother was Jehoaddan. She was from Jerusalem. ²Amaziah did many things that pleased Yahweh, but he did not want to do them very much. ³As soon as he was in complete control of his kingdom, he caused others to execute the officials who had murdered his father. ⁴But he did not order their sons to be executed; he obeyed what was in the laws that Moses had written. In those laws Yahweh had commanded, "People must not be executed because of what their children have done, and children must not be executed for what their parents have done. People must be executed only for the sins that they themselves have committed."

⁵Amaziah summoned the men of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin to come to Jerusalem, and there he put them into groups, each clan in a group by themselves. Then he appointed officers to command each group. Some officers commanded one hundred men, and some commanded one thousand men. They counted the men who were at least twenty years old; altogether there were 300,000 men. They were all men who were ready to be in the army, and able to fight well, using spears and shields. ⁶Amaziah also hired 100,000 capable soldiers from Israel; he paid almost 3,300 kilograms (or about three and one-third metric tons) of silver for them.

⁷But a prophet came to him and said, "Your Majesty, you must not allow those soldiers from Israel to march with your soldiers, because Yahweh does not help the people of the tribe of Ephraim or from anywhere else in Israel.

⁸Even if your soldiers go and fight courageously in battles, God will cause your enemies to defeat you; do not forget that God has the power to help armies or to cause them to be defeated."

⁹Amaziah asked that prophet, "If I do that, what about 3,300 kilograms of silver that I paid to hire those soldiers from Israel?"

The prophet replied, "Yahweh is able to pay you back more money than you paid to hire those soldiers."

¹⁰So Amaziah told those soldiers from Israel to return home. They left to go home, but they were very angry with the king of Judah for not allowing them to stay and fight.

¹¹Then Amaziah became brave, and he led his army to the Valley of Salt. There they killed ten thousand soldiers from the Edom people group. ¹²The army of Judah also captured ten thousand other soldiers, took them to the top of a cliff, and threw them all down over the cliff, with the result that their bodies were all smashed to pieces.

¹³While that was happening, the soldiers from Israel whom Amaziah had sent home raided cities and towns in Judea, from the city of Samaria to the city of Beth Horon. They killed three thousand people and took away a great amount of valuable things.

¹⁴When Amaziah returned to Jerusalem after his army had slaughtered the soldiers from Edom, he brought the idols that his enemies had worshiped. He set them up to be his own gods. Then he bowed down to worship them and offered sacrifices to them. ¹⁵Because of that, Yahweh was very angry with Amaziah. He sent a prophet to him, who said, "Why do you worship these foreign gods who were not even able to save their own people when your army attacked them?"

¹⁶While he was still speaking, the king said to him, "We certainly did not appoint you to be one of my advisors. So stop talking! If you say anything more, I will tell my soldiers to kill you!"

So the prophet said, "I know that God has determined to get rid of you, because you have begun to worship idols, and have not heeded my advice." Then the prophet said nothing more.

¹⁷Some time later Amaziah, the king of Judah, consulted his advisors. Then he sent a message to Jehoash, the king of Israel. He wrote, "Come and meet me face to face in battle."

¹⁸But Jehoash replied this to King Amaziah: "One time a thistle growing in the mountains in Lebanon sent a message to a cedar tree, saying, 'Give your daughter to my son in order that he can marry her.' But a wild animal in Lebanon came along and trampled the thistle under his feet. ¹⁹What I mean is that you are saying to yourself that your army has defeated the army of Edom, so you have become very proud. You can be proud of your victory, but you should not fight me. If you do, you will only make trouble for yourself. I will defeat you, and Judah with you."

²⁰But Amaziah paid no attention to Jehoash's message. This happened because God wanted Jehoash's army to defeat them, because they were worshiping the gods of Edom. ²¹So Jehoash's army attacked. Their two armies faced each other at the city of Beth Shemesh in Judah. ²²The army of Judah was badly defeated by the army of Israel, and all the soldiers of Judah fled to their homes. ²³King Jehoash's army also captured King Amaziah there. Then he brought Amaziah to Jerusalem, and his soldiers tore down the wall that was around the city, from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate. That was a section that was one-hundred and eighty meters long. ²⁴His soldiers also carried away the gold, silver, and other valuable objects from the temple that the descendants of Obed Edom had been guarding. They also took away the valuable things in the palace, and they took to Samaria some prisoners whom they had captured.

²⁵King Jehoash of Israel died, and King Amaziah of Judah lived for fifteen years after that. ²⁶An account of all the other things that Amaziah did while he was the king of Judah is written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.

²⁷From the time that Amaziah started to disobey Yahweh, some men in Jerusalem planned to kill him. He was able to escape to the city of Lachish, but those who wanted to kill him sent another group of people to Lachish and killed him there. ²⁸They put his corpse on a horse and brought it back to Jerusalem and buried it where his ancestors had been buried in what is called the city of Judah.

Chapter 26

¹All the people took Uzziah and made him their king, in the place of his father Amaziah. Uzziah was sixteen years old at that time. ²While he was the king, after his father King Amaziah had died, he had his workers rebuild the city of Elath and brought that city under the protection of Judah.

³Uzziah ruled in Jerusalem for fifty-two years. His mother was Jecoliah; she was from Jerusalem. ⁴Uzziah did the things that Yahweh said were good, like his father Amaziah had done. ⁵He set himself to seek God in the days of Zechariah. Zechariah is the one who taught him to give honor to God. For as long as he sought Yahweh, God made him successful.

⁶Uzziah and his army went to attack the army of Philistia. They tore down the walls of the cities of Gath, Jabneh, and Ashdod. Then they rebuilt the cities near Ashdod and in other places in Philistia. ⁷God helped them to fight the army of Philistia and the Arabs who lived in the city of Gur Baal, and the descendants of Meun who had come to that area from Edom. ⁸Even the Ammon people group paid taxes to Uzziah each year. So Uzziah became famous as far as the border of Egypt, because he had become very powerful.

⁹Uzziah's workers built watchtowers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate, at the Valley Gate, and at the place where the wall turns, and they placed weapons in those towers. ¹⁰They also built watchtowers in the wilderness and dug many wells. They did that to provide water for a lot of the king's cattle that were in the foothills and in the plains. Uzziah was very interested in farming, so he also stationed workers to take care of his fields, vineyards in the hills, and in the fertile areas.

¹¹Uzziah's army was trained for fighting battles. They were in groups that were always ready to go into battles. Jeiel, the king's secretary, and Maaseiah, one of the army officers, counted the men and placed them in groups. Hananiah, one of the king's officials, was their commander. ¹²The total number of the family leaders who led the strongest soldiers in battle was 2,600 in number. ¹³In the groups that those leaders commanded there was a total of 307,500 well-trained soldiers. It was a very powerful army, ready to fight the king's enemies. ¹⁴Uzziah gave to each soldier a shield, a spear, a helmet, a vest made of iron plates, a bow and arrows, and a sling for throwing stones. ¹⁵In Jerusalem his skilled workers made machines to put on the watchtowers and on the corners of the walls, to shoot arrows and to hurl large stones. He became very famous even in distant places, because God helped him very much and enabled him to become very powerful.

¹⁶But because Uzziah was very powerful, he became very proud, and that caused him to be punished. He disobeyed what Yahweh his God had commanded. He went into the temple to burn incense on the altar where God had said that only the priests should burn incense. ¹⁷Azariah, the high priest, and eighty other brave priests followed him into the temple. ¹⁸They rebuked him and said to him, "Uzziah, it is not right for you to burn incense to Yahweh because you are not set apart to serve as a priest, and only a priest can burn incense to Yahweh. The priests are the descendants of Aaron our first high priest, and you are not one of them! You must leave immediately, because you have disobeyed Yahweh our God, and he will not honor you for what you have done!"

¹⁹Now Uzziah was holding in his hand a pan for burning incense, and he became very angry with the priests. While he was expressing his anger, while he stood beside the altar of incense in front of the priests, suddenly spots of leprosy appeared on his forehead. ²⁰When Azariah the high priest and all the other priests who were there looked at him, they saw the leprosy on his forehead, so they quickly took him outside. And truly the king was eager to leave the temple, because he knew that it was Yahweh who had caused him to have that leprosy, and he did not want it to become worse.

²¹King Uzziah had leprosy until he died. Because he had leprosy, he lived in a house that was not near other houses, and he was not allowed to enter the courtyard of the temple. His son Jotham supervised the palace and ruled the people of Judah.

²²A record of all the other things that Uzziah did while he was the king of Judah was written by the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. ²³Because Uzziah was a leper, when he died they would not bury him in the royal tombs. Instead, they buried him in a nearby cemetery that the kings owned. Then his son Jotham became the king of Judah.

Chapter 27

¹Jotham was twenty-five years old when he became the king of Judah. He ruled from Jerusalem for sixteen years. His mother was Jerushah, the daughter of the priest Zadok. ²Jotham obeyed Yahweh and did what Yahweh approved. He followed the example of his father Uzziah in everything he did. (He did not, however, go into the Temple of Yahweh to burn incense as his father had done.) Yet the people of Judah continued to do the things that showed how sinful they had become.

³Jotham's workers rebuilt the Upper Gate of the temple, and they did a lot of work to repair the wall near the hill of Ophel. ⁴They built cities in the hills of Judah, and they built forts and towers for defense in the forests.

⁵During the time that he was the king of Judah, his army attacked and defeated the army of the Ammon people group. Then, every year during the next three years, he required them to pay to him about three and one-third metric tons of silver, 2,200 kiloliters of wheat, and 2,200 kiloliters of barley.

⁶Jotham faithfully obeyed Yahweh his God, and as a result he became a very powerful king.

⁷A record of everything else that Jotham did during the time that he was the king, including the wars that his army fought, is written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. ⁸After he had ruled Judah for sixteen years, he died when he was forty-one years old. ⁹He was buried in Jerusalem, and his son Ahaz became the next king of Judah.

Chapter 28

¹Ahaz was twenty years old when he became the king of Judah. He ruled from Jerusalem for sixteen years. His ancestor King David had been a good king, but Ahaz was not like David. He constantly disobeyed Yahweh ²and was as sinful as the kings of Israel had been. He made idols of the god Baal by having craftsmen cast them in metal.

³He burned incense in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. He even killed some of his own sons in fires as sacrifices. That imitated the disgusting customs that the people groups who previously lived there had done, people whom Yahweh had drive out when the Israelites were advancing through the land. ⁴He offered sacrifices to idols at the houses built upon hilltops and under every big green tree.

⁵Therefore Yahweh his God allowed his army to be defeated by the army of the king of Aram. They captured many soldiers of Judah and took them as prisoners to Damascus. The army of the king of Israel also defeated the army of Judah and killed very many of their soldiers. ⁶In one day the army of Remaliah's son, King Pekah of Israel, killed 120,000 fine soldiers in Judah. That happened because the people of Judah had abandoned Yahweh, the God whom their ancestors worshiped. ⁷Zicri, a warrior from the tribe of Ephraim, killed King Ahaz's son Maaseiah, Azrikam, who was in charge of the palace, and Elkanah, the king's assistant. ⁸The soldiers of Israel captured 200,000 of the people of Judah, including many wives and sons and daughters of the soldiers of Judah. They also seized and took back to Samaria many valuable things.

⁹But a prophet of Yahweh, whose name was Oded, was in Samaria. He went out of the city to meet the army as it was returning. He said to them, "Yahweh, the God to whom your ancestors belonged, was angry with the people of Judah, so he has handed them over to you, and you have slaughtered so many in a towering rage. ¹⁰And now you want to sin by causing men and women from Judah to become your slaves, but you have certainly offended Yahweh, our God, in this matter. ¹¹So listen to me! Send back to Judah your fellow countrymen whom you have captured, because Yahweh is extremely angry with you for what you did to them."

¹²Then some of the leaders of the tribe of Ephraim—Azariah son of Johanan, Berekiah son of Meshillemoth, Jehizkiah son of Shallum, and Amasa son of Hadlai—rebuked those who were returning from the battle. ¹³They said to them, "You must not bring those prisoners here! If you do that, Yahweh will consider that we are guilty of sinning. We are already guilty of committing many sins; do you want to cause us to be even more guilty by committing another sin? God is already very angry with us people of Israel!"

¹⁴So, while their leaders and others were watching, the soldiers released the prisoners, and also gave back to them the valuable things that they had captured. ¹⁵The leaders assigned some men to take care of the prisoners. These men took some of the clothes that the soldiers had taken from the people of Judah and gave those clothes to the people who were naked. They also gave to the prisoners sandals and other clothes, as well as things to eat and drink, and they gave them olive oil to rub on their wounds. They gave donkeys to those who were very weak, in order that they could ride on them. Then they led them all to Jericho, the city that had many palm trees. Finally those men returned to Samaria.

¹⁶About that time, King Ahaz sent a message to the king of Assyria requesting help. ¹⁷He did that because the army from the Edom people group had come again and attacked Judah and taken away many of the people of Judah as prisoners. ¹⁸At the same time, men from Philistia raided towns in the foothills and in the southern Judean wilderness. They captured the cities of Beth Shemesh, Aijalon, and Gederoth, as well as those of Soko, Timnah, and Gimzo with its nearby villages. ¹⁹Yahweh allowed those things to happen in order to humble King Ahaz, because he had encouraged the people of Judah to do wicked things and had disobeyed Yahweh very much. ²⁰Tiglath-Pileser, the king of Assyria, sent his army saying that they would help Ahaz, but instead of helping him, they caused him trouble. ²¹Ahaz's soldiers took some of the valuable things from the temple and from the king's palace and from other leaders of Judah, and sent them to the king of Assyria to pay him to help them, but the king of Assyria refused to help Ahaz.

²²While King Ahaz was experiencing those troubles, he disobeyed Yahweh even more. ²³He offered sacrifices to the gods that were worshiped in Damascus, whose army had defeated his army. He thought, "The gods that are worshiped by the kings of Aram have helped them, so I will offer sacrifices to those gods in order that they will help me." But worshiping those gods caused Ahaz and all of Israel to be ruined.

²⁴Ahaz gathered all the furnishings that were used in the temple and broke them into pieces. He locked the doors of the temple and set up altars for worshiping idols at every street corner in Jerusalem. ²⁵In every city in Judah, his workers built houses on the hilltops, and there they burned sacrifices to other gods, and that caused Yahweh, the God whom their ancestors worshiped, to be very angry with them.

²⁶A record of the other things that Ahaz did while he was the king, from when he started to rule until he died, is written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. ²⁷Ahaz died and was buried in Jerusalem, but he was not buried in the tombs where the other kings of Israel had been buried. Then his son Hezekiah became the king.

Chapter 29

¹Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he became the king of Judah. He ruled from Jerusalem for twenty-nine years. His mother was Abijah, the daughter of a man whose name was Zechariah. ²Hezekiah did things that Yahweh considered to be right, like his ancestor King David had done.

³During the first month of the first year that Hezekiah was ruling Judah, he unlocked the doors of the temple, and his workers repaired them. ⁴Then he gathered the priests and other descendants of Levi in the courtyard on the east side of the temple, ⁵and he said to them, "You descendants of Levi, listen to me! Set yourselves apart, and prepare the house of Yahweh so it is a place that honors Yahweh, whom your ancestors worshiped; carry out all the filthiness that is in the holy place. ⁶Our ancestors disobeyed God; they did many things that he says are evil, and they did things that are not pleasing to him. They abandoned this place where Yahweh lives, and they have stopped worshiping him. ⁷They locked the doors of the temple and extinguished the lamps. They did not burn any incense, and they did not offer any sacrifices that were to be completely burned on the altar in the holy place.

⁸Therefore, Yahweh has become very angry with us people of Jerusalem and other places in Judah, and he has caused other people to become frightened and horrified of us. And they ridicule us. You know this very well. ⁹That is why our fathers have been killed in battles, and our sons and daughters and our wives have been captured and taken to other countries. ¹⁰But now I intend to make a covenant with Yahweh, our God, in order that he will no

longer be angry with us. ¹¹You who are like my sons, do not waste any time. Do immediately what Yahweh wants you to do. Yahweh has chosen you to stand in his presence and offer sacrifices and burn incense."

¹²Then these descendants of Levi started to work in the temple.

From the descendants of Kohath there were Mahath the son of Amasai, and Joel the son of Azariah.

From the descendants of Merari there were Kish the son of Abdi, and Azariah the son of Jehallelel.

From the descendants of Gershon there were Joah the son of Zimmah, and Eden the son of Joah.

¹³From the descendants of Elizaphan there were Shimri and Jeiel.

From the descendants of Asaph there were Zechariah and Mattaniah.

¹⁴From the descendants of Heman there were Jehiel and Shimei.

From the descendants of Jeduthun there were Shemaiah and Uzziel.

¹⁵Those men gathered their fellow descendants of Levi and together they prepared themselves for the work of the priesthood. They took all the steps to prepare themselves so they could serve the king in Yahweh's house, because the king was following Yahweh's commands. And the Levites entered the temple to clean it up. ¹⁶They worked within the temple to purify it. They brought out into the courtyard of the temple everything that they had found in the temple that was not pleasing to Yahweh. Then the descendants of Levi took those things down to the Kidron Valley and burned them there. ¹⁷The priests and other descendants of Levi started this work on the first day of the first month and finished setting apart for the honor of Yahweh, the courtyard of the temple on the eighth day of that month, and they finished the work of setting the temple apart for the honor of Yahweh, one week later.

¹⁸Then they went to King Hezekiah and reported this: "We have purified all parts of the temple, and the altar where sacrifices are completely burned, and all the items used at the altar, the table on which the priests display the bread before Yahweh, and the things used at that table. ¹⁹Ahaz ruled over us, he disobeyed what Yahweh had commanded, and he threw away many of the tools and implements from the temple many things that should be there, but now we have brought them back, we dedicated them to Yahweh's service, and then we placed them in front of the altar of Yahweh, where they can be seen."

²⁰Early the next morning, King Hezekiah gathered together the city officials, and they went to the courtyard of the temple. ²¹They took with them seven bulls, seven rams, seven male lambs, and seven male goats to be an offering in order that Yahweh would forgive the sins of all the people in the kingdom of Judah, and in order to purify the temple. The king commanded that the priests, who were descendants of Aaron, should offer those animals to be sacrifices to Yahweh on the altar. ²²So first the priests slaughtered those bulls, and took the blood and sprinkled it on the altar. Then they slaughtered the rams and sprinkled their blood on the altar. Then they slaughtered the lambs and sprinkled their blood on the altar. ²³The goats that were slaughtered to be an offering in order that Yahweh would forgive the sins of the people were brought to the king and the others who were there. Then the king and those who were present laid their hands on those goats. ²⁴Then the priests slaughtered those goats and splashed their blood on the altar, to atone for the sins of Israel. The priests did that because the king had commanded that offerings that would be completely burned on the altar and other sacrifices should be made for all the people of Israel.

²⁵The king then told the descendants of Levi to stand in the temple with their cymbals, harps, and lyres, obeying what David and his prophets Gad and Nathan had commanded. Those were things that Yahweh had told his prophets that the descendants of Levi should do. ²⁶So the descendants of Levi went and stood in the temple, and began to play the musical instruments that King David had given to them. And the priests began to blow their trumpets.

²⁷Then Hezekiah told some of the priests to slaughter the animals that would be completely burned on the altar. When they started to slaughter the animals, the people started to sing to praise Yahweh, while the other

descendants of Levi were playing their instruments. ²⁸All the people who were there bowed to worship Yahweh, while the singers sang and the trumpeters played. They continued to do this until they had finished slaughtering all the animals that would be completely burned.

²⁹When they finished making those offerings, the king and all those who were there knelt down and worshiped Yahweh. ³⁰Then King Hezekiah and his officials commanded the descendants of Levi to praise Yahweh, singing the songs composed by David and Asaph the prophet. So they sang songs joyfully, and bowed their heads to worship.

³¹Then Hezekiah said, "You have now set yourselves apart for the honor of Yahweh. So come close to the temple and bring animals to be sacrificed, and also bring the other offerings to thank Yahweh for what he has done for you." Then those who wanted to bring animals to be completely burned on the altar brought them.

³²Altogether they brought seventy bulls, one hundred rams, and two hundred male lambs to be completely burned on the altar. ³³The other animals that they brought were six hundred bulls and three thousand sheep and goats that were set apart for the honor of Yahweh, to be sacrifices. ³⁴There were not enough priests to remove the skins from the animals that would be completely burned on the altar. So the descendants of Levi stepped in to help the priests until the work was finished. The Levites were more hard-working and dedicated than the priests were.

³⁵In addition to all the offerings that were completely burned on the altar, the priests burned the fat of the accompanying animals that were sacrificed to maintain good fellowship with Yahweh; there were also offerings of wine.

In this way the worship at the temple began again. ³⁶And Hezekiah and all the other people of Judah celebrated, because God had enabled them to do all the repair work very quickly.

Chapter 30

¹⁻³King Hezekiah, his officials, and all the other people who had gathered in Jerusalem wanted to celebrate the Passover festival. But they were not able to celebrate it at the usual time, because many of the priests had still not been able to perform all the rites of purity for themselves, so they were not allowed to do the work of that festival. Also, not everyone had come to Jerusalem to celebrate it. So they decided to celebrate the festival the following month. ⁴The king and all the other people who had gathered thought that this was a good plan. ⁵So they decided to send messages to all the cities and villages in Judah and in Israel, from Beersheba in the far south to Dan in the far north, including places in the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, to invite people to come to the temple in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover to honor Yahweh, the God whom the Israelite people worshiped. Many of the people had not previously celebrated that festival, even though it had been written in the law of Moses that they should do that.

⁶Obedying what the king commanded, messengers went throughout Judah and Israel, taking messages that had been written by the king and his officials. This is what they wrote:

"You Israelite people, you who survived after being slaves of the kings of Assyria, return to Yahweh, the God whom our great ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob worshiped, in order that he may return to you. Your fathers and your fellow countrymen did not faithfully obey Yahweh, the God whom our ancestors worshiped.

⁷Do not act like they did, because what they did caused Yahweh to punish them so severely that other people were horrified when they heard of what he had done. ⁸Do not be stubborn as our ancestors were. Do what Yahweh desires. Come to Jerusalem to the temple, which he has set apart for his honor forever. Do what pleases Yahweh our God, in order that he will no longer be angry with you. ⁹If you return to Yahweh, the people who have captured our brothers and sisters and our children will act kindly toward them, and allow them to return to this land. Do not forget that Yahweh our God is kind and merciful. If you return to him, he will no longer reject you."

¹⁰The messengers went to all the cities in the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, as far north as the tribe of Zebulun, and gave them this message, but most of the people there scorned them and ridiculed them. ¹¹But some of the people of the tribes of Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun acknowledged their sin and went to Jerusalem. ¹²Also in Judah God made the people want together to obey Yahweh, which is what the king and his officials had told them to do in the message that they sent.

¹³So a huge crowd of people gathered in Jerusalem in the second month of the year, to celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread. ¹⁴They removed the altars of Baal in Jerusalem and took away the altars for burning incense to honor other gods; they burned them all in the Kidron Valley.

¹⁵They slaughtered the Passover lambs on the fourteenth day of that month. The priests and the other descendants of Levi who had not performed the rituals to purify themselves, they were ashamed; and they set about to make themselves qualified for the service to Yahweh, and they brought to the temple animals to be completely burned on the altar in the house of Yahweh.

¹⁶Then they stood in the places that Moses had written in his law that they should stand in. Then the descendants of Levi gave to the priests bowls containing blood of the animals that were being sacrificed, and the priests sprinkled the altar with some of the blood. ¹⁷Many people in the crowd had not purified themselves, and therefore they were not able to kill the lambs and dedicate them to Yahweh. So it was necessary for the descendants of Levi to kill the lambs for them. ¹⁸Although most of the people who had come from the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Issachar had not purified themselves, they ate the food of the Passover Festival anyway, ignoring the rules written by Moses. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying "Yahweh, you always do what is good; I pray that you will forgive everyone ¹⁹who sincerely wants to honor you, the God whom our ancestors worshiped, even if they have not purified themselves by obeying the sacred laws that you gave to us." ²⁰And Yahweh heard what Hezekiah prayed; he forgave the people, and did not punish them.

²¹The Israelite people who were there in Jerusalem celebrated the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days. They rejoiced greatly as they celebrated, while the priests and other descendants of Levi sang to Yahweh every day and played musical instruments to praise God.

²²Hezekiah thanked all the descendants of Levi for doing this work for Yahweh, and for very skillfully leading the people who were worshiping. For those seven days the people ate the Passover food and brought offerings to maintain fellowship with Yahweh and praised Yahweh, the God whom their ancestors had worshiped.

²³Then the whole group decided to celebrate for seven more days; so they celebrated joyfully for seven more days.

²⁴King Hezekiah provided one thousand bulls and seven thousand sheep to be slaughtered for the people to eat during the festival, and the officials also gave them one thousand bulls and ten thousand sheep and goats. Many priests set themselves apart for serving Yahweh and to honor him, at this festival. ²⁵All the people of Judah rejoiced, including the priests and other descendants of Levi and all the people from Israel who had come, and including some from other countries who were living in Israel and some from other countries who were living in Judah. ²⁶Everyone in Jerusalem was very joyful, because nothing like this had happened in Jerusalem since the time when David's son Solomon was the king of Israel. ²⁷The priests and the other descendants of Levi stood up to bless the people, and God heard them, because their prayers reached up to heaven, the holy place where God lives.

Chapter 31

¹After the festival ended, the Israelites who were there went to all the cities in Judah and smashed the stones for worshiping idols, and cut down the poles for worshiping the goddess Asherah. They destroyed the high places where idols were worshiped, and the altars of Baal throughout the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and also in the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. After destroying all of them, they returned to their own cities and towns.

²Hezekiah divided the priests and other descendants of Levi into groups. He appointed some of the groups to offer sacrifices that would be completely burned on the altar and offerings to maintain fellowship with Yahweh. He

appointed some groups to do other work at the temple: Some to lead the people in their worship, some to thank Yahweh, and some to sing songs to praise Yahweh at the gates of the temple. ³The king contributed some of his own funds to buy animals that would be sacrificed in the morning and in the evening of each day, and on the Sabbath days, to celebrate the new moons, and during the other feasts, according to what was written in the laws that Yahweh gave to Moses. ⁴Hezekiah told the people living in Jerusalem to give to the priests and the other descendants of Levi the portions of meat that should be given to them, in order that they could devote all their time to obeying the laws of Yahweh. ⁵As soon as he told that to them, they generously gave the first part of their harvest of grain, and the first part of the new wine that they produced, and olive oil and honey, and of the crops that grew in their fields. They brought to the temple a tenth of all their crops. ⁶The men of Israel and Judah who were living in various cities in Judah also brought a tenth of their cattle and sheep and goats, and a tenth of other things that they had set them apart for the honor of Yahweh their God, and they piled up all those things in heaps. ⁷They started to do that in the third month and finished doing it in the seventh month. ⁸When Hezekiah and his officials saw the heaps, they praised Yahweh and requested God to bless the people.

⁹But Hezekiah asked the priests and other descendants of Levi, "What are these heaps of things?" ¹⁰Then Azariah the high priest, a descendant of Zadok, replied, "Since the time that the people started to bring their offerings to the temple, we have had even more food than we need. This has happened because Yahweh has greatly blessed our fellow Israelites, with the result that all this is left over after we priests and other descendants of Levi took all that we need!"

¹¹Then Hezekiah ordered that they should prepare storerooms at the temple to hold these supplies. ¹²Then they brought into the storerooms all the tithes and offerings and things and the things dedicated to Yahweh which the people had brought. One of the descendants of Levi whose name was Konaniah was in charge of those things, and his younger brother Shimei was his assistant. ¹³Those two men supervised Jehiel, Azariah, Nahath, Asahel, Jerimoth, Jozabad, Eliel, Ismakiah, Mahath and Benaiah while they did the work. They were appointed by King Hezekiah; Azariah was in charge of everything that was done in the temple.

¹⁴Kore son of Imnah, another descendant of Levi, who guarded the east gate of the temple, was in charge of the offerings to God that were made voluntarily. He distributed to the priests and other descendants of Levi the offerings and other things that were dedicated to Yahweh. ¹⁵Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, Shemaiah, Amariah and Shecaniah faithfully assisted him in the towns where the priests lived. They distributed those things to the groups of their fellow priests; they distributed them to everyone, including those who were young and those who were old.

¹⁶They also distributed things to the males who were at least three years old, those whose names were on the scrolls where lists of family names were written. They were males who were allowed to enter the temple to perform their tasks each day, the tasks that each group had been assigned to do. ¹⁷The names of the priests were on the scrolls where their families' names were written. They also distributed things to groups of descendants of Levi, those who were at least twenty years old. ¹⁸They included all their little children and wives and other sons and daughters whose names were on the scrolls where the family names were written, because they also faithfully had set themselves apart for the honor of Yahweh and his requirements for holiness.

¹⁹Hezekiah also appointed other men to distribute portions of those offerings to the priests and other descendants of Levi who were living in the pasturelands around the towns of Judah. But they gave things only to those who were descendants of Aaron the first high priest, whose names were on the scrolls containing the names of their families.

²⁰That is what Hezekiah did throughout Judah. He always faithfully did things that Yahweh his God says are right and good. ²¹In everything that he did for the worship in the temple, and as he obeyed God's laws and commands, he tried to find out what his God wanted, and he worked energetically. So he was successful.

Chapter 32

¹After King Hezekiah had obeyed Yahweh's instructions and had done all those things, King Sennacherib of Assyria came with his army and invaded Judah. He commanded his soldiers to surround the cities that had walls around

them, thinking that they would break through those walls and conquer those cities. ²When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come with his army and that they intended to attack Jerusalem, ³⁻⁴he consulted with his officials and army leaders. They said to themselves, "Why should we allow the king of Assyria and his army to come and find plenty of water to drink?" So they decided to stop the water from flowing outside the city. A large group of men gathered together and blocked all the springs and the stream that flowed through that area. ⁵Then they worked hard to repair all the sections of the city wall that had been broken, and they built watchtowers on the walls higher. They strengthened the Millo, a massive supporting wall on the east side of the city of David. They also made a large number of weapons and shields.

⁶Hezekiah appointed army commanders, and he gathered them in front of him in the square at one of the city gates, and he encouraged them by saying this to them: ⁷"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the huge army that is with him, because Yahweh is with us, and his power is greater than their power. ⁸They have to rely on the power of humans, but we have Yahweh our God to help us and to fight battles for us." So the people became more confident because of what Hezekiah, the king of Judah, said.

⁹Later, when Sennacherib and all his soldiers were surrounding the city of Lachish, he sent some officers to Jerusalem to give this message to King Hezekiah and to all the people of Judah who were there:

¹⁰"I am Sennacherib, the great king of Assyria, and this is what I say: While you are staying in Jerusalem, my soldiers are surrounding the city. So what are you depending on to keep you safe? ¹¹Hezekiah says to you, 'Yahweh our God will save us from being defeated by the army of you.' He wants you to die from having no food or water. ¹²Hezekiah is the one who told his men to get rid of that god's high places on the hills, and his altars in the countryside, saying to you people of Jerusalem and other places in Judah, 'You must worship at only one altar and burn sacrifices on only that altar.'

¹³⁻¹⁴Do you people not know what I and my ancestors have done to all the people groups in other countries? We destroyed them all, and their gods could not save them from me. ¹⁵So do not allow Hezekiah to deceive you like this. Do not believe what he says, because no god of any nation or kingdom has ever been able to rescue his people from being conquered by my army and the armies of my ancestors. So certainly your god will not be able to rescue you from my power."

¹⁶Sennacherib's officers said more things to insult Yahweh their God and Hezekiah, who served God well. ¹⁷King Sennacherib wrote more letters insulting Yahweh, the God whom the Israelites belonged to. He wrote, "No god of any of these nations I have conquered could save his people from me. Similarly, the god of Hezekiah will not save his people from my power." ¹⁸Then the officers shouted in the Hebrew language to the people who were on the wall, in order to cause them to be very terrified, thinking that as a result the army of Assyria could capture the city without a battle. ¹⁹They belittled the God worshiped by the people of Jerusalem like they belittled the gods of the other people groups of the world, gods which indeed were only idols fashioned by craftsmen.

²⁰Then King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah cried out to God, praying very earnestly about this. ²¹And that night Yahweh sent an angel who killed all the soldiers of Assyria and their leaders and their officers in the place where the king of Assyria and his army had set up their tents. So the king of Assyria left, and returned to his own country, very disgraced. And one day when he went into the temple of his god, some of his sons struck him with their swords and killed him.

²²That is how Yahweh guided and rescued Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem from the power of Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, and from the power of all their other enemies. That is how he gave them peace with all the countries near them. ²³Many people brought offerings for Yahweh to Jerusalem, and also brought valuable gifts for King Hezekiah. And from that time, Hezekiah was highly respected by the people of all the other nations.

²⁴About that time, Hezekiah became very ill. He thought that he was about to die. But he prayed to Yahweh, and Yahweh answered him. He performed a miracle and healed Hezekiah. ²⁵But Hezekiah was very proud, and he did not thank Yahweh for acting kindly toward him. Therefore Yahweh was angry with him and punished him and the

people of Jerusalem and other places in Judah. ²⁶Then Hezekiah said that he was sorry about being proud, and the people of Jerusalem also said that they were sorry for their sins. So Yahweh did not punish them during the remaining years that Hezekiah was their king.

²⁷Hezekiah became very rich and was greatly honored. His workers made storerooms for his silver and gold, for his very valuable stones, and for spices and shields and other valuable things. ²⁸His workers also built buildings to store the grain and wine and olive oil that people produced and brought to him. They also made stalls for various kinds of cattle, and pens for his flocks of sheep and goats. ²⁹They built cities and acquired for the king great many flocks of sheep and goats and herds of cattle, because God had enabled him to become very rich.

³⁰Hezekiah was the one who told his workers to block the place where the water flows out of the spring of Gihon, and to build a tunnel through which the water flowed to the west side of the area called the city of David. He was able to do everything that he wanted to do. ³¹But when messengers who were sent by the rulers of Babylon came and asked about the miracle that God had performed in the land, it was then that God left Hezekiah alone in order to test him. God tested him so that he would know everything that was in Hezekiah's heart.

³²A record of the other things that happened while Hezekiah was ruling, and the things that he did to please God, is written on the scroll of the vision of Isaiah the prophet. It is also written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. ³³When Hezekiah died, he was buried in the tombs where the most respected kings of Judah were buried. Everyone in Jerusalem and other places in Judah honored him. Then his son Manasseh became the king.

Chapter 33

¹Manasseh was twelve years old when he became the king of Judah, and he ruled from Jerusalem for fifty-five years. ²He did many things that Yahweh said were evil. He imitated the disgusting things that were formerly done by the people groups that Yahweh had expelled from Israel as his people advanced into the land. ³He commanded his workers to rebuild the high places upon the hills for worshiping idols, the same ones that his father Hezekiah had destroyed. He told them to set up poles to honor the god Baal, and to make poles to honor the goddess Asherah. He also bowed down to worship all the stars. ⁴He directed his workers to build altars for foreign gods in the temple itself, about which Yahweh had said, "It is here in Jerusalem that I want people to worship me, forever." ⁵He directed that altars for worshiping all the stars be built in both of the courtyards outside the temple. ⁶He even sacrificed some of his own sons by burning them in a fire in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. He performed rituals to practice sorcery. He asked fortune tellers for advice. He performed witchcraft. He talked to people who consulted the spirits of people who had died to find out what would happen in the future. He did many things that Yahweh says are very evil, things that caused Yahweh to become very angry.

⁷Manasseh took the carved idol that his workers had made and put it in the temple. That is the temple concerning which God had said to David and to his son Solomon, "My temple will be here in Jerusalem, the city that I have chosen where I want people to worship me, forever." ⁸If they will obey all the laws and decrees and regulations that I told Moses to give to them, I will not again force the Israelite people to leave this land that I gave to their ancestors." ⁹But Manasseh led the people of Jerusalem and other places in Judah to do things that are wrong, with the result that they did more evil than had been done by the people in the people groups that Yahweh had driven out as the Israelite people advanced through the land.

¹⁰Yahweh spoke to Manasseh and the people of Judah, but they paid no attention. ¹¹So Yahweh caused the army commanders of Assyria and their soldiers to come to Jerusalem, and they captured Manasseh. They put a hook in his nose, put bronze chains on his feet, and took him to Babylon. ¹²There, while he was suffering, he humbled himself greatly in the presence of Yahweh, the God whom his ancestors worshiped, and pleaded with Yahweh to help him. ¹³When he prayed, Yahweh heard him and pitied him. So he allowed him to return to Jerusalem and to rule his kingdom again. Then Manasseh realized that Yahweh is God, who can do anything.

¹⁴Later, Manasseh's workers rebuilt the eastern section of the outer wall around Jerusalem, and they made it higher. That section extended from spring of Gihon north to the Fish Gate, and around the part of the city that they

called Ophel Hill. Manasseh also appointed army officers to guard each of the cities in Judah that had walls around them. ¹⁵Manasseh's workers removed from the temple the idols and the figures of gods of other nations. He also told them to remove the altars that they had previously built on Mount Zion and in other places in Jerusalem. He had all those things thrown out of the city. ¹⁶Then he told them to repair the altar of Yahweh, and he offered sacrifices to restore fellowship with Yahweh and to thank him. And he told the people of Judah that they must worship only Yahweh. ¹⁷The people continued to offer sacrifices at the high places on the hills, but only to Yahweh their God.

¹⁸The other things that happened while Manasseh was ruling, including his prayer to God and the messages from Yahweh that the prophets spoke to him, are written in the book of the kings of Israel. ¹⁹What Manasseh prayed and how God pitied him because of what he pleaded to God for—also his sins and ways in which he disobeyed God—also the list of places where he built the houses on the hills for idol worship and set up poles to honor the goddess Asherah and other idols before he humbled himself—these are all written in what the prophets wrote. ²⁰Manasseh died and was buried in his palace. Then his son Amon became the king of Judah.

²¹Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he ruled in Jerusalem for two years. ²²He did many things that Yahweh said were evil, as his father Manasseh had done. Amon worshiped all the idols that Manasseh's workers had made. ²³But he did not humble himself and turn to Yahweh like his father did. So he became more sinful than his father had been.

²⁴Then Amon's officials made plans to kill him. They assassinated him in his palace. ²⁵But then the people of Judah killed all those who had assassinated Amon, and they appointed his son Josiah to be their king.

Chapter 34

¹Josiah was eight years old when he became the king of Judah. He ruled from Jerusalem for thirty-one years. ²He did things that were pleasing to Yahweh, and conducted his life like his ancestor King David had done. He fully obeyed all the laws of God.

³When he had been ruling for almost eight years, while he was still a boy, he began to worship God as his ancestor King David had done. Four years later, he began to get rid of all the houses that were built on the hills for idol worship, and they were all around Jerusalem and in other places in Judah. They also took down the poles that were to give honor the goddess Asherah and the carved idols and metal statues of gods. ⁴While he directed them, his workers tore down the altars where people worshiped Baal. They smashed the altars that were near those altars, where people burned incense. They smashed the poles to honor the goddess Asherah and the idols carved from wood or stone and metal statues. They smashed them to bits and scattered the bits over the graves of those who had offered sacrifices to them. ⁵They burned the bones of the priests who had offered sacrifices; they burned them on their own altars. In that way Josiah caused Jerusalem and other places in Judah to be acceptable places to worship Yahweh again. ⁶In the towns in the tribes of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, and as far north as the tribe of Naphtali and in the ruins around all those towns, ⁷Josiah's workers tore down the pagan altars and the poles to honor the goddess Asherah, and crushed the idols to powder, idols that craftsmen had carved. They also smashed to pieces all the altars for burning incense throughout Israel. Then Josiah returned to Jerusalem.

⁸When Josiah had been ruling for almost eighteen years, he decided to do something else to cause the land and the temple to be acceptable places to worship Yahweh. So he sent Shaphan son of Azaliah and Maaseiah the governor of the city and Joah son of Joahaz, the secretary, to repair the temple of Yahweh.

⁹They went to Hilkiah the high priest and gave him the money that had been brought to the temple. That was the money that the descendants of Levi who guarded the doors of the temple had collected from the people of the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim and other places in Israel, and also from all the people in Jerusalem and other places in the tribes of Judah and Benjamin—all the people of the land who survived.

¹⁰Then Hilkiah gave some of the money to the men who had been appointed to supervise the work of repairing the temple. The supervisors paid the men who did the repair work. ¹¹They also gave some of the money to the carpenters and builders to buy the cut stones and the timber for the joists and the beams for the buildings that the kings of Judah had allowed to decay.

¹²The workers did their work faithfully. Their supervisors were Jahath and Obadiah, who were descendants of Levi's son Merari, and Zechariah and Meshullam, who were descendants of Levi's son Kohath. All the descendants of Levi, who played musical instruments well, ¹³supervised all the workers as they did their various jobs. Some of the descendants of Levi were secretaries; some kept records, and some guarded the temple gates.

¹⁴While they were giving to the supervisors the money that had been taken to the temple, Hilkiah the high priest found a scroll on which was written the laws that Yahweh had given to Moses to give to the people. ¹⁵So Hilkiah said to Shaphan, "I have found in the temple a scroll on which is written the laws that God gave to Moses!" Then Hilkiah gave the scroll to Shaphan.

¹⁶Shaphan took the scroll to the king and said to him, "Your officials are doing everything that you told them to do.

¹⁷They have taken the money that was in the temple, and they have given it to the men who will supervise the men who will repair the temple." ¹⁸Then Shaphan said to the king, "I have also brought to you a scroll that Hilkiah gave to me." And Shaphan started to read it to the king.

¹⁹When the king heard the laws that were written in the scroll, he tore his clothes because he was very upset.

²⁰Then he gave these instructions to Hilkiah, to Shaphan's son Ahikam, to Micah's son Abdon, to Shaphan, and to Asaiah, the king's special advisor: ²¹"Go and ask Yahweh for me, and for all his people who are still alive in Judah and Israel, about what is written in this scroll that has been found. Because it is clear that Yahweh is very angry with us because our ancestors disobeyed what Yahweh said; they did not obey the laws that are written on this scroll."

²²So Hilkiah and the others went to consult a woman whose name was Huldah, who was a prophetess who lived in the Second District of Jerusalem. Her husband Shallum son of Tikvah, took care of the robes that were worn in the temple.

²³When they told her what the king had said, she said to them, "This is what Yahweh, the God whom we Israelites say we worship, says: 'Go back and tell the king who sent you ²⁴that this is what Yahweh says: "Listen to this carefully. I am going to bring a disaster on Jerusalem and all the people who live here. I will send on them the curses that were written in the scroll that was read to the king of Judah. ²⁵I will do that because they have abandoned me, and they burn incense to honor other gods. They have caused me to become very angry because of all the idols that they have made.'" ²⁶The king of Judah sent you to inquire what I, Yahweh, want. Go and tell him that this is what I, Yahweh, the God whom you Israelites worship, say about what you read: ²⁷'Because you heeded what was written in the scroll, and you humbled yourself when you heard what I said to warn about what would happen to this city and the people who live here, and because you tore your robes and wept in my presence, I have listened to you. ²⁸So I will allow you to die in peace, without seeing me punish this place and the people living in it.'"

So they took her reply back to the king. ²⁹Then the king summoned all the elders of Jerusalem and other places in Judea. ³⁰They went up together to the temple with the leaders of Judah and many other people of Jerusalem and the priests and other descendants of Levi, from the least important to the most important ones. And while they listened, the king read to them everything that was in the scroll containing God's laws that had been found in the temple.

³¹Then the king stood next to the pillar at the entrance to the temple, where kings stood when they announced something important, and while Yahweh was listening, he repeated his promise to sincerely obey, with his entire inner being, Yahweh and all his commands and regulations and decrees that were written on the scroll.

³²Then the king said that everyone who lived in Jerusalem and from the tribe of Benjamin should promise that they also would obey those laws. And they did that, agreeing that they would obey the agreement that God, whom their ancestors had worshiped, had made with them.

³³Josiah instructed his workers to remove all the disgusting idols from all the land of the Israelite people, and he commanded that all those from Israel who were there should worship only Yahweh their God. As long as Josiah was alive, the people did what was pleasing to Yahweh, the God whom their ancestors worshiped.

Chapter 35

¹Josiah commanded that the people should celebrate the Passover Festival in Jerusalem. So they slaughtered the lambs for the Passover on the 14th day of the first month. ²Josiah assigned to the priests to the tasks that they should perform at the temple, and encouraged them to do their work well. ³The descendants of Levi were the ones who taught all the Israelite people; they had been set apart for Yahweh. Josiah said to them, "Put the sacred chest in the temple that the workers of David's son King Solomon of Israel built. But carry it on poles; do not carry it on your shoulders. And do well your work for Yahweh your God and for his Israelite people. ⁴Divide yourselves into your traditional clans, obeying the instructions that King David and his son Solomon wrote.

⁵Then stand in the temple area, with each of you in your own Levite clan, ready to help your fellow Israelites when they bring their offerings to the temple. ⁶Slaughter the lambs for the Passover. Do this for your fellow Israelites. Perform the rituals to set yourselves apart for God's honor and to serve Yahweh and do his work. Prepare the sacrifices, doing what Yahweh told Moses to tell you that you should do."

⁷Josiah provided from his own flocks and herds thirty thousand young sheep and goats for the Passover sacrifices. He also provided three thousand bulls from his own herds.

⁸His officials also voluntarily contributed animals for the people and the priests and the other descendants of Levi. Hilkiah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, the officials who were in charge of the temple, gave to the priests 2,600 lambs and three hundred cattle to be sacrifices for the Passover. ⁹Also, Konaniah, along with his younger brothers Shemaiah and Nethanel, and Hashabiah, Jeiel, and Jozabad, the leaders of the descendants of Levi, provided five thousand lambs and five hundred cattle for the other descendants of Levi, to be sacrifices for the Passover.

¹⁰Everything for the Passover was arranged: The priests and the other descendants of Levi stood in their places in their groups, as the king had commanded. ¹¹Then they slaughtered the Passover lambs. The priests sprinkled the blood from the bowls that were handed to them, while the other descendants of Levi removed the skins from the animals. ¹²They set aside the animals to be completely burned on the altar, in order to give them to the various family groups to offer to Yahweh, obeying the instructions that were written in the laws God gave Moses. They did the same thing with the cattle. ¹³Obeying those regulations, they roasted over the fire the lambs for the Passover. And they boiled the meat of the sacred offerings in pots and kettles and pans, and served the meat immediately to all the people who were there. ¹⁴After that, they prepared meat for themselves and for the priests, because the priests were busy until nighttime, sacrificing the offerings to be completely burned and burning the fat parts of the offerings. So the descendants of Levi prepared meat for themselves and for the priests, who were descendants of Aaron, the first high priest.

¹⁵The musicians, who were descendants of Asaph, stood in their places, as had been commanded by King David, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun the king's prophet. The men who guarded the gates of the temple did not need to leave their places, because their fellow descendants of Levi prepared food for them to eat.

¹⁶So on that day everything that needed to be done for worshiping Yahweh was done. They celebrated the Passover Festival, and they presented offerings to be completely burned on the altar, which was what Josiah had commanded. ¹⁷The Israelites who were there celebrated the Passover on that day, and for seven days they celebrated the Festival of Unleavened Bread. ¹⁸The Passover Festival had not been celebrated like that in Israel since the time that the prophet Samuel lived. And none of the kings of Israel had ever celebrated the Passover like

Josiah did, along with the priests, the other descendants of Levi, and all the other people of Judah and Israel who were there with the people who lived in Jerusalem. ¹⁹They celebrated this Passover Festival when Josiah had been ruling for almost eighteen years.

²⁰After Josiah had done all those things to restore the worship at the temple, King Necho of Egypt went with his army to attack the city of Carchemish alongside the Euphrates River, and Josiah marched with his army to fight against them. ²¹Necho sent some messengers to Josiah, to tell him, "You are the king of Judah, and there is certainly no reason for you to fight me; we are attacking the army of Babylonia. God has told me to hurry. So stop opposing God, who is for me. If you do not stop, God will get rid of you."

²²But Josiah would not listen to him. Instead, he disguised himself in order to be able to attack the army of Egypt without anyone recognizing him. He did not pay any attention to what God had told Necho to say. Instead, he and his army went to fight Necho's army at the plain of Megiddo.

²³Some archers shot King Josiah. He told his officers, "Take me away from here because I am badly wounded." ²⁴So they took him out of his chariot and put him in another chariot that he had brought with him, and they took him to Jerusalem, where he died. He was buried in the tombs where his ancestors had been buried, and all the people of Jerusalem and other places in Judah mourned for him.

²⁵The prophet Jeremiah composed a song to lament for Josiah, and all the men and women singers in Israel still mourn for Josiah by singing that song. That became a custom in Israel; the words of that song are written in a scroll of funeral songs.

²⁶⁻²⁷A record of the other things that happened while Josiah ruled, from the time he started to rule until he died, including how he faithfully was devoted to honoring God by obeying all that was written in the laws of Yahweh, is written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.

Chapter 36

¹Then the people of Judah chose Josiah's son Jehoahaz and appointed him to be the king in Jerusalem.

²Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became the king, but he ruled from Jerusalem for only three months. ³The king of Egypt captured him and prevented him from ruling any longer. He also forced the people of Judah to pay to him a tax of three and one-third metric tons of silver and thirty-three kilograms of gold. ⁴The king of Egypt appointed Jehoahaz's younger brother Eliakim to be the king of Judah. He changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim. But Necho seized Jehoahaz and took him to Egypt.

⁵Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became the king of Judah, and he ruled from Jerusalem for eleven years. He did many things that Yahweh said were evil. ⁶Then the army of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon attacked Jehoiakim's army. They captured Jehoiakim, fastened him with bronze chains, and took him to Babylon.

⁷Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers also took valuable things from the temple. They took them to Babylon and put them in King Nebuchadnezzar's palace there.

⁸A record of the other things that happened while Jehoiakim was ruling, the disgusting things that he did and the evil things that people said that he did, is written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. After he was taken to Babylon, his son Jehoiachin became the king of Judah.

⁹Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became the king of Judah, and he ruled from Jerusalem for only three months and ten days. He did many things that Yahweh said were evil. ¹⁰During the spring of the next year, King Nebuchadnezzar sent soldiers to bring him to Babylon. They also took to Babylon many valuable things from the temple of Yahweh. Then Nebuchadnezzar appointed Jehoiachin's uncle, Zedekiah, to be the king of Judah.

¹¹Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became the king, and he ruled in Jerusalem for eleven years. ¹²He did many things that Yahweh said were evil. He did not humble himself when the prophet Jeremiah spoke to him a

message from Yahweh to warn him. ¹³He would not return to Yahweh, the God that the people of Israel said that they worshiped. Zedekiah also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had forced him to solemnly promise using God's name to be loyal to him. Zedekiah became very stubborn. ¹⁴Furthermore, all the leaders of the priests and also the people of Judah became more wicked again, doing all the disgusting things that the people of the other nations did, and causing the temple in Jerusalem that Yahweh had caused to be holy to become an unacceptable place to worship him.

¹⁵Yahweh, the God whom the ancestors of the people of Judah worshiped, gave messages to his prophets many times, and the prophets gave those messages to the people of Judah. Yahweh did that because he pitied his people and did not want his temple to be destroyed. ¹⁶But the people continually made fun of God's messengers. They despised God's messages. They ridiculed his prophets, until finally God became extremely angry with his people, with the result that nothing could stop him from destroying Judah. ¹⁷He incited the king of Babylonia to attack Judah with his army. They killed the young men with their swords, even in the temple. They did not spare anyone, either young men or young women or old people. God enabled the army of Nebuchadnezzar to defeat all of them. ¹⁸His soldiers took to Babylon all the things that were used in God's temple, big things and little things, all the valuable things, and the valuable things that belonged to the king and his officials. ¹⁹They burned the temple, and they broke down the wall surrounding Jerusalem. They burned all the palaces in Jerusalem and destroyed all the remaining valuable things there.

²⁰Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers took to Babylon the remaining people who had not been killed with their swords, Those people became the king's slaves and his son's slaves, until the army of Persia conquered Babylonia. ²¹Moses had said that every seventh year the people must not plant their fields; they must allow the soil to rest. But the people had not done that. So after the army of Babylonia destroyed Judah, the soil was allowed to rest. That continued for seventy years, fulfilling what Yahweh had told Jeremiah would happen.

²²During the first year that Cyrus was the king of Persia, in order that what Yahweh told Jeremiah would happen would occur, Yahweh motivated Cyrus to write this and proclaim it throughout his kingdom:

²³"I, Cyrus, the king of Persia, declare that Yahweh, the God who rules in heaven, has enabled me to become the ruler of all the kingdoms of this world. And he has appointed me to command that my workers build a temple for him in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. I am allowing any of his people among you to go to Jerusalem. And I will pray that Yahweh will be with them."

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